CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Concept of Indian English

1.1.1 The Emergence of the Concept

Thanks to Professor Bansal and his monumental work The Intelligibility of Indian English,[1] the term General Indian English (abbreviated to GIE), referring to the spoken variety of English, has emerged. "What is the GIE equivalent of the voiced labio-dental fricative sound /v/?" is a question many a PGDTE (Postgraduate Diploma in the Teaching of English) student faces during an oral examination in spoken English at the CIEFL. Books written on the phonetics and phonology of English for use by Indian students have dealt with the concept of General Indian English.[2]

1.1.2 The Reality of the Concept

Is there, objectively speaking, a variety of spoken English that can really and truly be described as General Indian English? There certainly are syntactic, semantic and idiomatic features that are peculiar to the variety of English used in India. For example, one very commonly hears (unacceptable) question-forms like "Why you are late today?", "What time you came?" and "I can see you for a minute now, no?" in the English speech of even educated Indians. Indian English is also characterized by peculiar expressions (peculiar from the non-Indians' point of view) like "He is not my son-in-law's brother, is he? So why should I help him with a loan?"[3] But the concept of General

Indian English, as far as the spoken variety of the language
is concerned, one feels, needs a more detailed examination
and elaboration.

No doubt, there are several common characteristics of
Indian (spoken) English (henceforth IE stands for the spoken
variety of English). For example, almost all Indians[4] replace
the voiceless dental fricative $\underline{/}\theta\underline{/}$ by the voiceless aspirated
dental plosive $\underline{/}t^h\underline{/}$ (i.e. speakers of Indo-Aryan languages)
or by the voiceless unaspirated dental plosive $\underline{/}t\underline{/}$ (i.e.
speakers of Dravidian languages). Similarly, most Indians
replace the voiced dental fricative $\underline{/}\eth\underline{/}$ by the voiced dental
plosive $\underline{/}d\underline{/}$. To cite a third example, almost all Indian
speakers of English use, in their English speech, the unaspirated
varieties of voiceless plosives where native speakers of English
use the aspirated varieties. Thus we hear, in Indian English
$\underline{/}pin\underline{/}$ instead of $\underline{/}p^hin\underline{/}$ and $\underline{/}kin\underline{/}$ instead of $\underline{/}k^hin\underline{/}$.[5]
Once again, we hear, in Indian English speech, the retroflex
plosives $\underline{/}t\underline{/}$ and $\underline{/}d\underline{/}$ in place of the alveolar ones $\underline{/}t\underline{/}$
and $\underline{/}d\underline{/}$ that occur in English.

But then, do the segmental substitutions (such as the
ones cited above). . . wholly contribute to something
called General Indian English? To answer this question, we
have to ask ourselves another question and find an answer to
that question. The question we have to ask ourselves is: "Do All

Indian speakers of English make the same sound-substitutions in their spoken English?" Listening to Indians with different mother tongues speaking English makes me feel that the answer to the question we raised above is a categorical "NO". Let us illustrate this with a few examples.

An Indian declared that he was late to class because he had to go to the $\angle$'[emb] $\angle$. The listener, also an Indian but who spoke a different mother tongue, was considerably puzzled.

Then again, an Indian with a rather painful expression on his face, declared that he was worried because his $\angle$baUətz$\angle$ were not all right. The listener instantly 'phoned a doctor which, in turn, puzzled the person with "bad bowels". It then conspired that the gentleman's bowels were quite in order, but that certain $\angle$vaUət$\angle$ sounds of English eluded the grasp of his speech organs.

There's the story[6] of another Indian, who declared, rather shame-facedly, that he $\angle$bit$\angle$ his wife. His listener, naturally, was shocked. The poor man meant that he had actually dealt his wife a blow during the course of an argument.

These anecdotes (the ones narrated above) prove that Indians, when they speak English, do make sound-substitutions. That is to say, when they come across an

unfamiliar sound which forms part of the sound-system of English,
but does NOT form part of the sound system of their mother tongue,
they merely substitute the unfamiliar (and therefore "difficult")
sound by a familiar (and therefore "easy")[7] one. But do all
Indians find the same set of sounds difficult to articulate
because of their unfamiliarity? The gentleman who pronounced the
word temple as /‾'ʈembɭ _/ did not say /‾baʊəłz_/ for vowels, nor
did he pronounce the word beat as /‾bit_/. The person who said
that he /‾bit_/ his wife had no problem in pronouncing the word
temple with a fair amount of acceptability.[8]

The answer to the question "Do ALL Indians find the same
set of sounds difficult to articulate?" seems to be a categorical
"NO". The three persons referred to earlier, spoke
three different Indian languages as their mother tongue, and
they found different sounds of English difficult to articulate.

To cite a few more examples, many native speakers of
Bengali and Oriya find it difficult to make the /‾s_/ -- /‾ʃ_/
distinction in their (English) speech. Native speakers of
Hindi, Marathi, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam make the[9]
/‾s_/ -- /‾ʃ_/ distinction with ease. Native speakers of
Tamil and Telugu tend to insert the semi-vowel on-glide /‾j_/
before words beginning with the English vowel phonemes /iː/,
/i/ and /e/. This is not the case with speakers of other
Indian languages. Again, speakers of Indo-Aryan languages
find it difficult to pronounce the English vowel phoneme /e/

because of the absence of a <u>short</u> vowel in the front half-close
half-open area in their mother tongues. They have the tendency
to lengthen this vowel, but since they use this lengthened vowel
in place of the English diphthongal phoneme /ei/ as well, they
obliterate, in their English speech, the distinction between
pairs like <u>men</u> and <u>main</u>. Speakers of Dravidian languages have
no problem in pronouncing the English short vowel phoneme /e/.
Many native speakers of Punjabi replace $\sqrt{}$ by $\sqrt{}$ which
native speakers of other Indian languages do not do.

These examples seem to falsify the claim that there is a
dialect of spoken English which can be called "General Indian".
It is justifiable to refer to "General French English" or
"General German English", because all people in France
and Germany speak the same language. People in India speak
a very wide variety of languages. General Tamil English,
General Telugu English, General Punjabi English, General
Kashmiri English may be, but General Indian English? One feels
that General Indian (spoken) English is not a reality.

1.2   The Aim and Scope of the Present Study

Since a researcher cannot attempt a phonetic and
phonological analysis of General Indian English (because of the
absence of such a variety of spoken English), he/she has to
attempt a phonetic and phonological analysis of different

varieties of IE. Once a systematic study is attempted of each
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of the various varieties of Indian English, then a comparative

and contrastive analysis of all such studies can be attempted,

with a view to evolving something called a pan-Indian variety

of IE. It is with this end in view that the present writer

decided to attempt a detailed phonological analysis of a

particular variety of IE used in the Union Territory of Pondicherry
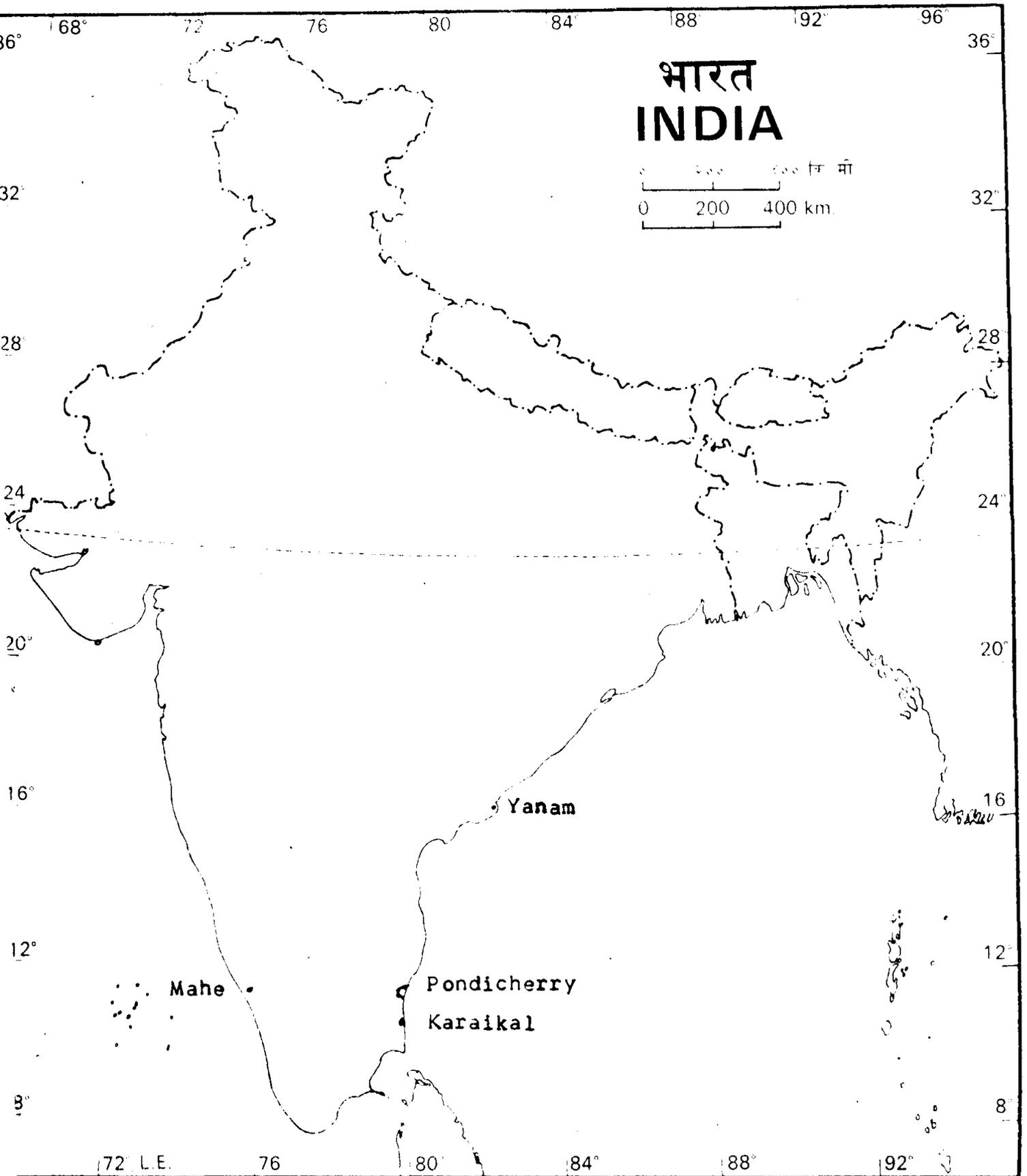
by the Tamil speakers of Pondicherry (Town) and Karaikal.

1.3 Rationale

1.3.1 Selection of Place

1.3.1.1 Cultural Heritage of Pondicherry

Pondicherry is a microcosm of India. For centuries it has

been "the millennial meeting place of the East and the West"

(Antony; 1982:1). Right from the time when the Roman civiliza-

tion was reigning supreme, it had contact with the world through

"the mediterranean maritime enterpreneurs who offered Roman

gold, wine, amphora jars in exchange for silk, ivory, pepper and

pearl. We come to know about these maritime activities through

the maritime chronicle "Periplus Maris Erythraci" of unknown

authorship. It mentions three market towns in the East coast

of India -- Damirica, Poduca, and Sopatma which are now

Kaveripoompatinam, Pondicherry and Marakanam and confirms the

fact that Romans traded with South India through Pondicherry.
Dr. Mortimer Wheeler and Mon.J.M. Casal in their excavations at
Arikamedu found evidence for the Greco-Roman Trade. The pottery
found in Arikamedu had stamps of four potters namely VIBIE, ITTA,
CAMURI and C. VIBI. They were well-known potters and merchants
of Arezzo and Rome in the first Century A.D." (Antony; 1982.122-131).
This contact with the West continued through centuries, during
the reigns of the Pallavas, Cholas, Pandyas and Nayaks. The
French succumbed to the mysteries and riches of the East and
established the first French "Loge" (trading port) in India in
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1666 after Bebber got a 'firman' from Aurangazeb in favour of
La Royale compaigne de France des Indes Orientales. In February
1673, Bellanger de l'Espinay, ... a trusted lieutenant
established a 'loge' at Pondicherry. By the 'firman' of 1672
November, given by Sher Khan Lodi, the French were allowed to
carry on trade. From February 1673 to November 1954 when the
Government of France agreed to leave the Indian sub-continent
after entrusting the "de facto" administration of the Union
Territory to the Government of India we can see an increasing
influence of the French on the people of Pondicherry. Though
on July 1st 1963, Pondicherry was made 'de facto' and 'de jure' a
part of the Union of India, the indelible impression of French
on the culture and language of Pondicherry is there till this
day.

भारत
INDIA

| | | 200 | 400 km |

68° 72° 76° 80° 84° 88° 92° 96°

36° 36°

32° 32°

28° 28°

24° 24°

20° 20°

16° Yanam 16°

12° Mahe Pondicherry 12°
Karaikal

8° 8°

72° L.E. 76° 80° 84° 88° 92°

1.3.1.2   The Geographic and Linguistic Profile of Pondicherry

The Union Territory of Pondicherry comprises   Pondicherry,
Karaikal, Mahe and Yanam. Pondicherry and Karaikal regions are
embedded respectively in the South Arcot and Thanjavur districts
of Tamil Nadu. Mahe, Geographically within Kerala, is situated on
the mouth of the Mahe river and Yanam is situated in the East
Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh. So, geographically, there
is a confluence of three languages, namely, Tamil, Malayalam and
Telugu in this Union Territory. During the time of the merger
of Pondicherry with India the Pondicherians were given an option
regarding their nationality. Hence even now we have French
nationals in Pondicherry. Therefore the inherited language viz.,
French, still is very much in use in Pondicherry. English acts
as a link language in these constituent regions. The Union
Territory therefore, uniquely adopts a five-language formula,
the five languages being Tamil, Malayalam, Telugu, French and
English. All the official communications are made available in
these five languages.

1.3.1.3   English in Pondicherry

As recently as 1965, we could see a dominant influence of
French in Pondicherry. Educational institutions offered only
French. But slowly, the occupancy of Pondicherry by multilinguals
necessitated the use of .English among them. As there has been
very good potential for business in Pondicherry, a vast number of
Tamil and Gujarati businessmen began to throng Pondicherry in

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the 1960s. The Aurobindo Ashram led to an inflow of people speaking a variety of languages into Pondicherry, dominantly Bengali and Oriya. The nexus of this kind of linguistic variety led to a dominance of English. Apart from this, the increase in the government services and consequently of the administrative machinery, the development of communication systems, the expansion of commerce and the increase in the educational facilities have led to the growth of a local English educated elite. A glance at the following break-up of schools and students gives us a clear picture of this.

Table 1

Number of Educational Institutions and their Strength
(1982-83)

Sl. No.	Institutions	Government		Private		Total	
		No.	Students	No.	Students	No.	Students
1.	Colleges	7	3753	2	1374	9	5127
2.	Hr. Sec. Schools	13	8537	5	8206	18	16743
3.	High Schools	52	28963	8	4683	60	33646
4.	Middle Schools	83	37224	20	6897	103	44121
5.	Primary Schools	271	37146	53	5027	324	42173
6.	Pre-Primary Schools	43	1258	54	3121	97	4379
	Total	469	116881	142	29308	611	146189

Table 2

Number of Educational Institutions and their Strength
(1986-87)

Sl. No.	Institutions	Government		Private		Total	
		No.	Students	No.	Students	No.	Students
1.	Colleges	7	4195	2	1214	9	5409
2.	Hr. Sec. Schools	14	12542	5	10908	19	23450
3.	High Schools	54	31252	12	8113	66	39365
4.	Middle Schools	82	42031	20	6928	102	47959
5.	Primary Schools	271	42157	85	7678	356	49835
6.	Pre-Primary Schools	43	1472	67	4615	110	6087
	Total	471	132649	191	39456	662	172105

A detailed statistical report of the region-wise break-up of the above information for the years 1982-83, 83-84, 84-85, 85-86, 86-87 can be found in Appendix III. A careful study of Tables 1 and 2 gives us a clear picture of how there has been a remarkable increase in the private educational institutions which cater to the immediate demands of the society. English enjoys a special status in Pondicherry because of the uses it is put to by the citizens of Pondicherry. English is the language of the administration. It is the language of the judiciary. It is the lingua franca of Pondicherry. It is the first foreign

language studied by most of the students. It is used in Universities and in advanced technological treatises and also in newspapers and magazines. Thus, those who learn, and are proficient in English, enjoy a certain amount of prestige. As Spencer (1983:30) says about English in West Africa, "the future of English, its manner of use, the roles it performs within the society, and the contribution its users make to the growth of the language and literature of the English speaking world will depend on ... the graduates, the teachers, and the professional men, the administrators, and higher commercial cadres, the technologists and the technicians. It is they who will constitute the growing urban, mobile elites and who will increasingly dominate the Governmental, commercial and educational structures. It is they who use English and know it best. The future of English is in their hands and it is theirs to mould and fashion as it seems most convenient for them..."

1.3.1.4 Pedagogic Profile

The English now spoken in Pondicherry i£ a Non-Native Institutionalised Variety of English (henceforth NIVE) (Williams; 1987: 162). In this NIVE situation, this regional variety has become the standard and the target language. The original target language, R.P. (Received Pronunciation of England) is no longer accessible. As Burling (1973:29) says "There can be no question whatsoever that it is the community in which a man lives, particularly the community in which he grows up, that determines how he will speak ... and it is segregation, not

genetics, that allows separate dialects to be perpetuated." Teachers of English in Pondicherry must be aware of the fact that the variety of English their students are exposed to, to a great extent, is the variety of English spoken by the Tamilians.

1.3.2 Rationale for the Selection of the Linguistic Group for this Study

A look at the region-wise composition of Pondicherry would reveal that the major part of it -- Pondicherry Town and Karaikal is surrounded by the Bay of Bengal on one side and South Arcot and Thanjavur districts on the other sides, which are Tamil speaking areas. According to the latest census report the total population of the Union Territory is 720,500 of which 673,535 live in Pondicherry Town and Karaikal. As mentioned earlier, there are French nationals (1.3.1.2), but even these are ethnic Tamilians. Hence Tamilians form an overwhelming majority and therefore, the English spoken by them has a great influence over the younger generation. The variety of English spoken in the Union Territory of Pondicherry, as in the case of other varieties of Indian English mentioned earlier, depends on the mother tongue of the Pondicherian. We can find the influence of Malayalam or Telugu or Tamil in the person's English depending on his/her linguistic group. Regarding the influence of French, the number of people who speak French in their daily life, is on the decline and hence the English

that the present generation listens to, in and outside their homes bears hardly any characteristic French features. Another major reason for the influence of Tamil on English is, right from the beginning there has been a dominance of Tamilians in teaching English in Pondicherry (town) and Karaik al. In the beginning, since the educated men and women had only French, they depended on experts in English from the neighbouring Tamil Nadu. In Pondicherry and Karaikal, we can even now find a predominance of teachers who have Tamil as their mother tongue and were educated in Tamil medium educational institutions at all levels of education -- from the primary to the tertiary level.

1.3.3 Personal Acquaintance

The investigator, a Tamilian of Thanjavur district, has been in Pondicherry for the past seventeen years. She, hence, has a first hand knowledge of the phonological features of the English spoken in Pondicherry. Being a Tamilian herself, she has the additional advantage of intuitive knowledge of the native speaker (a Tamilian speaking English). She, as a teacher of English, equipped with phonetic training, has had first hand contact with the English spoken in Pondicherry for the past seventeen years. This personal observation is of great help in having an insight into the instinct of the informants.

1.4 Earlier Studies

Attempts have been made (Seetha,R 1980; Ismael, Sadikha 1983) to give phonological descriptions of vowels, and vowels and conso- nants respectively of the English spoken by the Degree students of Pondicherry. But, both these studies deal with the English (the Interlanguage) spoken at the learner level. To a teacher of English in Pondicherry, the descriptions of English spoken at this level alone will not be adequate. He/she needs a model of the phonemic system of English spoken in Pondicherry, which can be arrived at only by a thorough and systematic analysis of the speech of a large and representative group of educated speakers.

1.5 Conclusion

In the following pages, the investigator has tried to attempt a phonological analysis of the English spoken by Tamilians of Pondicherry and Karaikal (henceforth ETPK) with a view to helping the future generations of the teachers and students of the Union Territory of Pondicherry.

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Notes

1. Bansal, R.K. and Harrison, J.B. (1972). <u>Spoken English for India: A Manual of Speech and Phonetics</u>, Orient Longman, Bombay.

2. Balasubramanian, T. (1981). <u>A Textbook of English Phonetics for Indian Students</u>, Macmillan India, Madras.

3. Raja Rao's novel <u>Kanthapura</u> has many such interesting examples which drive home (even to a non-Indian reader) the "Indianness" of Indian English.

4. We mean those Indians who have not had any exposure to native varieties of English and those who have not received any specialised training in spoken English.

5. The use of the symbols $\underline{/i\_7}$ and $\underline{/I\_7}$ in these transcriptions is deliberate. There <u>IS</u> a qualitative difference between the vowel used by the native speakers of English and Indians in words such as the ones cited here as examples.

6. Though we have used the word 'story', it is, in fact real. One of my teachers actually had this sentence spoken to him.

7. By "difficult" here is meant "difficult (for a particular person or a group of persons) to articulate. Similarly the word "easy" here means "easy (for a particular person or a group of persons) to articulate."

8. This person too used $\underline{/\ t\_7}$ instead of $\underline{/t^h\_7}$ while pronouncing the word <u>temple</u>, but he had no problems in pronouncing the

voiceless $/^-p/$ after a nasal $/^-m/$, nor did he use a retroflex lateral at the end of the word.

9. It does not mean that native speakers of Indian Languages other than the five listed do find it difficult to distinguish between $/^-s/$ and $/^-\int/$ in their English speech. The five quoted here are just random examples.

10. Some such studies have been attempted -- Babu (1971), Nirmala (1985), and Sethi (1976).

11. An Order or Permission or Charter given by a Muslim King.

12. The great seer poet and prophet of Indian spirituality came to Pondicherry on 4th April 1910. The mother, who was conscious of her spiritual mission met Sri Aurobindo in 1914 and finally came over to Pondicherry in 1920. After sixteen years of rigorous "tapasya" the Ashram was organised. The Mother desired it to be "a place where all human beings of good will, sincere in their aspiration, could live freely as citizens of the world, obeying one single authority, that of the Supreme Truth, a place of peace, concord, harmony ... a place where the needs of the spirit and the care for progress would get precedence over the satisfaction of desires ..." (Manojdas; 1976:48) quotes the Mother.

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