

**New hierarchies, new elites:  
Subaltern voices in transnational space**

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Half a century of social dialectology has identified a number of enduring vectors along which prestige is conferred in Western speech communities, including class, region, and native speaker status. These are strongly associated with the classic and late modern epochs during which urban sociolinguistics developed, so much so that they seem quite universal. To what extent has the rapid increase in human mobility—migration, globalisation, transnationalism—disrupted these vectors of prestige? I investigate the transnational status of originally subaltern postcolonial varieties such as Indian English, with a particular focus on the circulation and perception of such varieties within the British context, where they have often been stigmatised as foreign and dysfluent (Rampton 2011) and rejected by young people as “too saliently non-local” (Cheshire et al. 2011). I present evidence of recent positive valuations and uptake of Indian English by British speakers and listeners. I argue that these shifts are not due to a flattening of hierarchy but due to a new hierarchisation (Park and Wee 2011). Marginalised social groups can bypass their local struggle for class mobility by adopting new transnational forms of social capital (“elite re-ethnicizations”, Silverstein 2003). This process can subvert such attributes as place authenticity and even native speaker status, but simultaneously valorises specific kinds of mobile and delocalised life trajectories, reinforcing a new form of global class hierarchy. The examples illustrate the relevance of examining diaspora and transnational dynamics not only in their own right, but to test and refine core models of sociolinguistic theory and language ideology in the context of contemporary social change.