

Word play...
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Like them (Arun Ranganathan and Braxton Robbason are the other co-founders of Samosapedia), Grant Barrett, co-host and co-producer of the American public radio show, A Way With Words (<http://waywordradio.org>), also believes words are meant to be toyed with. He says as much, when asked what his creation, the Double-Tongued Dictionary (<http://doubletongued.org>) hopes to achieve — "It's just for fun!" Point noted.

That's a far cry from the language Nazis who decry any 'vilification' of language because of a belief that there is an original, textual tradition that it can return to, to be 'pure'. But then, the neo-dictionary writers of today are all for celebrating the evolution of language, even if that means pimping it with a bit of local pizzazz.

Talk to the audience in their lingo

"Words like 'kintu' and 'parantu' (meaning 'but') make no sense anymore. People don't use them. So how can you expect to sell products using that sort of language?" asks Manohar Naik, founder and Managing Director, Lingo India (LI), a consultancy that "transcreates", in his words, radio and television advertisement scripts for local penetration.

There's no such thing as a language purist. There are no practitioners of a pure language, in any language. Such people are usually miseducated or misinformed people who are naive, ethnocentric, racist, or elitist.

GRANT BARRETT

Co-host and co-producer of the American public radio show, A Way With Words, on why there is no pure, original language

In plain English, that means LI customises an English/Hindi script to root it in the cultural and contextual milieu of a part of the country that speaks another dialect altogether.

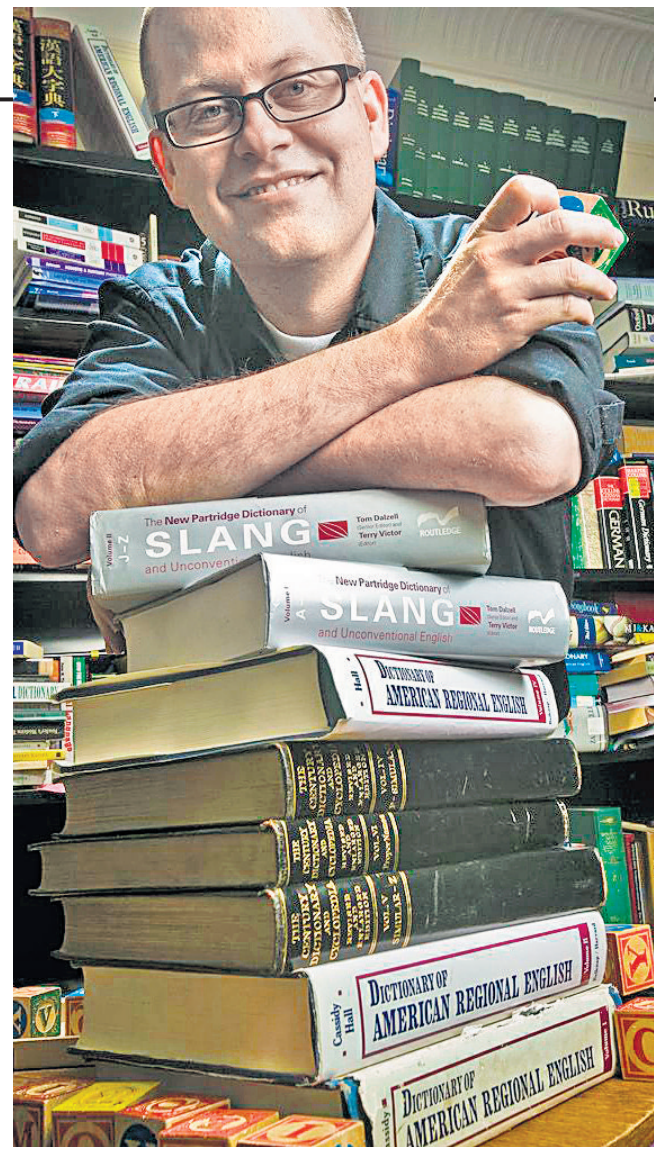
Sitting in his dimly-lit, soundproofed recording studio at Bandra's SV Road, Naik talks passionately about reviving regional Indian languages, but is quick to add, "I'm not disputing the importance of English or Hindi — there's a reason this conversation is unfolding in English. And I'm all for fluidity in communication — that's how language evolves."

It's this penchant for democratisation that makes these new-age lexicographers different. As Barrett puts it, "There is no such thing as a 'pure' language. There are no practitioners of a pure language, in any language." Naik is in agreement, and it is reflected in the choice of his company's name. "Most communication

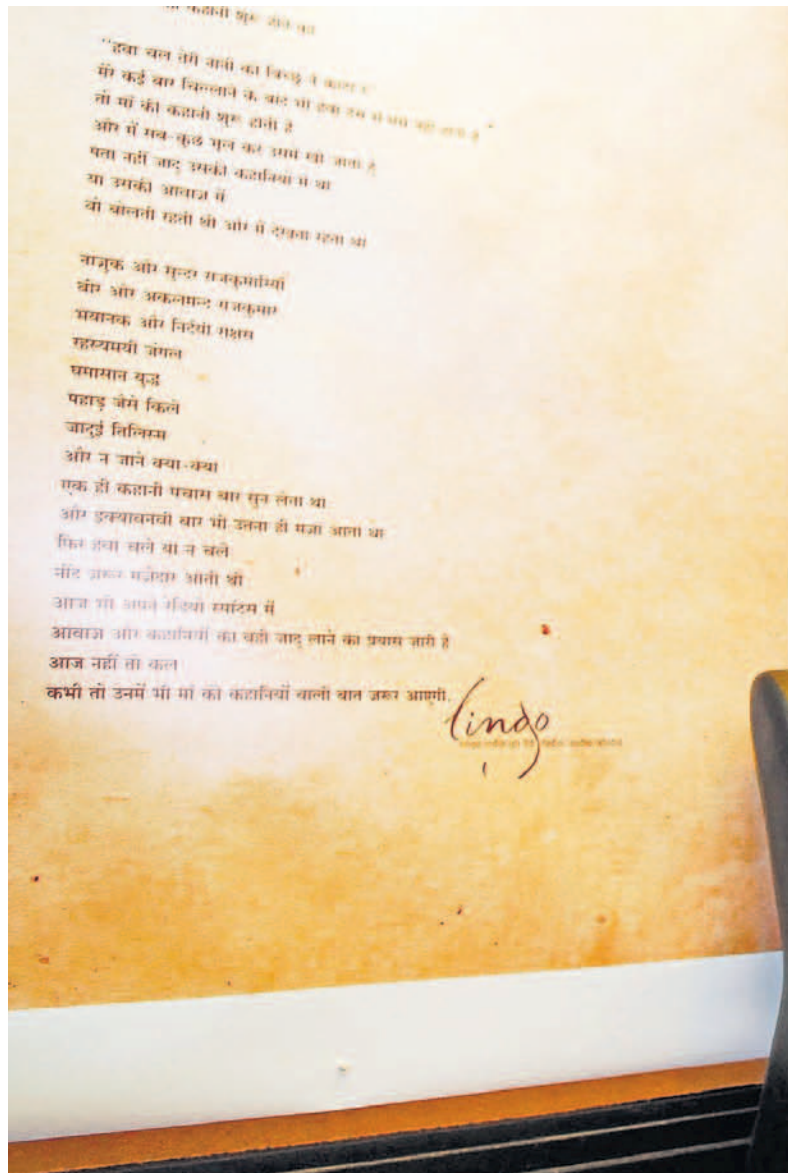
today is informal. Colloquialisms have entered the dictionary, and make things sound less rigid, less legal," he laughs, describing a print campaign that LI did for an aerated drink some time ago, in Maharashtra. "It featured a prominent Mangalorean actor who is now in Bollywood. We could have gone with Marathi, but instead, I went with Tulu, which is the language of Udipi restaurant owners and waiters that the campaign was targeting. What do you know? It worked like a charm!"

Today, fringe. Tomorrow, mainstream

For Barrett, who has worked as a lexicographer for the Oxford University Press, Cambridge University Press, and Collins, and compiled and edited the Official Dictionary of Unofficial English (2006, McGraw-Hill) and the Oxford Dictionary of American Political Slang (2004,



WE ARE A POLYGLOT COUNTRY. INDIAN ENGLISH, NOW KNOWN AS INDLISH, IS AN ENTITY IN ITS OWN RIGHT. MY OBJECTION IS WHEN IDEAS ARE CONCEIVED IN ENGLISH AND TRANSLATED INTO INDIAN LANGUAGES, WITHOUT INDIANISING.



Manohar Naik's firm Lingo India 'transcreates' radio, television and print advertisement scripts for local penetration. Naik's passion for language has also seen him take on the position of president, Language Club, which offers a platform to advertising language copywriters to address their concerns regarding the importance given to regional communication in advertising. PIC/ SAYED SAMEER ABEDI