

Recent diachronic change in the use of the Present Perfect and Past Tense in Philippine and Indian English

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The historical spread of English around the world has given rise to dozens of new dialects. Considerable efforts have been made to uncover and explain differences between these varieties by identifying continuities with and departures from the structure of their ancestor varieties (usually British English) (e.g. Sharma 2005). Most previous studies were synchronic, but with more and more diachronic corpora becoming available, we can refine our understanding of the pathways of linguistic continuity and change that have shaped present-day postcolonial varieties of English.

We contribute to this line of research by focussing on recent diachronic change in the use of the Present Perfect (PP) and the Past Tense (PT) in Indian and Philippine English (IndE; PhiE). IndE and PhiE are an interesting test case because IndE was historically influenced by BrE, and has preserved a very high PP frequency, while PhiE was influenced by AmE, and has a low PP frequency. We track recent diachronic change with several measures:

- (1) the relative frequency of the PP per million words
- (2) the frequency of the PP as a percentage of all references to the past (PP percent)
- (3) the PP in combination with time adverbials of indicating current relevance (see Fuchs 2016).

Results indicate that the extent and direction of diachronic change is genre-dependent. The greatest decrease is found in PhiE press writing ($p < 0.0001$) whereas in IndE there is only a slight decrease on a much higher level than in PhiE (n.s.).

This and the results for other registers reveal diachronic trends in IndE and PhiE that suggest an increasing endonormativity in these varieties (Borlongan 2011, Collins 2015) at least with respect to the use of the PP and PT: IndE does not follow BrE in the decrease of the PP, while PhiE outpaces AmE in some registers.