

第五辑

Volume 5

(商务沟通研究专辑)

# 商务英语教学与研究

Business English Teaching and Research

• 主 编 王光赫



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# Contents

From Bangalore to Shanghai: The Language Corporate America Speaks — Code-mixing, International English and/or McEnglish? .....	Anita PANDEY, Jian FENG ( 3 )
The Effects of Plain English Movement and Culture: A comparison of loan contracts of Japanese banks and Anglo-American banks .....	Yuichiro YAMAMOTO ( 16 )
Vague Language and Fuzzy Logic in Art Exhibition Translating and Daoism .....	WANG Tongjun, LU Hefa ( 33 )
A Study on the Application of Task-based Assessment in Business Communication Course in China .....	LUAN Xiaofei ( 53 )
Acculturating into Business Professional Community: Challenges, emerging strategy use and socialization .....	ZHAO Ke, ZHOU Huijing, CUI Yue, LIANG Jinni, SUN Yufan ( 66 )
On Exploring the Criteria of Business English Majors' Business Communication Competence .....	LIU Yonghou ( 84 )
Hedges used in Business Emails: A Corpus study on the language strategy of international business communication online .....	YUE Siwei ( 97 )
Interpreters as Intercultural Communicators at Business Meetings .....	Summer MOUALLEM ( 109 )
A Study of Negotiation Mechanism Based on Science of Momentum .....	ZHANG Shougang, LI Dechang, MAO Fanyu, XIA Mingxue ( 119 )
A Study on the Intercultural Adaptation of Chinese Graduate Students in Korea .....	ZHANG Leisheng ( 128 )

# 目 录

## 商务英语语言研究

- 从班加罗尔到上海：美国公司使用的语言——语码混合英语、国际英语和/（或）快餐英语？  
..... Anita Pandey 冯 建( 15 )
- 论简明英语运动及文化的影响：以日本银行与英美银行贷款合同为例 ..... 山本祐一郎( 32 )
- 艺术展览翻译及道家哲学中的模糊语言与模糊逻辑 ..... 王同军 吕和发( 49 )

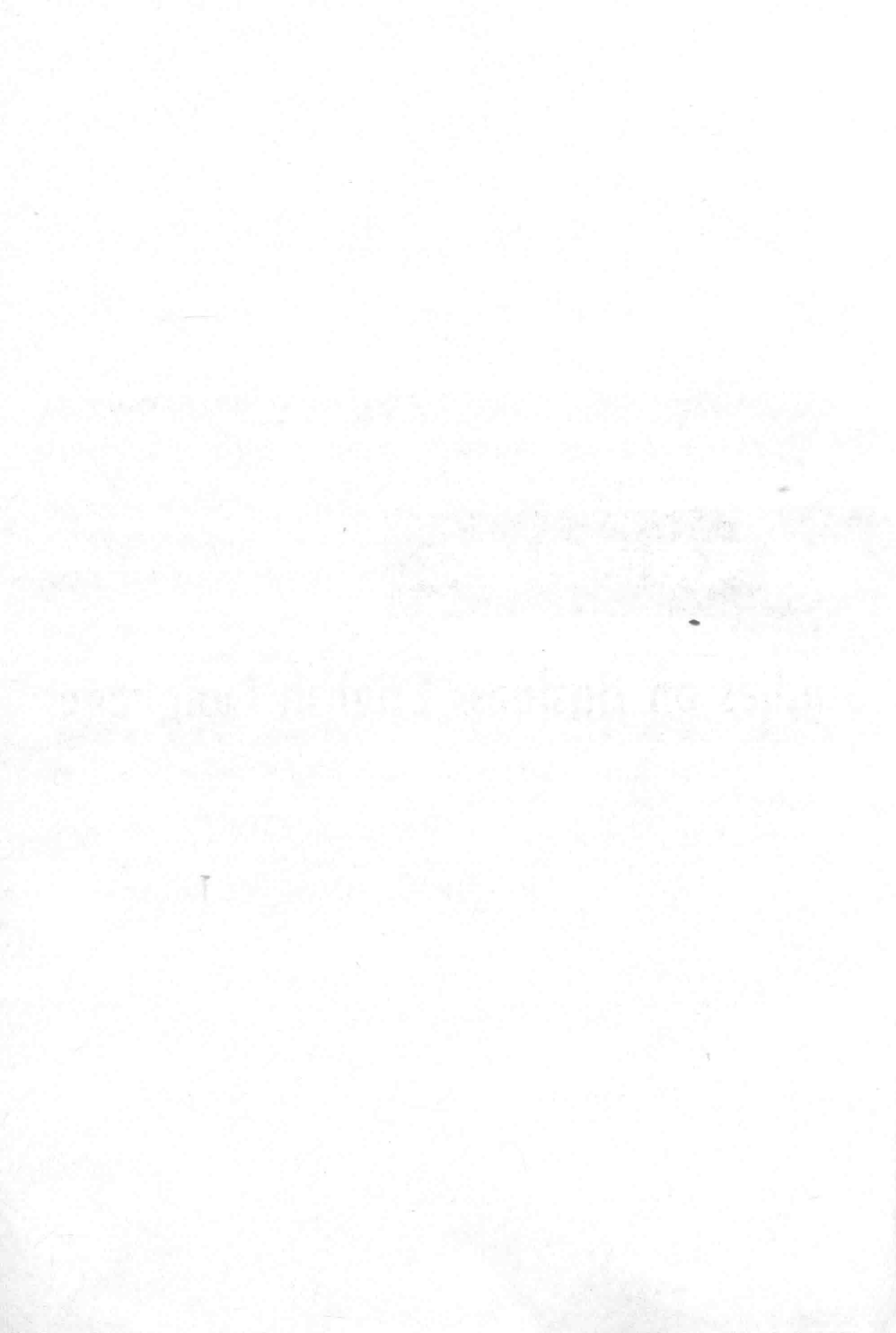
## 商务英语教学研究

- 任务型测试在中国商务沟通课程中的应用研究 ..... 栾晓菲( 65 )
- 商务英语学生进入职场的转变：挑战、对策与社会化进程 ..... 赵 珂 等( 83 )
- 商务英语专业学生商务沟通能力的培养模式研究 ..... 刘永厚( 94 )

## 跨文化商务沟通研究

- 商务电子邮件中的模糊限制语——一项基于语料库的电子商务沟通的语言策略研究  
..... 乐思伟( 108 )
- 口译员在商务会议中的跨文化交流者角色研究 ..... Summer Mouallem( 118 )
- 基于势科学的谈判机制研究 ..... 张守刚 李德昌 毛凡宇 夏明学( 126 )
- 关于韩国高校中国留学研究生的跨文化适应研究 ..... 张雷生( 152 )







# From Bangalore to Shanghai: The Language Corporate America Speaks — Code-Mixing, International English and/or McEnglish?

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**Abstract:** Given that English is the preferred language of international business, does this mean that U.S. corporations employ a singular brand of English in their international marketing campaigns? This session will first and foremost debunk the myth of *international English*, and examine communication strategies U.S. fast food and other companies like McDonald's, Coke, Domino's, Pizza Hut, Adidas, and Nike employ to market themselves in China and India. In addition to a cross-country comparison of the language(s) and communication strategies U.S. companies employ in both nations, other key questions are addressed. As demonstrated, with globalization, just because most individuals use English in their professional and business exchanges does not mean that they employ the same brand of English, or that they share expectations and interpretations of words, sentences, and discourse or the cultural context within which meaning and messages are framed. McDonald's ads in South Asia lure Bengali, Hindi, and Urdu speakers to "Karlo paet puja" or to "worship" their stomachs, evidencing the sustenance American fast food provides and represents in the life and mindset of India's growing middle class, many of whom only read English or English-like Hindi (i.e., Hindi words and concepts presented through Romanized script). This sociolinguistic facelift of India's ad world, reflected in the infusion of English and/or Roman letters in an ancient devanagari-based culture and space, is research-worthy. In China, U.S. products and services are also strategically pitched, yet using different communication strategies. The implications of our cross-nation findings are discussed, alongside directions for future research.

**Key Words:** ; code-mixing, international English, McEnglish

## 1. Introduction: US-ed From Head to Toe?

Fairclough (2006) observes that "Globalism is a strategy for hijacking globalization in the service of particular national and corporate interests." When one examines corporate activity in today's outsourcing-impacted China and India, the dominance of corporate America is indisputable.

Both China and India (Pandey, 2010, 2012b, 2011) are emerging business leaders in the global era, as evidenced by the frequency with which they are mentioned in financial reporting, and their presence in the commonly used acronym BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India, and China). Not surprisingly, both constitute fertile ground for U.S. corporations, given the investment incentives they provide to outside (mostly U.S.) investors (see madaan.com) and relatively open trade policies with international partners and their fast-growing middle class. This paper provides a cross-country comparison of the language(s) and communication strategies selected U.S. companies employ in both nations.

Primary research questions investigated here include the following:

- How dominant are U.S. corporations in the region?
- Which U.S. industries have experienced the greatest growth regionally, and why?
- How has U.S. corporate presence in China changed over the last five years, as compared to India?
- What does corporate U.S. communication look like in China versus India, and how does it differ from region-specific World English(es)?
- What role do U.S. corporations play in selling American English in China and India?
- How have outsourcing and technological advances impacted the form, function, and ethicality of communication involving U.S. companies, on the one hand, and Chinese and Indian employees and clients on the other?
- What is the future of U.S. corporate communication as it relates to tapping these markets — from a linguistic standpoint, and otherwise?

As regards the first, U.S. corporations ranging from fast food to fashion are fast dominating both China and India. How are U.S. corporations faring in China and India? Interestingly, many have recorded higher sales figures from these international markets than domestically, evidencing the monetary benefits of U.S. investment in the region. India has become increasingly attractive to foreign investors in various sectors, largely due to the ease of outsourcing, based on the 12-hour time difference that makes for a seamless work day, as well as the educational skills and technological savviness and English proficiency-cum-bi / multilinguality of its citizenry and the purchasing power (madaan.com) of India's rapidly growing middle class. In recent years, China has also become "an integral destination for global offshore outsourcing" (Lingnian, 2014).

Quick facts about China and India are readily available online and through print sources (see *How India Got its Funk*, 2013; Lingnian, 2014). India, for instance, is "the world's fourth largest economy" (madaan.com), boasting the world's largest middle class, estimated at 300 million out of a total population of one billion, most of whom are loyal to and crave U.S. products (Pandey, 2013). China and India have the largest pharmaceutical industries, with China in the lead. Both have a sizeable movie industry — one of the most viable advertizing platforms, as this paper demonstrates, with India producing the most movies (over 900 a year, significantly more than Hollywood). Not surprisingly, Hollywood recently signed a pact with Bollywood, incentivizing filming in the U.S., and culminating in the lucrative movie by Bollywood tycoon Shah Rhuk Khan *My Name is Khan* (2010).

India is also home to one fifth of the Fortune 500 companies' research and development facilities. The fact that English is an official language in India (alongside Hindi) makes it particularly attractive for global investment and entrepreneurship. Its low costs and large and highly skilled English-speaking workforce have made it popular with multinationals for work including in manufacturing and at call centers (see *International Journal of Communication*, 2011). Given the Indian government's goal of being on the cutting edge of technology and globalization, India now provides tax exemptions to companies to set up shop in India. This, coupled with cultural assimilation practices by companies that have outsourced to India — through their subtle and not-so-subtle strategies like Indian

employees' adopting "American" names (Morgan & Ramanathan, 2009) and/or providing a multisensory milieu that replicates the U.S. workplace in all respects including the distinctly Western musical genres or elevator music played at Indian offices locations, and the addictive U.S. snacks, foods, and beverages served — all of which eventually work to transform participants' cultural identities. Product endorsements by politicians and Bollywood stars have strategically modified the food habits, psyche, and cultural identity of many well-to-do Indians, creating a huge market for U.S. products and services ranging from non-vegetarian fast foods like KFC and pizza to deodorants, clothing (e.g., jeans and t-shirts), shampoo, soap, and footwear, with U.S. products fast becoming the preferred choice for many individuals. Indeed, many Indian movie characters like Ritik Roshan in the hit film *Kabhi Khushi, Kabhi Gham* are, for lack of a better term, *US-ed* (pun intended) to advertize the American dream (see Bhatia, 2006). Throughout the movie, he sports Gap and other U.S. namebrands, from head to toe. Interestingly, he speaks the most English in the movie, and his use of American English is noteworthy. For these and other reasons, India is emerging as a major market and investment destination for Western companies. It is, for instance, the world's second largest small car market and the U.S. State Department recently signed its largest trade agreement with India (Rajadurai, 2012). The agreement was unprecedented in scope and proportions.

Arguably, U.S. interest in India has everything to do with India's role as a key player in the global marketplace. What makes India particularly attractive for outsourcing and U.S. investment is the linguistic readiness of its citizens. According to the business literacy Website madaan.com "with its large base of English speaking skilled human resource, it is most sought after destination for business process outsourcing, knowledge processing, and more." Not surprisingly, India boasts the "second largest English-speaking scientific, technical and executive manpower in the world" (Ibid). Worthy note is the fact that China has also been working on preparing its citizens for greater global participation, by instituting mandatory English language courses and tests. The next sections focus on each of these nations, in alphabetic order.

## 2. The Language(s) Corporate America Speaks in Chinese Mainland & Taiwan

The questions outlined at the outset and investigated in the comparative cross-country studies conducted for this paper provided the fodder for a two-part survey conducted in Chinese Mainland with a small group of faculty/staff and students at Hubei University. The survey took the form of semi-focused interviews with five faculty and staff from the Department of Foreign Languages, and an online and paper-based student questionnaire. The latter had a return rate of seventy percent. Participants were randomly polled and their (verbatim) responses to each research question are aggregated below each bulleted question:

### 1) How dominant are U.S. corporations in the region?

U.S. corporations are very prominent in some fields. For instance, 40% market share of fast food industry goes to KFC and McDonald's holds tightly the second place. The GM passed Toyota to control 12.8% automotive market share in Chinese Mainland. Microsoft dominates the PC operating system with a staggering 99.3% of market share, and Boeing boasts more than 50% at the Chinese

commercial aircrafts market.

- 2) Which U.S. industries have experienced the greatest growth regionally, and why?
- 3) The fastest-growing U.S. industries (and relevant corporations) in mainland China include:
  - The food industry: specifically, McDonald's, KFC (see Peterson, 2014), Pizza Hut
  - Retailers: Walmart, Metro
  - Medical and personal-care: Unilever, P&G
  - Car industry: GM
  - Athletic gear: Nike, Converse
  - High-tech: Microsoft, Apple
- 4) The following reasons were provided for U.S. businesses booming in China:
  - Focus on “an enlarging solid middle-class base” that need more commodities. The manufacturing industry that has fueled China's GDP growth also has rapidly built a huge middle class, one made up primarily of factory workers. And the need for better houses, cars and modern articles of daily use from this middle class continues to grow.
  - Chinese people's loss of confidence in domestic products. Food safety crisis in the 2010s triggered people's new interest and reliance in Western products, especially the health and household related ones.
  - Business is also a social issue in China. The companies that are good at socializing with the Chinese people and the government get the most.
  - Foreign companies who want to thrive in China have to abide by the rules of an authoritative leadership. Companies who prioritize their own freedom will not succeed.
- 5) How has U.S. corporate presence in China changed over the last five years, as compared to India?
 

Pioneering companies like KFC have become a sensation in China since its first opening in Beijing in 1987, along with many fashion brands from the U.S. and Europe. While KFC sales suffered a loss following the avian bird flu (Peterson, 2014), the company just introduced many Chinese menu items, including three rice dishes, and hopes to regain its stronghold by appealing to the locals' tastebuds.

About 10 years later, following China's Taiwan and India, mainland China became the outsourcing factory of the United States. Today it is the world's biggest construction site. U.S. corporate influence is still everywhere in China, only much deeper.
- 6) What does corporate U.S. communication look like in China versus India, and how does it differ from region-specific World English(es)?

Only one participant responded to this question, noting that in Taiwan, English usage in ads for U.S. products and the American dream (i.e., owning a home and a car) was on the rise and very successful. Hsu (2008) cites examples of ad that code-mix simple English words like “easy” and “happy” and alluring and alliterative phrases like “wonderful villa” with Chinese characters to increase the lure of real estate. She also cites examples of localized English (e.g. “Where can give us so fresh so much as here?” excerpted from an ad that mentions the woods and leaves around a “villa”) and concludes that “English is overwhelmingly popular in Taiwan, with even English-

illiterate, monolingual Chinese speakers” (p. 155). English usage there, she continues is “attention-getting” and synonymous with “internationalism, premium quality, authenticity, and the trendy taste of the younger generation” (Ibid). Similarly, van Dijk (2006) cites examples of “the new business discourse in Romania ... strongly influenced by the English language” (p. 2).

7) What role do U.S. corporations play in selling American English in China and India?

U.S. corporations exert their influence in selling American English in two ways:

- Since most of the English-speaking corporations in mainland China speak American English, the foreign languages departments of colleges attach more attention to its education, since the universities and institutes in mainland China are becoming more sensitive in their graduates’ employment rate, and
- By advertising, a handful of slogans (usually in very plain English) have gained some popularity.

In India, English education is popular, but some contend that basic public education is much weaker than in China (see *The Economist*, Aug 24–30, 2013).

8) How have outsourcing and technological advances impacted the form, function, and ethicality of communication involving U.S. companies, on the one hand, and Chinese and Indian employees and clients on the other?

China has a highly diverse citizenry, due to ethnical diversity on one hand and the huge gap in the urban-rural binary structure on the other. Huge differences in real assets price and the *household registration system* (hùkǒu) restrict the free flow of employees. However, the outsourcing and high-tech corporation have also made a big difference in providing them relatively higher salaries and a more challenging yet eye-opening environment, or even ultimately a new home, and a new life. The relationship may still be tense in some international companies, but the companies and their employees are both more experienced in dealing with the contradictions. The serial suicide incidents in Foxconn, which claimed 14 lives of its employees, used to draw a lot of ethical concerns. But we have seldom heard of similar crises happen in U.S. companies.

9) What is the future of U.S. corporate communication as it relates to tapping these markets — from a linguistic standpoint, and otherwise?

The reports from both the government-controlled facilities and independent research bureaus are telling us that the outlook for the wider Chinese economy is slow. But that can be considered a prologue for deeper changes in China’s economic structure and its way of dealing with THE OTHER. The U.S. corporations have proved themselves excellent in creating new investable themes, commercially and linguistically. China’s relatively low labor costs have cut the prices of daily necessities, but Americans and Europeans could use linguistic means to draw attention from the new millionaires — in China. If the price of everybody’s house is counted in, then everybody is a millionaire.

### 3. Worship Your Stomach?: The Language Corporate America Speaks in India

This section first examines communication strategies U.S. companies like McDonald’s employ to market themselves in India. Next, it shares Indian respondents’ responses to the same survey questions

asked of the Chinese participants. As is demonstrated, just because English is used for business exchanges does not mean that interpretations of words, sentences, and discourse or the cultural (sub) context within which context-specific messages are framed are shared (see Pandey, 2012, 2011).

McDonald's ads in India lure bilingual readers to "Karlo paet puja" or to "worship" their stomachs, evidencing the sustenance American fast food provides (in the life and mindset of) middle class India. This sociolinguistic facelift of India's ad world — reflected in the infusion of English and/or Roman letters in an ancient devanagari-familiar culture and space — is noteworthy. As noted earlier, subliminal advertising of U.S. products to Indian consumers — through Bollywood movies, for example — is on the rise. Many movies now showcase U.S. products, ranging from hair products to fashion footwear and clothing name brands like NIKE and GAP (*Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gham*, 2001) to Coke (*Taal*, 1999), and fast food, including Domino's, Pizza Hut and McDonald's. The movie *My Friend Pinto* (2011), for instance, shows friends bonding while eating fries. Indeed, corporate America's presence in Indian media today is increasingly visible and, like most companies, "McDonald's is eager to tap that 500-million-strong market" (McDonald's, 2012).

Let's examine the following McDonald's ad (see Fig. 1)



Fig. 1: McDonald's Ad in India (Photo courtesy of Will Wicker)

This ad is an example of translinguality; it involves *code-switching* with Hindi, the source language of the slogan at the top. Yet, the language is not visibly Hindi to non-Indians; it is Hindi only as far as the sounds it captures (i.e., at the phonetic level) but not orthographically, since the Hindi is presented in Roman script — very likely to make it more accessible to the younger, English-dominant Indian. Most of us would agree that today, one need not be a multilingual in the traditional sense to create and/or participate in cross- or translingual exchanges. Translinguals, individuals who traverse codes include comprehensive or all-around bilinguals; passive, or partial bilinguals<sup>①</sup> who

① Researchers are hard pressed to answer questions like "What's the minimum skill one needs in each language to be considered a bilingual?"

merely understand but rarely speak and/or read/write; fluent bilinguals, conversant with just listening and speaking; and functional bilinguals, who know enough of a variety to elicit a smile or break the ice.

Other examples of ads that market U.S. products to Indians follow, via the links provided below:

**Nike: Just Do it!**

Features the national Sahara (helper) cricket team playing cricket on bus & car tops in a traffic jam

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mpvuz8gg79Q>

Parallel Journeys: Bleed Blue

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zek1PqGSll0>

**Pizza:**

U-tube ad shows a famous filmstar ordering it after viewing the traffic jam & expecting a free pizza (coke featured, too):

Hungry kya? (Hungry why/no?): 30 mins. nahi tho free (or else free:

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t4p3q\\_a1bIk](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t4p3q_a1bIk)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CdlRL0CjBfc>

(shows a woman's began ka bharta/roasted eggplant being a flop)

Havelli/Palace ad: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QPLL0ckXMX0>

[Lo pizza awee O; samjho jail meal for chor, fun meal for 4]

Delhi ad for thin crust Pizza (Hut)

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c\\_ofY2TzqR0](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c_ofY2TzqR0)

**Coke:**

Life ho to aisi! (Way to live!): Aishwarya Rai — biggest Bollywood Star

Thandi ka tharka! (Aur agar nahi banna hei rude, tho thanda siti bajaiyega dude):

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5i--HJKINq4>

**Coca Cola Enjoy!:** <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sOxk6pZR7iM>

In the present study, Indian respondents were also invited to view these ads and share their thoughts on the language(s) they employ. Three randomly selected responses follow:

- 1) I like Nike ad the most. It shows how people are crazy in India about cricket and it is definitely a good idea to attract people to buy Nike shoes and other products. Also, in the ad, I like the way they managed to play the cricket on the top of truck, cars, and it was really good to see people getting together to play the game. They were speaking Hindi at some points but bulk of it was visually communicated, so an international audience could understand the interactive or community-centeredness of the culture. Nike slogan was self-explanatory even in the context of this game; that is, now you can play cricket anywhere and anytime, with no fear, all thanks to Nike gear! (Surya)
- 2) I like the coke advertisement the best. In this ad, the woman is trying to tackle some guys who are



whistling after her. The boys are amazed to know that the woman whistles better than them. She even teaches them how to do it, so Coke supposedly gives her confidence and power in this society. (Amit)

- 3) **Nike:** I am a HUGE fan of cricket, especially of Virat Kohli, who is a player for India's team, who was shown in the second video. Both videos did such a good job of including relatable issues, and people in the commercials. Showing the atmosphere of India, and the "Stars are just like us", theme is exceptionally done well in the second video. The first video was entertaining because it showed the chaos of the streets in India, but also showed the homeliness that everyone can come out and do what they want, while being at home and not worrying about disturbing others' peace. The second video, I must say was more inspiring than the first, not just because of the taal and classical music that was played in the background, but because of the alternating from common people to the actual professional cricketers, including Dhoni, the captain of India's cricket team. It portrayed the "just do it" slogan well because just as we see the professionals performing at the plate, we can just do it like them, if we keep them as our inspiration.

**Pizza:** The first video is of a famous Bollywood actor Paresh Rawal, who used to act as a villain, but after the 90's started doing comic roles, and as you can see in the commercial, he is actually very funny. He is gujurati, and you can tell, because gujurati people are known for their "money mindedness", and try to save money as often as possible which is why he was so happy the pizza was going to be free, especially since he expected with traffic, it would definitely take more than 30 minutes. When the pizza delivery came on time, he asked: "do you have a disease where you always come on time?" I enjoyed the humor in the ad a lot. The second we see Paresh Rawal on the screen we know we are going to laugh. But did they make their point? Of course. They are trying to market more people by saying if their pizza doesn't arrive in 30 minutes it's going to be free, and since everyone in India believes free is the best thing ever, and that traffic is unescapable, they are the best market for such an advertisement. The second video, is basically so relatable for us Indian girls, because as time has changed, we aren't as domesticated as our mothers, always cooking for our husbands and doing housework, etc. We have become more worldly, and ambitious in the outside world so cooking hasn't been our number one priority anymore, therefore it was completely understandable when she burnt the eggplant subzi. Clearly, the husband knew it was going to happen, so he ordered already. The next time the delivery came from dominos, she had burned potato subzi. This relates to all newly weds because chances are, the newly wed wife isn't that experienced in the kitchen.

The third haveli video, I didn't like it very much because it was too quick for me to understand, but it was a little funny, I just don't like the "Daku" (i.e., robbers) theme. The last pizza video was short and sweet, but I didn't like how they just said the toppings were punjabi. I guess since I don't live in India, I don't know the difference between toppings that would be marathi or punjabi, but for the commercial's purpose, I will let it go. It was actually a very funny commercial because he starts singing a romantic bhangra punjabi song after eating the punjabi toppings and happened to tell the girl how he felt about her. Short and sweet, made the point very well, that



pizza “does change your life; Punjabi toppings will give you courage”.

**Coke:** this ad is done by Aishwarya Rai. I’m not a huge fan of her, but her husband Abhishek Bachchan, I do like very much. She is to Bollywood, as like Heidi Klum or Kate Hudson is here. She’s gorgeous but also an actress. In this commercial she was basically making fun of a guy that whistled at her saying that his whistle was basically that of a panzy. Although I liked the message she was sending of stop whistling at girls, I don’t think it was that great of an ad to Coca Cola because she doesn’t really “sell” the product. The second coca cola video was with Hrithik Roshan who is considered the heartthrob of Bollywood. He is an amazing dancer as you can tell, and is known for characters that are simple, but woo girls with his hidden talents. This commercial was an amazing concept I loved it. It was just the right touch of cute, funny, and totally sold the product because it moved literally the product to the girl, but also abstractly explained that anyone can get coca cola to you. (Anuja)

Indian respondents’ combined responses to the research questions investigated in this paper follow:

Q1: How dominant are U.S. corporations in the region?

A1: U.S. corporations are more widespread in India than ever before, and strategically and consistently marketed on rural and urban television, radio, and through print sources, as well.

Q2: Which U.S. industries have experienced the greatest growth regionally, and why, and how has U.S. corporate presence in India changed over the last five years, as compared to China?

A2: With the exception of the i-Phone and other namebrand tech gadgets, other U.S. tech products are not as popular in India as they are in China. However, practically every other U.S. product is carefully marketed and highly coveted in India, including Disney movies (with new cartoons in Hindi for the Indian market), Vogue and other popular sports and fashion magazines, CNN, MTV, and other U.S. news outlets, U.S. autos like Ford (which just this year opened a manufacturing plant in Gujarat) as well as wines and liquors — a fast-growing market.

Q3: What does corporate U.S. communication look like in India, and how does it differ from region-specific World English(es)?

A3: Code-mixing, language hybridity (i.e., when the borders between language varieties are so closely meshed as to elude linguistic separation), Englishization, and Hindization are very commonly employed to sell U.S. products in India. In short, language is literally stretched in this part of the world.

Q4: What role do U.S. corporations play in selling American English in India?

A4: U.S. corporations are actively employing American English in India and in the process, whether intentionally or unintentionally, selling this brand of English to the target audience, namely, Indians aged 12 – 30 (an approximation of Bollywood actors’ age in various movie role depictions). As the example ads from India showed, informal American English (e.g., McDonald’s snazzy and youthful slogan “i’m lovin’ it!”) is increasingly common in the Indian advertising arena.

Q5: How have outsourcing and technological advances impacted the form, function, and ethicality of