**Non-canonical Syntax in South-Asian Varieties of English:   
A corpus-based pilot study on fronting**

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Apart from Indian English (IndE), which constitutes the largest institutionalized second-language variety of English worldwide, English also fulfills important, yet varying, roles in India’s neighboring countries Bangladesh (BgE), Nepal (NpE) and Pakistan (PkE), as well as in Sri Lanka (SLE) and the Maldives (MdE).

Previous corpus-based studies describing similarities and differences across South Asian Varieties of English (SAVEs) have mainly focused on the description of nativization processes on the lexicogrammatical level, for example in the areas of collocation and verb-complementation (Schilk 2011), particle verbs (Schneider 2004), article use (Sand 2004) or collostructions (Mukherjee & Gries 2009; Gries & Mukherjee 2010). Previous corpus-based and quantitative studies describing syntactic aspects of SAVEs have rarely been undertaken, however, two laudable exceptions being Lange (2012), who describes in detail the (non-canonical) syntax of spoken Indian English and Winkle (2015), who compares eight spoken ENL and ESL varieties. Both studies found a particularly high frequency of fronted elements in spoken Indian English. However, to the best of my knowledge, there has not been a study investigating systematically the parallels and disparities of syntactic patterns in different SAVEs and British English. Against this background, the present paper aims to close this research gap by taking into account fronting as a non-canonical syntactic structure in order to test 1) if fronting is a typically Indian English feature or rather a pan-South-Asian one, 2) if there are differences in form and frequency of fronted elements across different SAVEs and 3) if previous findings for spoken data (e.g. Lange 2012; Winkle 2015) also figure in written data.

The data analysis is based on the SAVE (*South Asian Varieties of English*; cf. Bernaisch et al. 2011) corpus, a collection of texts representing acrolectal newspaper English which amounts to 6 x 3 million words (2 subcorpora at 1.5m words each) per variety. In the present paper, I would like to present the findings of a pilot study based on 500 sentences per variety that were manually parsed and annotated for their information status (i.e. GIVEN/NEW). Methodologically, I apply multifactorial regression analyses (cf. Gries 2013) in order to test for variety-specific as well as universal features of fronting in SAVEs. The results of this pilot study yield some interesting findings: while it is clearly visible that a constituent is more likely to be fronted when the information is GIVEN, regardless of variety (cf. also Birner & Ward 1998; Winkle 2015), for elements containing NEW information, there are also clear variety-specific differences between IndE, PkE, SLE and BdE on the one hand (showing a generally higher frequency of object fronting), and BrE, MdE and NpE on the other (with a higher frequency of fronted adjuncts). These findings, among others, will be discussed with regard to their implications on the norm-providing potential of SAVE as well as on the role of Indian English as a possible linguistic epicenter in South Asia.

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