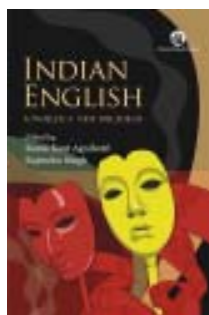


# Book Reviews

## **Indian English: Towards a New Paradigm**

R.K. Agnihotri &  
Rajendra Singh (Eds.).  
2012 New Delhi: Orient  
BlackSwan,  
ISBN: 978-81-250-4371-3,  
pp. 336

*Reviewed by: **Rajesh Kumar***



The subtitle of this edited volume modestly suggests that it presents a new paradigm in the study of Indian English. However, a serious reading of this book reveals that it sets a benchmark for the study of Indian English in particular, and the study of English in the general; it presents Indian English in a new *avatar* with special reference to the concept of a native speaker. In fact the concept of a native speaker has been redefined in this book.

The design of this edited volume is extremely innovative. It puts a target paper at the centre, and then looks at the responses to the ideas mentioned in the target paper from various perspectives. The target paper is in section one; the responses to the target paper with grammatical, socio-linguistic, diachronic, cultural, political, philosophical, and pedagogical perspectives in section two; and finally miscellaneous comments and discussions in section three. The target paper is extremely provocative in its approach towards the treatment of Indian English and the question of a native speaker. According to the main argument of the paper, Indian English is part of the linguistic ecology of India, just like any other language of India. Questioning the concept of a 'non-native speaker', Singh examines it from a social as well as a linguistic point of view.

According to him, English must be looked at from the point of view of 'English of India'. He asserts that the study of English in terms of 'English in India' subsumes the application of the concept of a native speaker in the sense that English in India is essentially the English of non-native speakers.

The responses to the target paper are varied and intense. R. Amritavalli, Rajesh Bhatt, Rakesh Bhatt, and Colin Masica respond to the questions raised by Rajendra Singh from a grammatical perspective. Amritavalli examines the idea of English with reference to Universal Grammar and First Language Learning. She also examines English in the light of multilingualism. Rajesh Bhatt substantiates Singh's argument that the study of English with reference to the distinction between native and non-native speakers is not tenable. Rakesh Bhatt points out that the typical features of Indian English are peculiar only in the sense that such peculiarities exist in all varieties of English. Masica investigates the historical significance of English, adding a new dimension to the study of English. Agnihotri reiterates and substantiates the point that the classification of languages with native and non-native labels does not add much value to the study and our understanding of language, since in both contexts there does not seem to be much difference as far as the structure of the language is concerned. Though Indian English is a legitimate variety of English, Langue holds the native and non-native distinction worthy of a full length debate. Falling in the same line and finding native and non-native contexts relevant in the area of multilingualism, Shreesh Chaudhary also finds the distinction significant. However, for Backus, the native and non-native distinction is part of a continuum.

Mesthrie does not sound convinced with the idea of a continuum though. He argues that the 'caught' and the 'taught' comprise the two obvious approaches to learning a language. Ritt finds the native and non-native distinction significant enough for an empirical research on the subject. In his opinion, native intuition is directly correlated with the speaker's grammatical judgment and, Singh's proposal may be problematic for an empirically sustainable position. Lele finds Singh's position subject to a critical analysis vis-à-vis power and hegemony. Rajgopalan's response to Singh's position on Indian English and the question of a native speaker is in total contrast with that of Langu and Chaudhary. Martina Ghosh-Schellhorn on the other hand is in agreement with Chaudhary that some of these questions must be examined in the context of multilinguality and speech community. A careful reading of the response suggests that Singh does not appear to leave the contexts of multilinguality and speech community out. Dickinson is uncomfortable with Singh's claim that the speakers of Indian English are competent speakers of that variety.

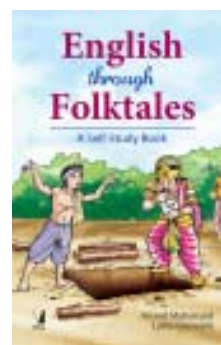
This book is a unique example of an extremely well presented compact argument. It combines a large variety of responses to a stand adopted in the target paper. The last section of the book is again uniquely innovative in the sense that it gives a summary of the questions asked from Singh and his responses to all of them.

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**English through Folktales: A Self-Study Book.**

by Mahanad, Anand & Goswami, Lalita (2011)  
 New Delhi: Viva Books.  
 ISBN: 978-81-309-1472-5,  
 pp. 97

*Reviewed by: Kamal Kumar Choudhary*



This book consists of sixteen folk tales from different parts of India. It is written in very easy language, and some scenes of the story are depicted through pictures, which makes it interesting for the children. As the authors point out, this book, intended for middle school children, is designed to improve not only the basic skills of language (reading, writing, speaking and listening), but also teaches them the basic grammatical structures. To meet this goal, each story is followed by different exercises (notes, comprehension questions, language study and communication skills). Notes give the word-meanings (difficult words in the text), and also demonstrate the use of a particular word in a sentence. Following this, there are comprehension questions based on the story. This is followed by language study and communication skills. Thus, this book is really good for improving English, particularly for children. The stories are interesting to read, and at the same time, they also improve the language skills of the children.

Learning English in a country such as India is important both for children and adults. It has been observed that the students who have studied throughout in Hindi or a regional language, face several problems when they join college or an institute, particularly if the courses are offered in English. Even in institutes such as IITs, remedial classes are offered to 1<sup>st</sup> year students, as some of them really face problems