

The Realisation of Strong Forms and Weak Forms in Nepali English: A Phonetic Study

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ABSTRACT

The study investigates how Nepali speakers of English use strong forms and weak forms in their speech. The research delves into the nature of functional words, which have both strong and weak forms, while identifying issues concerning the use of these forms by Nepali English speakers. It examines the pattern of weak forms in Nepali English, analysing speech samples from 10 Nepali-speaking graduate students of Assam. The test materials have been enriched by the utilisation of sentences that include various functional words by speakers. The sound recording software ‘Praat’ recorded all the speech samples. The data is analysed phonetically on different parameters, with the researcher providing the phonetic description based on auditory impressions of the recorded data. The study suggests that insufficient exposure to native speech and the prominent influence of the mother tongue account for the inappropriate use of the weak forms because speakers’ relative success in approaching the target language is their ability to disassociate L2 speech from the repertoire of L1 phonemes and allophones.

Keywords: strong forms, weak forms, Nepali English, functional words, L1 influence

1. Introduction

Strong forms and weak forms are possible pronunciations of a word in the context of connected speech (Crystal, 2008). For example, in English, the word *at* has a pronunciation /ət/ (weak form) and /æt/ (strong form). The sentence ‘I’ll see you at lunch’ is pronounced as /aɪl si: ju ət lʌnʃ/ (weak form) and ‘What are you looking at?’ /wɒt a: ju lʊkɪŋ æt/ (strong

form). In response to the rhythmic pressures occurring in the sentences, vast numbers of words in English may vary their form by losing weak syllables entirely or by reducing their articulation.

It is important to know that English, like many other languages, distinguishes between content (or lexical) words and function (or grammatical) words. Content words receive strong form pronunciation as they carry new information and tend to be stressed. They are nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. Functional words, on the other hand, carry little information and are generally not stressed in connected speech. These functional words have strong and weak forms. When they are not stressed, weak-form pronunciation is used. The present research delves into the nature of functional words. They are articles, determiners, conjunctions, pronouns, prepositions and auxiliary verbs.

2. Theoretical Background

Shockey (2003) reports that the change in pronunciation affects words in connected speech. This includes the reduction of a vowel to /ə/, as in 'at', 'on', 'from', 'than' or the elision of initial /h/ in 'have', 'his', 'her'; final /d/ in 'and'; initial /w/ in 'would', and initial /ð/ in 'them' etc. The appropriate use of weak forms is essential to smooth and rhythmical speaking, to the clarity of prominent and non-prominent syllables, and the clarity of meaning (Underhill, 2005)

The difference between the strong (stressed) and the weak form (unstressed) of a word is not apparent in writing, but in speech, these two variations in pronunciation can be drastically different. The difference between the two forms can affect meaning. For example, the strong and weak forms of the word "that" can change the entire meaning of a sentence. In the example, "John thinks that man is evil", the application of a weak form of "that" /ðət/ will make an interpretation that says 'John thinks that all humans are evil' while the use of the strong form "that" /ðæt/ will interpret as 'John thinks a specific male is evil'. This hints at the fact that misuse of forms can cause misunderstanding among speakers. The use of weak forms is by far more frequent in English than the use of strong forms. However, if the word is stressed because it is especially important or because we want to show a contrast, we use the strong form. The use of either form depends upon three factors: action, position and phonetic environment.

The strong forms occur in natural speech but only in a specific context. Weak forms are not used for 'function words' only in exceptional circumstances. The words in *italics* are

pronounced in their strong forms “I said Hary *and* John rather than Hary *or* John” (when the function word is stressed); “What are you looking *at*”, “I know I *can*” (when a function word is at the end of a sentence or phrase); “I was looking *for* you” (if there are two or more function words at the end of a sentence especially a preposition followed by a pronoun, usually the first one will be in its strong form in many cases); “I usually *have* lunch at 1 pm vs. I have eaten already”, “I was *there* vs. There is a book on the table” (When the word is used as full meaning 'full' meaningful, 'lexical' form)

Many experts emphasise the significance of weak forms in effective communication in English. Using weak and contracted forms is crucial for achieving fluency in English, as Beverly & Mees (2003) stated. Ladefoged (1993) points out that non-native speakers who neglect the use of weak forms may sound awkward and unnatural. Roach (1983) further explains that an absence of weak forms can make one's English sound foreign. (Sobkowiak, 2006) highlights the potential communication difficulties that can arise from not using weak forms enough. Wells (2000) strongly advocates for the regular use of weak forms in all styles of English speech by non-native speakers.

Gimson (1970) reports that supra-segmental features like stress, rhythm, and intonation can extend beyond the phoneme level and encompass larger units of speech. In English, reduced vowels are often found in unstressed syllables to maintain the stress-timed rhythm. This means that in unstressed syllables, the vowel sound is typically replaced by another sound, most commonly the schwa /ə/, or sometimes by /ɪ/ or /ʊ/, or even a syllabic consonant. This process is called vowel reduction and is a prominent feature of the English language's sound system.

English is considered a stress-timed language, meaning that stressed syllables are pronounced at a regular pace, and non-stressed syllables are shortened to fit into this rhythm. Walker (2001) notes that English leans more towards stress-timing on the continuum between stress-timed and syllable-timed languages, due to the prevalence of weak-form words and reduced unstressed vowels. While some varieties of British and American English may occasionally use syllable-timing in certain situations, such as baby talk or sarcasm, they still generally adhere to a stress-timed rhythm. This distinctive rhythm, created by the interplay between stressed and unstressed syllables, is a hallmark of spoken English. In contrast, some languages are syllable-timed, where syllables are produced at a constant rate, unaffected by differences in stress (Crystal, 1998).

In a stress-timed language, the stressed syllables occur at regular intervals, and the time between the stressed syllables can vary. This means that unstressed syllables can be pronounced more quickly to maintain the rhythm. English is an example of a stress-timed language. In contrast, in a syllable-timed language, each syllable is pronounced for roughly the same amount of time, regardless of whether it is stressed or unstressed. This means that the rhythm is more evenly distributed across the syllables.

3. Nepali Learners of English

When a second language learner tries to produce a sound in their non-native language, their success in approximating the target sound depends on their ability to separate their use of phonemes and allophones from their first language. This separation is necessary because two languages may have sounds that appear to be identical but are produced using different articulatory movements. As a result, these sounds may have distinct acoustic qualities that could be perceived by the listener as different from the target sound.

Odlin (1990) states that a person's native language's phonetics and phonology are significant factors in acquiring the phonetics and phonology of a second language. By analysing and contrasting the phonemic inventories and phonological rules of both the native and target languages, it is possible to predict certain difficulties that may arise during second language acquisition. The non-native speakers tend to categorise foreign language sounds based on the phonemic inventory of their native language. Another factor that contributes to difficulties in both the production and perception of sounds for language learners is the difference in supra-segmental features such as stress and rhythm.

Importantly, Nepali lacks a mid-central vowel, equivalent to the English /ə/. The prosodic features of Nepali are considered to have syllable-timing rhythm. Moreover, the English feature of the reduction of function words to weak forms is absent in Nepali.

Learners are likely to find unreduced syllables easier to interpret when speaking amongst each other. Therefore, they are reluctant to attempt a reduction in their utterances. However, using suprasegmental features of English [especially intonation, stress in sentences, word-linking and weak forms] accurately in spoken utterances is a vital aspect of English pronunciation.

Nepali-English has a syllable-timed rhythm, which is very different from the stress-timed rhythm of English. A characteristic of Nepali English is the absence of vowel reduction in

unstressed syllables. Mostly, Nepali learners of English will not possess the elaborate systems of weak and contracted forms that characterise native-speaker English. However, this scenario holds for the vast majority of non-native speakers learning English.

Roach (2004) states that individuals who lack a good understanding of weak forms are more likely to have difficulties comprehending speakers who use them. Additionally, possessing a practical grasp of the weak forms of English is crucial for achieving good pronunciation and listening comprehension. Given the general difficulties non-native speakers face in comprehending weak forms and the specific challenges Nepali learners encounter due to interference from their L1, it can be argued that Nepali learners of English may struggle to produce utterances containing weak forms. This is because they may be accustomed to giving equal stress to every syllable in their native language. However, with increased proficiency and exposure to casual English speech, these differences are expected to diminish over time.

4. Research Objectives

- i. To investigate how far Nepali English speakers use appropriate weak and strong forms.
- ii. To highlight the weak form pronunciation of function words, if any, in Nepali English.
- iii. To find the amount of deviation, if any, of Nepali English from that of the standard variety of RP
- iv. To observe the influence on L2 (English) utterance from their repertoire of L1 (Nepali) phonemes and allophones

5. Research Methodology

The speakers for the present study were Nepali-speaking graduate students from Assam. Out of the total 10 speakers, 5 were females, and the remaining 5 were males. The criteria for selection of speakers were that the mother tongue of all the speakers should be Nepali, and they had been speaking English for at least 10 years. In order to extract speech samples, a list of sentences was devised which includes several functional words and contractions with weakened pronunciations. The speakers were asked to read the sentences aloud while being recorded using a sound recording software called Praat. Before being recorded, they were allowed a few minutes to rehearse the text. The recordings were made in reasonably quiet surroundings to ensure high-quality data. To maintain the naturalness of the speech, the speakers did not reveal which aspects of their speech would be analysed.

6. Data Analysis and Findings

The information obtained from analysing the recorded data was organised in several tables. Each speaker's speech sample was listened to carefully, and a phonetic transcription was made based on the researcher's auditory perception.

Functional Words RP Pronunciation as per the rhythm of English speech

6.1 Sentence 1: She'll be there from five to ten.

RP Pronunciation: /ʃi:l bi ðeə frəm faɪv tə ten/

Strong (SF) and Weak forms (WF) of the words are:

- a. she'll: /ʃi:l/
- b. be: WF /bi/
 SF /bi:/
- c. there: WF /ðə/ or /ðər/
 SF /ðeə/
- d. from: WF /frəm/
 SF /frɒm/
- e. to WF /tə/ or /tʊ/
 SF /tu:/

Speakers' Response

Functional Words/ Contractions	RP Pronunciation	Speakers Using RP Form	Speakers Misreading	Patterns used by speakers
she'll	/ʃi:l /	2	--	[ʃɪwɪl] [sɪwɪl]
be	/bi/	10	--	[bi]
there	/ðeə/	1	--	[de:r] [dɪər]
from	/frəm /	0	--	[frɒm] [pʰrɒm]
to	/tə/	0	--	[tə]

Table I: *Different realisations of the Strong and Weak Forms in Nepali-English in Sentence 1*

6.2 Sentence 2: I'll look at them for some time

RP Pronunciation: aɪl lʊk ət ðəm fə səm taɪm

Strong (SF) and Weak forms (WF) of the words are:

- a. I'll: /aɪl/
- b. At: WF /ət/
SF /æɪt/
- c. Them WF /ðəm/ or /ðm/
SF /ðem/
- d. For WF /fə/ or /fər/
SF /fɔ:/

Speakers' Response

Functional Words/ Contractions	RP Pronunciation	Speakers Using RP Form	Speakers Misreading	Patterns used by speakers
I'll	/aɪl/	3	1	[aɪwɪl] [aɪwl]
At	/ət/	0	--	[eɪ]
Them	/ðəm/	0	--	[dem] [ðem]
for	/fə/	0	--	[fɔr] [pʰɔr]
some	/səm/	0	--	[sʌm]

Table II: *Different realisations of the Strong and Weak Forms in Nepali-English in Sentence 2*

6.3 Sentence 3: He doesn't care that there's a meeting

RP Pronunciation: hi dəznt keə ðət ðəz ə mi:tɪŋ

Strong (SF) and Weak forms (WF) of the words are:

- a. He: WF /hi/
SF /hi:/
- b. doesn't: /dəznt/
- c. that: WF /ðət/
SF /ðæt /
- d. there's: SF /ðeə/
WF /ðəz/

- e. a: WF /ə/
 SF /eɪ/

Speakers' Response

Functional Words/ Contractions	RP Pronunciation	Speakers Using RP Form	Speakers Misreading	Patterns used by speakers
he	/hi/	10	--	[hi]
doesn't	/dəznt/	0	--	[dʌznt] [dʌdʒnt]
that	/ðæt/	1	--	[det]
there's	/ðəz/	0	--	[de:ri:z] [dieri:z] [djeri:z]
a	/ə/	0	--	[ʌ] [e]

Table III: *Different realisations of the Strong and Weak Forms in Nepali-English in Sentence 3*

6.4 Sentence 4: We're investing in it for our benefit

RP Pronunciation: wɪə ɪnvestɪŋ ɪn ɪt fər ʌʊə benɪfɪt

Strong (SF) and Weak forms (WF) of the words are:

- a. we're: /wɪə/
 b. for: WF /fə/ or /fər/
 SF /fɔ:/

Speakers' Response

Functional Words/ Contractions	RP Pronunciation	Speakers Using RP Form	Speakers Misreading	Patterns used by speakers
we're	/wɪə/	3	--	[wɪa:r]
for	/fər/	0	--	[fɔr] [pʰɔr]

Table IV: *Different realisations of the Strong and Weak Forms in Nepali-English in Sentence 4*

6.5 Sentence 5: She's got tired of me

RP Pronunciation: ʃi:z gɒt taɪrəd əv mi

Strong (SF) and Weak forms (WF) of the words are:

- a. she's: /ʃi:z/
 b. Of WF /əv/
 SF /ɒv/

Speakers' Response

Functional Words/ Contractions	RP Pronunciation	Speakers Using RP Form	Speakers Misreading	Patterns used by speakers
She's	/ʃi:z/	3	6	[ʃi:ɪz] [si: ɪz]
of	/əv/	0	--	[ɔf]

Table V: *Different realisations of the Strong and Weak Forms in Nepali-English in Sentence 5*

6.6 Sentence 6: I'm happy to hear that you've won the match with your efforts.

RP Pronunciation: aɪm hæpi tə hiə ðæt ju:v wʌn ðə mætʃ wið jər efət

Strong (SF) and Weak forms (WF) of the words are:

- a. I'm /aɪm/
 b. to WF /tə/ or /tʊ/
 SF /tu:/
 c. that WF /ðæt/
 SF /ðæt /
 d. you've /ju:v/
 e. the WF /ðə/ or /ði/
 SF /ði:/
 f. your WF /jə/ or /jər/
 SF /jo:/

Speakers' Response

Functional Words/ Contractions	RP Pronunciation	Speakers Using RP Form	Speakers Misreading	Patterns used by speakers
I'm	aɪm	9	--	[aɪm] [aɪem]
to	tə	0	--	[tʊ]

that	ðæt	0	--	[det̚] [ðat]
you've	ju:v	0	--	[ju:hev] [ju:hɛf] [ju:ev]
the	ðə	0	--	[da] [dʌ]
your	jə	0	--	[jʌr]

Table VI: *Different realisations of the Strong and Weak Forms in Nepali-English in Sentence 6*

6.7 Sentence 7: Of all the suggestions, the one that you gave is the best

RP Pronunciation: əv ɔ:l ðə sədʒestʃən ðə wʌn ðet ju: geɪv ɪz ðə best

Strong (SF) and Weak forms (WF) of the words are:

- a. Of WF /əv/
 SF /ɒv/
- b. The WF /ðə/ or /ði/
 SF /ði:/
- c. That WF /ðæt/
 SF /ðæt /
- d. You WF /jʊ/ or /jə/
 SF /ju:/
- e. Is WF /z/ or /s/
 SF /ɪz/

Speakers' Response

Functional Words/ Contractions	RP Pronunciation	Speakers Using RP Form	Speakers Misreading	Patterns used by speakers
of	/əv/	2	---	[ɔf]
the	/ðə/	1	---	[dʌ] [di:] [da]
the	/ðə/	1	---	[da] [dʌ]
that	/ðæt/	1	---	[det̚]
you	/ju:/	9	---	[jʊ] [tʃʊ]

is	/ɪz/	10	---	[ɪz]
the	/ðə/	1	---	[dʌ] [di:] [da]

Table VII: *Different realisations of the Strong and Weak Forms in Nepali-English in Sentence*

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6.8 Sentence 8: It's good but expensive than the one we'd gifted her on her birthday

RP Pronunciation: its gud bət ɪkspensɪv ðən ðə wʌn wɪd ɡɪftɪd ər ɒn ə bɜːθdeɪ

Strong (SF) and Weak forms (WF) of the words are:

- a. It's /ɪts/
- b. But WF /bət/
- SF /bʌt/
- c. Than WF /ðən/
- SF /ðæn/
- d. The WF /ðə/ or /ði/
- SF /ði:/
- e. we'd /wɪd/
- f. Her WF /hə/ or /ə/ or /ər/
- SF /hɜː/

Speakers' Response

Functional Words/ Contractions	RP Pronunciation	Speakers Using RP Form	Speakers Misreading	Patterns used by speakers
It's	its	9	---	[ɪts] [ɪtɪz]
but	bət	0	---	[bʌt]
than	ðən	0	---	[den]
the	ðə	1	---	[da]
we'd	wɪd	2	1	[wehed] [wɒd]
her	ər	0	---	[hər] [har]
her	ə	0	---	[hər] [har]

Table VIII: *Different realisations of the Strong and Weak Forms in Nepali-English in Sentence 8*

6.9 Sentence 9: To come to the point, what shall we do for the rest of the week

RP Pronunciation: tə kʌm tə ðə pɔɪnt wɒt ʃl wi də fər ðə rest əv ðə wi:k

Strong (SF) and Weak forms (WF) of the words are:

- | | | |
|----------|----|---------------|
| a. to | WF | /tə/ or /tʊ/ |
| | SF | /tu:/ |
| b. the | WF | /ðə/ or /ði/ |
| | SF | /ði:/ |
| c. shall | WF | /ʃəl/ or /ʃl/ |
| | SF | /ʃæl/ |
| d. do | WF | /də/ or /du/ |
| | SF | /du:/ |
| e. For | WF | /fə/ or /fər/ |
| | SF | /fɔ:/ |
| f. Of | WF | /əv/ |
| | SF | /ɒv/ |

Speakers' Response

Functional Words/ Contractions	RP Pronunciation	Speakers Using RP Form	Speakers Misreading	Patterns used by speakers
to	tə	0	---	[tʊ]
to	/tə/	0	---	[tʊ]
the	/ðə/	1	---	[dʌ] [di:] [da]
shall	/ʃl/	8	---	[ʃl] [sel]
do	/də/	0	---	[du]
for	/fər/	0	---	[fɔr]
the	/ðə/	1	---	[dʌ] [da]
of	/əv/	2	---	[ɒf]

the	/ðə/	1	---	[dʌ] [da]
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Table IX: *Different realisations of the Strong and Weak Forms in Nepali-English in Sentence*

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6.10 Sentence 10: You must exercise and must never eat unhealthy food to stay fit and fine

RP Pronunciation: jʊ məst eksəsaɪz ən məs nevə i:t ʌnhelθi fu:d tə steɪ fɪt n faɪn

Speakers' Response

Functional Words/ Contractions	RP Pronunciation	Speakers Using RP Form	Speakers Misreading	Patterns used by speakers
you	jʊ	10	---	[jʊ]
must	/məst/	0	---	[məst]
and	/ən/	0	---	[en]
must	/məs/	0	---	[məst]
to	/tə/	0	---	[tʊ]
and	/n/	0	---	[en]

Table X: *Different realisations of the Strong and Weak Forms in Nepali-English in Sentence*

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7. Data Findings

After studying the phonetic features of Nepali English spoken by the graduated students of Assam, it is evident that almost all speakers were influenced by Nepali's (which is their mother-tongue) sound pattern and rhythm. It is clear that the speakers have shown significantly lower scores of correct patterns of weak forms in their speech. Nepali speakers' difficulty when dealing with vowel reduction in function words is probably due to the absence of this process in their mother tongue.

The use of strong forms rather than weak forms has been observed to impede the rhythmic flow of English exhibited by all the speakers. This substitution of strong forms for weak forms directly impacts the stress-timed rhythm employed by English speakers. A considerable number of weak forms were produced as strong forms. This occurrence could be attributed to either a tendency to pronounce words based on their spelling or a lack of familiarity with weak forms as Nepali, unlike English, does not employ these forms.

7.1 Contractions

Out of a total of ten sentences, 7 sentences (1-6 & 8) had contracted words which included words like *she'll*, *I'll*, *doesn't*, *there's*, *we're*, *she's*, *I'm*, *you've*, and *it's*. Throughout the study, all the speakers were inconsistent in using the contractions, occasionally omitting them and at other times using them appropriately. Some of the findings among Nepali English speakers related to contracted forms are as follows:

- a. Many speakers displayed uncertainty regarding the correct pronunciation of contractions.
- b. Most participants expanded many of the contractions, such as *she'll*, *I'll*, *there's*, *doesn't*, *we're* *you've*, *she's*, and *we'd*.
- c. Contractions such as *I'm* and *it's* were produced correctly by the majority of the speakers. It seemed that the orthography did not make any difference in the case of contractions.
- d. One of the speakers expanded the contractions like, *it's* and *I'm* even though they were written with apostrophes.
- e. In contracted form like '*there's*' /ðəz/, which is mostly realised as [de:ri:z], the schwa sound /ə/ has been lengthened to [e:], while the voiced dental fricative /ð/ is realised as a voiced alveolar plosive [d] which can also be seen in words like *the*, *them*, *than*, *that* etc, and the postvocalic /r/ has been fully realised which is similar to other words like '*for*', '*your*', and '*her*'.

7.2 Functional Words

- a. In words like '*there*' /ðeə/ and '*there's*' /ðəz/, which is mostly realised as [de:r] and [de:ri:z], the diphthong /eə/ and schwa /ə/ have been lengthened as a vowel [e:]
- b. The voiced dental fricative /ð/ is realised as a voiced alveolar plosive [d] which can also be seen in words like *the*, *them*, *than*, *that* etc, and the postvocalic /r/ has been fully realised which is similar to other words like '*for*', '*your*', and '*her*'.
- c. It was found that the speakers were unaware of the English schwa sound /ə/, even though the sound is very common in natural English.
- d. The /ə/ sound is realised differently as [ɔ], [ʊ], [e], [ʌ] and [a] in Nepali-English. For example-
 - /ə/ in words like '*from*' /frəm/, '*for*' /fər/, '*of*', /əv/ become [frəm], [fər], [ɔf] respectively
 - /ə/ in words like '*to*', /tə/ becomes [tʊ]

- /ə/ in words like 'a'/ə/, 'at'/ət/, 'them'/ðəm/, 'than'/ðən/, 'and'/ən/, 'shall'/ʃəl/, 'that'/ðət/ become [e], [eɪ], [dem], [en], [ʃel] and [deɪ] respectively
 - /ə/ in words like 'some'/səm/ 'but'/bət/, 'must'/məst/, 'the'/ðə/, and 'a'/ə/ become [sʌm], [bʌt], [mʌst], [dʌ] and [ʌ] respectively
 - Finally, /ə/ in words like 'the'/ðə/ and 'her'/ə/ is realised by some speakers as [da] and [har] respectively.
- e. In words like 'to'/tə/, 'at'/ət/, 'that'/ðət/, 'but'/bət/, and 'must'/məst/, the voiceless alveolar plosive /t/ is articulated with tongue raised as [tə], [ət], [ðət], [bʌt] and [mʌst] respectively.
 - f. The voiced labio-dental fricative /v/ is realised as a voiceless labio-dental fricative [f] in words like 'of' wherein /əv/ becomes [ɒf]
 - g. The substitution of /ð/→[d] or /ʃ/→[s] indicates strong deviation from RP. Insertion of glide [w] between syllables or rhoticity [r] is observed. Phoneme replacement /f/→[p^h] points towards L1 influence.
 - h. The voiceless post-alveolar fricative /ʃ/ is produced in the alveolar region as voiceless alveolar fricative /s/ among many speakers in words like 'she's' and 'she'll' i.e /ʃi:z/ and /ʃi:l/ becomes [si:z] and [si:l] respectively.

8. Conclusion

By viewing English as a tool for international intelligibility, we need to establish a new perspective on pronunciation goals, with a priority on spoken English. Features of connected speech such as the use of weak grammatical word forms in English are said to have an important role. English spoken with only strong forms sound unnatural and does not help the listener distinguish emphasis or meaning.

It is the widespread use of English which makes it an international language. English is used as a lingua franca in many international contexts. It is being used as an international language in diplomacy, international trade, and tourism. English is spoken differently in different parts of the world, as well as in different regions of India. The label "English" can be applied to many forms of the language which are identifiably different from each other: 'British English', 'American English', 'Australian English', 'Indian English'. 'West African English' and so on.

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Appendix

The test material used in the study includes the following sentences:

1. She'll be there from five to ten.
2. I'll look at them for some time
3. He doesn't care that there's a meeting
4. We're investing in it for our benefit
5. She's got tired of me
6. I'm happy to hear that you've won the match with your efforts.
7. Of all the suggestions, the one that you gave is the best.
8. It's good but expensive than the one we'd gifted her on her birthday.
9. To come to the point, what shall we do for the rest of the week?
10. You must exercise and must never eat unhealthy food to stay fit and fine.