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Innovation of English Pronunciation in Malayalee-English through Intrusion and Elision of Phonemes

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Abstract

English spoken by educated people in Kerala is a regional variant of Indian English commonly called Malayalee-English (M.E). The M.E is influenced in its pronunciation and syntax by Malayalam- the mother tongue of the speakers. This L_1 influence/ colouring on L_2 is denoted with the terms interference/negative transfer. It is generally held that interference is the main causative factor that produces the Indian English accents. However, the distinct Malayalee-English accent is not due to interference alone. Innovations in pronunciation by M.E bilinguals also factor in making the M.E a highly noticeable variety of Indian English. This study, based on a survey of the English pronunciation of a group of undergraduates highlights some of the pronunciation innovations in M.E through insertion and elision of certain sounds.

Keywords: Malayalee-English (ME), L_2, Interference/negative transfer, Intrusion, Elision.

Introduction

Indian English is described as the English language spoken by the Indian English bilinguals who learned it as a second language . As India is multilingual with more than thirty major languages, English learning in India occurs in language contexts where the national languages (official langages of the Indian states) dominate. It is from such a language contact situation that Indian English bilinguals learned the second language (English) from educational institutions (after acquiring the first language). This learning of English results in transfer of some of the features of the speakers' L_1 to their L_2. Consequently , one comes across a number of regional accents in Indian English such as Hindi-English (Hinglish), Tamil-English (Tamilish), Malayalam-English (Manglish) etc.

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These regional 'Englishes' differ in their pronunciation, syntax and vocabulary. As pointed out already when a bilingual learns a second language transfer of features of the first language into the second language occurs. So regional accent diffrences are usually attributed to the 'interference'. But Interference/negative transfer may not be the sole reason for differnces in accents in India. This study indicates that pronunciation innovations practiced by Malayalees also add on to the special accent of Malayalee-English .

Indian English is a prominent non-native variety of English in the global village. Malayalee-English is a major constituent of Indian English that is likely to play a significant role in the years to come. As Kerala is the most literate state in India with more than four million unemployed bilingual youths awaiting jobs in the national/international job markets, it is likely that a day may come when the M.E will be synonymous with Indian English. And so, a survey of the pronunciation innovations in M.E is significant and relevant as it would help in maximizing 'intelligibility' in communication contexts involving Malayalee -English speakers and even Indian English speakers, at large.

A number of studies have been carried out in India pertaining to the pronunciation of English in the country . Studies by Kachru (1965) Pattanayak (1969, 1981), Verma (1978), Prabhu (1987), Sasikumar (2009) and Tickoo (2009) have pointed out features of General Indian English.

Aspects of M.E pronunciation have been studied by Asari (1970), Nazareth (1990), Syamala (1983, 1996), Lalitha (1998) and Thomas (2002, 2011, 2011a and 2011b). But no one has so far examined the pronunciation innovations in M.E at the segmental level. Hence, the need for the present study.

Methodology

A study of the English pronunciation of 400 undergraduate students (17-20 age group; Arts, Science and Commerce students; both sexes) selected through stratified random sampling from the Central Travancore colleges has been undertaken. The members of the sample were required to pronounce selected words. The students' pronunciation was recorded by English teachers. Thus, through recorded pronunciation and participant observation (direct listening) the data was collected and subjected to further study.

Results

Analysis of the data indicates that pronunciation innovations in M.E. is made through 'Intrusion' of a few sounds in some words and 'Elision' of certain sounds from a number of words some of which are listed below:

I. Sound Intrusions in Malayalee-English: While pronouncing some words Malayalee-English bilinguals have been found to insert /j/ and /w/.

(i) Intrusive /j/ :

(a) The Rp diphthongs **/ ɪə /** and **/ eə /** are pronounced with /j/ intrusion. For examples: ear / ɪəʳ /-[M.E jiʌr], fear / fɪəʳ /-[fijʌr], near / nɪəʳ /-[nijʌr], peer / pɪəʳ / - [pijʌr], bear /beəʳ /-[bijʌr], fair / feəʳ /-[fejʌr], hair/ heəʳ /-[hejʌr] and pair / peəʳ / -[pejʌr].

(b) An intrusive /j/ has been heard in the pronunciation of words with 'dia' –beginning: diabetes /ˌdaɪəˈbiː.tiːz/- [dʌjʌbetis], diabetic /daɪəˈbet.ɪk /- [dʌjʌbetik], diagnosl /ˈdaɪəg.nəʊz/-[dʌjʌgnoːs], diagram /ˈdaɪə.græm/-[dʌjʌgram], dial /daɪəl/-[dʌjʌl], dialect /ˈdaɪə.lekt/- [dʌjʌlekt], dialogue /ˈdaɪə.lɒg/- [dʌjʌloːg], diameter /daɪˈæm.ɪ.təʳ/- [dʌjʌmiːter], diamond /ˈdaɪə.mənd/- [dʌjʌmend], diaper /ˈdaɪə .pəʳ/ -[dʌjʌper] and diary /ˈdaɪə.ri/- [dejʌri].

(c) Words with 'ca' - beginning have been found to be pronounced with an intrusive/j/ . egs:- camel /ˈkæm.ᵊl/-[ˈkjæm.ʌl], camera /ˈkæm.ᵊr. ə/ - [ˈkjæmʌrʌ], camp /kæmp/-[kjæmp], campus /ˈkæm.pəs/-[kjæm.pʌs], cancer /ˈkænt .səʳ/ [ˈkjæn .s ʌr], capital /ˈkæp.ɪ.tᵊl/-[ˈkjæp.ɪ.tl], capitalism/ˈkæp.ɪ.tᵊl.ɪ.zᵊm/ [ˈkjæp.ɪ.t ʌ l.ɪ.zm], capsicum/ˈkæp.sɪ.kəm/- [ˈkjæp.sɪ.km], capsule /ˈkæp.sjuːl/-[ˈkjæp.sjuːl], captain /ˈkæp.tɪn/-[ˈkjæp.tʌn], captivate /ˈkæp.tɪ.veɪt/ -[ˈkjæp.tɪ.veːt], captive /ˈkæp.tɪv/ [ˈkjæp.tɪw], capture /ˈkæp.ʧəʳ/-[ˈkjæp.ʧer], cat /kæt/-[kjæt],cattle /ˈkæt.ᵊl/-[ˈkjæt.l],crack /kræk/-[kræjk].etc.

(d) Miscellaneous words with /j/ intrusion include diet /daɪət/- [dʌjʌt], dietician/ˌdaɪəˈtɪʃ.ᵊn /-[dʌjʌt ɪʃn], doyen /ˈdɔɪ.en /-[doːjʌn], gamble /ˈgæm.bᵊl/-[ˈgjæm.bl], gas /gæs/-[gjæs],idiot /ˈɪd.i.ət/[ˈɪd.ijet], iodine /ˈaɪ.ə.diːn/-[ˈaj.ʌ.din], loyal /lɔɪəl/-[loːjʌl], loyalty /ˈlɔɪəl.ti/-[loːjʌl.ti], mayor /meəʳ/-[meːjʌr], pack /pæk/-[pæjk], packed /pækt/-[pæjkd], rack /ræk/-[ræjk], racket /ˈræk.ɪt/-[ˈræjk.et], rag /ræg/-[ræjg], region /ˈriː.ʤᵊn/-[ˈriː.ʤjʌn], repayable /rɪˈpeɪ.ə.bᵊl/-[rɪˈpeːj. ʌ.bl], tag /tæg/-[tæjg], back /bæk/-[bæjk], bag /bæg/-[bæjg] and black /blæk/-[blæjk].

(ii) Intrusive /w/ :

In M.E. an intrusive /w/ is heard while pronouncing the following words: Awe /ɔː /-[oːw], Coward /kaʊəd/-[kʌward], cowardice /ˈkaʊə.dɪs/-[kʌwardis], cowardly /ˈkaʊəd.li/-[kʌward.li], dowry /ˈdaʊ.ri/-[ˈdaw.ri], Jewel /ˈʤuː.əl/-[ˈʤuw.el], Jewel-box /ˈʤuː.əl bɒks/-[ˈʤuw.el boːks], jewel(l)er /ˈʤuː.ə.ləʳ/-[ˈʤuw.e.llʌr], jewellery /ˈʤuː.əl.ri/-[ˈʤuw.e.llʌri], Jewish /ˈʤuː.ɪʃ/-[ˈʤuw.ɪʃ] and Jewry /ˈʤʊə.ri/-[ˈʤʊw.ri].

II. Elision of sounds in Malayalee-English:

Elision or dropping of sounds of some words is found to be one of the features of Malayalee English Pronunciation. The most commonly elided sounds are the following:

(1) /w/ is elided in words with 'qu'-cluster.

e.g. equal /ˈiː.kwəl/-[ˈiː.kuʌl], equality /ɪˈkwɒl.ə.ti/-[iˈkuali.ti], equator /ɪˈkweɪ.təʳ/-[ɪˈkueːter], equilibrium /ˌiː.kwɪˈlɪb.ri.əm/-[i.kɪˈlɪb.ri. ʌm], equinox /ˈiː.kwɪ.nɒks/-[ˈi.kɪ.noːks], equip /ɪˈkwɪp/-[eˈkɪp etc], similarly the /w/ in the following words are generally elied in M.E:

equitablle /'ek.**w**ɪ.tə.bᵊl/, equity /'ek.**w**ɪ.ti/, equivalence /ɪ'k**w**ɪv.ᵊl.ənt s/, extinguish /ɪk'stɪŋ.g**w**ɪʃ/, frequence /'friː.k**w**ənts/, guava /'g**w**ɑː.və/, inequable /ɪ'nek.**w**ə.bl/, inequity /ɪ'nek.**w**ə.ti/, liquid /'lɪk.**w**ɪd/ liquidate /'lɪk.**w**ɪ.deɪt/, liquidation ˌ/lɪk.**w**ɪ'deɪ.ʃᵊn/, liquidity /lɪ'kwɪd.ə.ti/, quarrel /'k**w**ɒr.ᵊl/ quarter ˈ/k**w**ɔː.təʳ/, queen /k**w**iːn/, queer /k**w**iːr/, quick /k**w**ɪk/, quench/ k**w**ent ʃ/, query /k**w**ɪə.ri/, quell /k**w**el/, question /'k**w**es.ʧən/, quibble /'k**w**ɪb.ᵊl/, quick /k**w**ɪk/, quicken /'k**w**ɪk.ᵊn/, quid /k**w**ɪd/, quip /k**w**ɪp/, quit /k**w**ɪt/, quiz /k**w**ɪz/, quota /'k**w**əʊ.tə/, quote /k**w**əʊt/, request /rɪ'k**w**est/, require /rɪ'k**w**aɪəʳ/, squad /sk**w**ɒd/, squeak /sk**w**iːk/, squeeze /sk**w**iːz/, squirrel /'sk**w**ɪr.ᵊl/, squirt /sk**w**ɜːt/, squad /sk**w**ɒd/, squadron /'sk**w**ɒd.rᵊn/, square /sk**w**eəʳ/

(2) The phoneme /k/ is dropped in the pronunciation of the following words: Antarctic /æn tɑk.tɪk/-[ʌn tar.tɪk], anxious /æŋk .ʃəs/-[æŋ .ʃʌs], anxiously /'æŋk .ʃəsli/-['æŋ .ʃʌsli], electronic /ˌel.ek'trɒn.ɪk/-[el.e'troːn.ɪk], facsimile /fæk'sɪm.ᵊl.i/-[fæ'sɪmail], punctual /'pʌŋk.ʧu.əl/-['pʌŋ.ʧuʌl], punctuality /ˌpʌnk.ʧu'æl.ə.ti/-[ˌpʌn.ʧu'æl.i.ti], punctuate /'pʌŋk.ʧu.eɪt/-['pʌŋ.ʧu.eːt], punctuation /ˌpʌŋk.ʧu'eɪ.ʃᵊn/-[ˌpʌŋ.ʧu'eː.ʃn], puncture /'pʌŋk.ʧəʳ/-[/'pʌŋ.ʧer], sanction /sæŋk.ʃᵊn/-[sæŋ.ʃn], sanctify /'sæŋk.tɪ.faɪ/ ['sæŋ.tɪ.faɪ], sanctuary /'sæŋk.ʧʊə.ri/-['sæŋ.ʧʊe.ri], sanctum /'sæŋk.tləm/-['sæŋ.tem].

(3) The /j/ sound is dropped in the pronunciation of a number of words:
e.g. Annual /'æn.ju.əl/-['æn.u.el], Assiduous /ə'sɪd.ju.əs/-[ə'sɪd.ju.əs], Calculate /'kæl.kjə.leɪt/-['kæl.ku.leːt], Circulate /'sɜː.kjə.leɪt-[sʌrkuleːt]/, Circulatory /ˌsɜː.kjə'leɪ.tᵊr.i/-[sʌrkuleːt r.i], Credulous /'kred.jʊ.ləs/-['kredu.lʌs], Cucumber /'kjuː.kʌm.bəʳ/-['ku.kum.ber], curious /'kjʊə.ri.əs/-['kʊːri.ʌs], Dual /'djuː.əl/-[duː.el], Dubious /'djuː.bi.əs/-['duː.bi.jes]
Other examples include the following words:

Duo /d**j**uː.əʊ /, Dupe /d**j**uːp/, Duplicate /'d**j**uː.plɪ.kət/, emulation /ˌem.**j**ə'leɪ.ʃᵊn/, extenuate /ɪk'sten.**j**u.eɪt/, fabulous /'fæb.**j**ə.ləs/, inaugural /ɪ'nɔː.g.**j**ə.rᵊl/, inaugurate /ɪ'nɔː.g.**j**ə.reɪt/-, incestuous /ɪn'ses.t**j**u.əs/, incredulous /ɪn'kred.**j**ə.ləs/, incubate /'ɪŋ.k**j**ʊ.beɪt/, insulate /'ɪnt .s**j**ə.leɪt/-, nutrition /n**j**uː'trɪʃ.ᵊn/-, manure /mə'n**j**ʊəʳ/-, obdurate /'ɒb.d**j**ᵊr.ət/, particular /pə'tɪk.**j**ə.ləʳ/, peculiarity /pɪˌk**j**uː.li'ær.ə.ti/, peculiar /pɪ'k**j**uː.li.əʳ/, pecuniary /pɪ'k**j**uː.njᵊr.i/, pendulum /'pen.d**j**ᵊl.əm/, popular /'pɒp.**j**ə.ləʳ/, popularity /ˌpɒp.jə'lær.ə.ti/-, popularise /'pɒp.**j**ə.lᵊr.aɪz/, populate /'pɒp.**j**ə.leɪt/, population /ˌpɒp.**j**ə'leɪ.ʃᵊn/, postulate /'pɒs.t**j**ə.lət/, regular /'reg.**j**ə.ləʳ/, regulate /'reg.**j**ə.leɪt/, regulation /ˌreg.**j**ə'leɪ.ʃᵊn/, residual /rɪ'zɪd.**j**u.əl/, sedulous /'sed.**j**ʊ.ləs/, simulate /sɪm.**j**ə.leɪt/ , situate /sɪt.**j**u.eɪt/, soluble /'sɒl.**j**ə.bᵊl/, stimulant /'stɪm.**j**ə.lənt/, stimulate /'stɪm.**j**ə.leɪt/, stipulate/ ˈstɪp.**j**ə.leɪt/, strenuous /'stren.**j**u.əs/, student /'st**j**uː.dᵊnt/, stupid /'st**j**uː.pɪd/, stupor /'st**j**uː.pəʳ/, studio /'st**j**uː.di.əʊ/, tabular /'tæb.**j**ə.ləʳ/, tabulate /'tæb.**j**ə.leɪt/, tenure /'ten.**j**əʳ/, utopia /**j**uː'təʊ.pi.ə/

(4) Miscellaneous deletions include the following phonemes

(a) **/p/** in empty /emp .ti/-[em .ti] and pumpkin /pʌmp.kɪn/-[pʌm.kɪn]

(b) **/ŋ/** in penguin /'peŋ.gwɪn/-[pen.gwɪn]

(c) **/i/** in intuition /ˌɪn.tju'ɪʃ.ᵊn/-[ˌɪn.tju:ʃ.n], intuitive/ɪn'tju:.ɪ.tɪv/ [ɪn'tju.tɪw], fruition /fru'ɪʃ.ᵊn/-[fru'ʃ.n] and tuition /tju'ɪʃ.ᵊn/-[tju'ʃ. n], and

(d) **/g/** in language/ 'læŋ.gwɪʤ/-['læŋ.we:ʤ], languid /'læŋ.gwɪd/-['læŋ.wɪd], languish /'læŋ.gwɪʃ/-['læŋ.wɪʃ].

The above account shows that pronunciation innovation in Malayalee English to an extent is the outcome of intrusion and elision of some sounds while pronouncing certain words.

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