

## Analyzing Social Values of Indian English in YouTube Video Comments: A Citizen Sociolinguistic Perspective

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### Abstract

The present study is an attempt to explore the role of social media, with a focus on **YouTube**, as a platform for citizen sociolinguists to demonstrate the use of Indian English in the digital space, thereby highlighting the embedded social values within it. In doing so, Halliday's Systemic-Functional linguistics and Sentiment Analysis technique is applied to reveal a comprehensive understanding of the impact of Indian English on **YouTube** by unravelling both the linguistic and emotional dimensions of the digital discourse.

**Keywords:** Social media, **YouTube**, Citizen Sociolinguists, Halliday's Systemic-Functional linguistics, Sentiment Analysis

### 1. Introduction

Language as an ever-evolving entity, undergoes continual change driven by two intricate characteristics, namely, the language structure and its use over diverse situations and time. English exemplifying this change, has undergone a paradigm shift over the centuries, particularly catalyzed by the emergence of the Web 2.0, and the advancement of technology, how we use the language in the digital space really mirrors the social value embedded within it.

#### 1.1 Citizen Sociolinguistics

The paper is based on the framework of 'Citizen Sociolinguistics' methodology, a term coined by Rymes and Leone in their article "Citizen Sociolinguistics: A New Media Methodology for Understanding Language and Social Life" (2014). Citizen Sociolinguistics,

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according to Rymes and Leone (2014:25), addresses “the need for a new sociolinguistic methodology that accounts for and partakes of the social demands and affordances of massive mobility and connectivity in today’s world”. In other words, Citizen Sociolinguistics is the study of the world of language by laypeople or Internet users, rather than trained sociolinguists participating in sociolinguistics exploration through various modes of networked communication (Aslan and Vásquez, 2018:4).

The approach shows how exploration of discursive meaning are drawn from the metacommentary posted on the Internet (Aslan and Vásquez 2018: 4). Through Citizen Sociolinguistics, unelicited, user-generated metacommentary which is context driven and not prompted by linguists, is used as data through crowd sourcing or scrapping from various social media platforms. Participation anonymity is maintained, which means that class, religion, age, sex etc. will not be considered. While not a unique approach, it serves to draw online sources to develop this approach to sociolinguistics, to language and society.

For this study, **Citizen Sociolinguistics** is used a methodology which employ qualitative and quantitative research by using the following:

1. Participants: The participants who have contributed to the database are Indians who write comments in English and can also be referred to as citizen sociolinguists. They have shared their insights through comments on videos on YouTube.

Extreme care has been taken to keep the personal details of the citizen sociolinguists anonymous. This is in adherence to the guidelines outlining the principles governing the ethical conduct of citizen sociolinguists.

2. Data: For this paper, the dataset exclusively comprises of meta-comments taken from credible contents that are light-hearted and non-controversial, related to India from YouTube, adhering to ethical standards and legal considerations. This is shown in **Table 1**.

S. No	Title	Publication Year	Total Views	Total Likes	Language	Total Meta commentaries
1.	Highlights: Prudential World Cup Final 1983 Watch India Win World Cup 83 Final	2018	13 million	161k	English	2.9k
2.	“Go Corona...Go Corona” Ramdas Athavale (Original)	2020	432k	3.2k	English	839
3.	Ramdas Athawale saying Corona Go! Dialogue with beats	2020	11 million	535k	English and Hindi	5.9k
<b>Total</b>						<b>9.6k</b>

*Table 1:* List of YouTube videos used for research in the paper.

## 1.2 Indian English

In the recent years, English has emerged as an ‘unparalleled’ lingua franca due to its “enormous functional flexibility” (House, 2002: 243). It has become a symbol of globalization, diversification, progress, identity, and change. This revolution of English language as stated by Crystal (2001) proves to be one of the most remarkable events in the late twentieth century. Crystal (1997: 3) stated that language achieves a global status when it has a special role that is recognised in every country of the world. Notably, English is not confined to being a first language but is spoken widely as a second or third and foreign language as well. The sheer magnitude of English speakers worldwide is staggering, reaching 1,453 million with 373 million being native speakers and 1,080 being non-native speakers (Ethnologue, 2022), hence proving the relevancy of the language in the world.

Emphasizing the significance of English again, it stands out as the world’s most widely spoken and used language, often referred to as ‘Global English’ because of the geographical, historical, and socio-cultural aspects (Crystal 1997, 2003: 29). Its global spread along with the influence of other languages in various regions has led to the emergence of different varieties of it. These different regional varieties of English existing around the

world, known as New Englishes (Graddol,1997: 6, 11) are gradually gaining recognition with Indian English being one such variant. According to Kumar and Singh (2014: 128), despite repeated attempts to abolish the former colonial language, English continues to be one of the most acceptable languages in India. English in India serves as a language of wider communication among the people (Kachru, 1986: 8). According to Dasgupta (1995) as cited by Kumar and Singh (2014: 130), highlights the ideological weight carried by English in India from its early introduction, a role that the language continues to uniquely occupy.

According to the Census of India (2011) English is the only language of the Germanic branch of the Indo-European family that has 2.56 million as a native language, 83 million speakers as a second language and 46 million speakers as a third language. This linguistics landscape highlights the multifaceted role of English in India, reflecting its complex and contemporary significance.

### **1.3 Social Media and YouTube in India**

According to Seargeant and Tagg (2014: 4), social media is a type of digital communication that permits social interactions between participants, who facilitates the participation and interaction in a less regulated, more fluid and diverse content. Merriam Webster (2019), Social-Media is defined as “forms of electronic communication (such as websites for social networking and microblogging) through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content (such as videos)”.

The landscape of social media usage in India has undergone a significant transformation, particularly in the context of active participation by people. The surge in engagement on these platforms gained momentum in the early 2010s, primarily due to the increased accessibility of the internet through Internet cafes and smartphones. According to Datareportal (2023), in the digital scenario of India back in 2011, when the population stood at approximately 1.21 billion, there were there were 858.37 million mobile subscribers, with around 92 million actively engaged in social media as reported by Datareportal (2023). In comparison to that, the current scenario in 2023, the number of mobile subscribers has

reached 1.10 billion mobile subscribers, and the staggering count of social media users has surged to 467 million (46.7 crores) in a population of approximately 1.42 billion.

According to Li (2017) as cited by Tankosic and Dovchun (2021: 2), social media platform like as YouTube has evolved into important space where users express their diverse linguistic repertoire, sharing viewpoints and opinions on various topics. In the Indian context, as of 2023, YouTube takes the lead with an impressive 467.0 million active users, followed by Facebook in the second position with 314.6 million users and Instagram comes in third with 229.6 million users in India.

The paper explores the social values of Indian English on YouTube video comments. To evaluate this, Halliday's Systemic-Functional linguistics theoretical framework, which he developed in the 1960s is used along with sentiment analysis of the data to bring in more clarity to the results being put forward.

## **2. Background Literature**

### **2.1 Halliday's Systemic-Functional Linguistics**

According to Halliday (1987: 101), Systemic-Functional linguistics, “provides a fundamental insight that made it possible to move linguistic analysis beyond formal description and use it as basis for social critique. Grammar goes beyond formal rules of correctness. It is a means of representing patterns of experience (...).” In other words, it allows individuals to construct a mental picture of reality, making sense of their surroundings and internal thoughts. Systemic-Functional linguistics focuses on the functional aspect of language, emphasizing how language is utilized for meaning-making in social contexts.

Halliday identifies three primary meta-functions of language:

1. The ideational function, defined as the 'content function of language' (Halliday 2007: 183), is actualized through transitivity and serves to represent worldly situations, events, and the associated entities, actions, and processes. In this function, the text-producer encapsulates their real-world experiences in language (Halliday 1973: 106).
2. The interpersonal function, denoted as the 'participatory function of language' (Halliday 2007: 184), enables the expression of attitudes and evaluations through

mood and modality. It also establishes a relational dynamic between the text-producer and the text-consumer (Halliday and Matthiessen 1999: 7).

3. The textual function of language, characterized as enabling (Halliday and Matthiessen 1999: 7-8), actualizes ideational and interpersonal meanings. This function is realized through information structure and cohesion, contributing to the overall organization and coherence of linguistic expressions (Halliday 2007: 184).

## **2.2 Sentiment Analysis**

According to Bing Liu (2012:7), sentiment analysis, also known as opinion mining, constitutes a multidisciplinary field of inquiry focused on scrutinizing individuals' opinions, sentiments, evaluations, appraisals, attitudes, and emotions pertaining to various entities such as products, services, organizations, individuals, issues, events, topics, and their associated attributes. This domain encompasses a broad spectrum of analytical challenges, reflecting the diverse range of factors influencing human sentiment.

## **2.3 Sentiment Lexicon**

A sentiment lexicon, as defined by Bing Liu (2012:12), consists of words that are important indicators of sentiments, commonly used to express positive or negative sentiments. Words such as "good," "wonderful," and "amazing" convey positivity, while "bad," "poor," and "terrible" convey negativity. This lexicon forms a foundational resource in sentiment analysis, facilitating the interpretation of textual data by discerning the prevailing sentiment.

## **3. Social Values of Indian English**

### **3.1 Halliday's Meta Functions**

The analysis of social values of Indian English on social media, applying Halliday's Systemic-Functional linguistics, has yielded insightful results. The analysis reveals that, among the overall metacommentaries studied concerning Indian English and the bilingual practices of citizen sociolinguists, 65% are associated with interpersonal function, while 30% are related to ideational function and 5% are related to textual function.

The following examples illustrate comments and their meta-functions that has been employed by citizen sociolinguists on selected YouTube videos. This is shown in **Tables 3 through 3.4**

S. No	Comment	Meta Function
1.	"What a nail-biting match"	Ideational
2.	"Aver green mach"	Ideational
3.	"Milestone Indian cricket"	Ideational
4.	"It's an emotion"	Ideational
5.	"Super match"	Ideational

**Table 3:** Ideational function comments on "The 1983 world cup match between India and West Indies" video on YouTube.

S. No	Comment	Meta Function
1.	"Savage 🤩🤩🤩🤩"	Ideational
2.	"I definitely bilive in hard work, but this Man makes me believe in Luck"	Ideational
3.	"Superpower India"	Ideational
4.	"Intimidation tactics"	Ideational
5.	"Shame on this political people... How they will do progress in India?"	Ideational

**Table 3.1:** Ideational function comments on "Go Corona...Go Corona" Ramdas Athavale' video on YouTube.

S. No	Comment	Meta Function
1.	"Heart touching movements, Jai Hind"	Interpersonal
2.	"SUPER INDIA AMAZING ININININININ 🤝🤝🤝🤝🤝🤝🤝🤝🤝🤝🤝"	Interpersonal

3.	"History made india.. 🙏 "	Interpersonal
4.	"Historical match.....we r proud..IN"	Interpersonal
5.	"Cheeka smoking 🚬 in Lords balcony, that's a thug life 😎 man."	Interpersonal

**Table 3.2:** Interpersonal function comments on “The 1983 world cup match between India and West Indies” video on YouTube.

S. No	Comment	Meta Function
1.	“Whenever I am depressed and need a good laugh, I watch “Kyarona Go!” video! 😄😄😄”	Interpersonal
2.	“This is what happens when you elect fools as your ministers”	Interpersonal
3.	“Thanks Ramdas aatvle ji for saving us 😊 ”	Interpersonal
4.	“How brave we indians are.... these type ministers are making policies and running our country. 😄 😊 ”	Interpersonal
5.	“He is not only a man, he is a power of laughing. This man can bring a smile to even a sad person’s face in an instant 😄😄😄😄😄 amazing skill”	Interpersonal

**Table 3.3:** Interpersonal function comments on “Go Corona...Go Corona” Ramdas Athavale” video on YouTube.

S. No	Comment	Meta Function
1.	“ 😄 without mask go corona “	Textual
2.	“Reporter: So tell me Ramdas how did you manage to chase away corona from india? Ramdas: Yes”	Textual
3.	“Cricket life 🔥 ”	Textual
4.	“Cheeka 🙏 ”	Textual

5.	“China left the chat!”	Textual
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**Table 3.4:** Here are some examples of comments pertaining to the textual function.

### 3.2 Sentiment Analysis

The study incorporates Sentiment Analysis as a process of analysing digital text to determine the emotional tone—positive, negative, or neutral. This assists the ideation and interpersonal meta functions. In the digital communication landscape, sentiment analysis plays a pivotal role to study the social values of Indian English used on social media sites, specifically YouTube. It is used to analyse the data, enhancing the accuracy of results aligned with Halliday’s theoretical framework.

The integration of sentiment analysis has added a layer of depth to the analysis, providing valuable insights into the emotional tone and attitudes expressed in Indian English on YouTube videos. The sentiment analysis employed in this study, have facilitated the systematic examination of digital text, determining whether the conveyed sentiments are positive, negative, or neutral. This has been particularly useful in understanding how social values are emotionally infused into linguistic expressions. The results highlight not only the linguistic diversity but also the emotional diversity within the Indian online community. Sentiment analysis, in conjunction with Halliday's theory, contributes to a comprehensive understanding of the impact of Indian English on social media by unravelling both the linguistic and emotional dimensions of the digital discourse.

#### 3.2.1 The Triadic Division

Sentiment Analysis is a technique applied to determine the emotional tone conveyed in a piece of text. This method involves analyzing text data to discern whether the expressed sentiment is positive, negative, or neutral. The triadic division of sentiment analysis forms the foundation for categorizing and understanding the emotional content within textual data.

In this triadic framework there are:

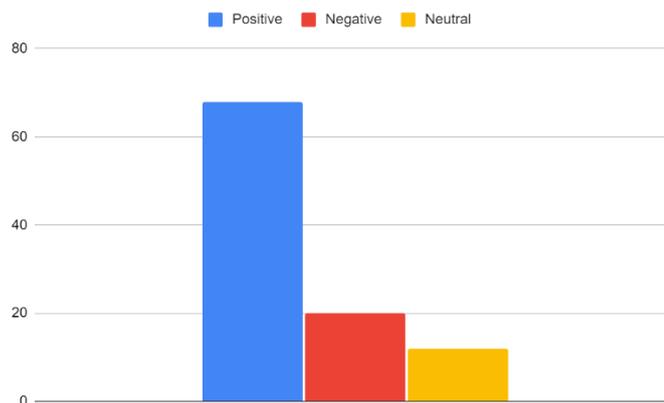
1. Positive sentiment: Text expressing positive sentiment typically conveys favorable or optimistic attitudes. Positive sentiment analysis is crucial in gauging the overall favorable reception of a topic or content consumed.
2. Negative sentiment: Negative sentiment analysis involves identifying text that conveys unfavorable, dissatisfied, or pessimistic attitudes. Analyzing negative sentiment is important for understanding areas of concern or assessing citizen sociolinguists' dissatisfaction.
3. Neutral sentiment: Neutral sentiment encompasses text that lacks overt positive or negative emotional tones. It represents a middle ground, indicating an absence of strong emotions or opinions. Identifying neutral sentiment is valuable for discerning objective statements or information, providing context to the overall sentiment analysis.

This triadic division enables sentiment analysis to categorize and quantify the emotional content of the meta comments, making it a valuable method for academic research. The goal is to show how citizen sociolinguists consume the content not merely by understanding it but also by interpreting the content's sentiments expressed in textual data, aiding in meaning-making and insights generation. This is shown in **Table 3.5 and Bar Graph 3.**

S. No	Comment	Sentiment Category
1.	"I love this man omg he is always making us happy and he is always making us laugh 😂😂😂😂😂😂😂😂😂❤️."	Positive
2.	"Hail u broo"	Positive
3.	"Lockdown Memories 🥺❤️"	Positive
4.	"Never gets old"	Positive
5.	"Watched hundred Times very nice 🙌🙌🙌🙌"	Positive
6.	"fact : THEY ARE SAYING GO CORONA IN PUBLIC 😏 What A Brain"	Negative
7.	"After he chanted "go corona", Corona made him gone 😏"	Negative
8.	"THESE BUNCH OF IDIOT WILL ORDER CORONA TO LEAVE"	Negative

9.	“There is no logic in this video 🤔🤔”	Negative
10.	“Useless content corona virus not a joke lacks of people dying with this virus or tm guitar baja kar corona par mazak bana rhe ho shameless u r”	Negative
11.	“Listening this in quarantine.....”	Neutral
12.	“Plot twist: Corona is her wife name”	Neutral
13.	“Please watch my vedio and subscribe too please”	Neutral
14.	“He is from karnataka”	Neutral
15.	“Who is here in may 2021 🤔 ”	Neutral

**Table 3.5:** Sentiment category of comments on Yashraj Mukhate’s “Ramdas Athawale saying Corona Go! Dialogue with beats” short on YouTube



**Bar graph 3:** Sentiment category of comments on Yashraj Mukhate’s “Ramdas Athawale saying Corona Go! Dialogue with beats” short on YouTube

### 3.3 Sentiment Lexicon

The results from this research work indicate a discernible pattern in the behavior of citizen sociolinguists engaging with content on social media platforms. Their comments often mirror their subjective reactions to the content they consume, reflecting either approval or disapproval. Consequently, comments tend to align with the sentiments evoked by the content, leaning towards positivity or negativity based on the individual's assessment of their experience. However, amidst these polarized expressions, a notable portion of comments remains neutral, indicating a lack of strong positive or negative sentiment. These neutral

comments serve as a valuable component of sentiment analysis, offering insights into the diverse spectrum of responses observed within social media discourse. This is shown in **Table 3.6.**

S. No	Sentiment Lexicon	Sentiment Category
1.	“ <b>Real heroes</b> ”	Positive
2.	“ <b>Salute</b> ”	Positive
3.	“My <b>favourite</b> player is Kapil Dev”	Positive
4.	“ <b>Proud</b> moment”	Positive
5.	“Mohinder amarnath <b>legend</b> ❤️❤️❤️❤️❤️❤️❤️❤️❤️”	Positive
6.	“Mohinder Amarnath sir what a Hook shot in Marshall bowling. Excellent and <b>courageous</b> shot.”	Positive
7.	“This world cup victory a complete <b>fluke</b> 🙄🙄🙄 ”	Negative
8.	“ <b>Fixed match</b> ”	Negative
9.	“ <b>Failure of overconfidence</b> of WestIndies.”	Negative
10.	“Gavaskar is <b>worst</b> player”	Negative

**Table 3.6:** Sentiment Lexicon of comments for “The 1983 world cup match between India and West Indies” video on YouTube.

#### 4. Conclusion

In a nutshell, the use of English within the Indian context on social media reflects the identity of the citizen sociolinguists, providing a means to express their subjective thoughts, emotions, and opinions in an authentic and relatable manner. It has cultivated a sense of community and belonging among citizen sociolinguists, creating a shared language and culture. Interestingly, citizen sociolinguists participating in these conversations, despite not being fluent in English, choose to engage as it aligns with the meaning-making in the Indian online community. This observation emphasizes that linguistic structures and expressions are not arbitrary but are shaped by the communicative needs and functions of the community.

The influence of social values on digital communication, specifically in the context of Indian English, extends significant liberties to citizen sociolinguists, notably the freedom of speech. This freedom is not merely a mechanical exercise; rather, it is emotionally and subjectively charged. It allows citizen sociolinguists to convey their opinions authentically, reflecting their attitudes towards the content they are consuming. Furthermore, the laxity in adherence to grammatical rules is observed; some of the comments that are written may not be grammatically correct, but the sentiments are definitely there through the choice of lexicon. The lexicon also reveals the introduction of new vocabularies or rather repurposed vocabularies, thus, showing how much the linguistic repertoire of citizen sociolinguists has evolved.

This emotional investment contributes significantly to the formation of a distinctive online cultural identity. By combining linguistic analysis with sentiment analysis, we gain profound insights into the intricate dynamics of language, identity, and the cultivation of solidarity and inclusivity within the online speech community. This dual analytical approach unveils the nuanced layers of meaning and emotion embedded in digital communication, offering a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted impact of social values and the impact in this evolving linguistic landscape.

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