

## **VARIETIES OF ENGLISH IN INDIA**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*English is one of the three largest spoken Languages of the world. It is also widely spoken in India, though it is not mentioned in the 8<sup>th</sup> schedule of the constitution of India. With the influence of the major languages of India, now it is developing as an Indian language i.e. Indian English. ‘Indian English’ is a compact phrase that refers to various forms of English used in different states of India. Some of its varieties enjoy the status and reputation of an Indian language as they comprehensively perform the four basic functions among the people of diverse linguistic backgrounds, nationally as well as internationally. Several renowned scholars dealt with the term ‘Indianisation’ of English on the basis of the data provided from earlier Indian English Writings. The present paper presents a very brief introductory history of English along with its growth and function in the country of diverse languages with the ultimate aim to describe the term variety; so that a brief description of various varieties as well as sub-varieties of Indian English may be mentioned clearly. It may also be helpful in determining the scope of the varieties & sub-varieties of English in India.*

**Keywords:** *Function, Growth, History, Varieties and Sub-varieties of Indian English.*

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

The English Language belongs to the Germanic sub group of the Indo-European Language family. It would not be hyperbole to say that English is one among the three largest spoken languages of the world. It is the only language of the world which has spread and flourished throughout the world. The relevant proof of this can be easily traced in the history. As British was the only power that had ruled over most of the countries for several years; thus it was the only reason for the development and worldwide growth of English language.

As per the result of its development, a number of varieties are also being flourished. By varieties of language we mean two or more forms of language as developed in different cultural setting. These varieties are the outcome of the impact of the native languages, culture, tradition and behaviour etc. A few varieties of English are – American English, Canadian English, Irish English, Black English, African English, Sri- Lankan English, Chinese English & Indian English etc. Out of these varieties, there are several sub- varieties also. They are: Chi- Chi English, Broken English, Kitchen English, Boxwala English, Bearer English, Pidgin English, Butler English, Babu English, Burger English etc. About two centuries ago, Pidgin English existed in India. It was initiated in the country with the first contact of Indians and Britishers during the earlier phase of activities of the

East India Company, especially in the eastern part of India. Now, it does not exist nor have any relevance with literature.

All these varieties are similar on many grounds, as they all are originated from the Standard British English, yet they have a number of differences on various levels; i.e. phonology, morphology, lexicon, semantic & syntactic etc.

## **II. THE CONDITION OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN INDIA**

The condition of English Language is quite unique and different in India. India, the democracy, is the one and only largest nation in the whole world that has a number of languages along with many a dialect of each language. There are 22 languages enshrined in the constitution of India and there are 1652 mother tongues which are frequently used throughout the states of the largest democracy. The process of the Indianization of English language got a fresh boost after the departure of the native speakers from the Indian scene in 1947. English, it may be asserted, enjoys a special privilege in India. No other language in this country has been asked to do so many things in so many situations and at places so remote from one another both geographically and culturally. It is true that English tends to admit of greater variety and move in more diverse situations in a non-native multi-lingual setting than in its native surroundings. The number of second language speakers of English has constantly been on the increase and this has also contributed to its rich variation.

As it is a well established fact that one cannot keep himself away from the impact of the mother tongue or the first language. It is always apparently visible in the use of second or the foreign language. As we are thoroughly acquainted with the Indian atmosphere in regards of language; it is obvious that India shares and enjoys the comfort of a number of languages as mother tongue or as first language and English as a second language or third language. It would not fake to mention that in India, English has lost its value and place of a foreign language; as it is finely blended with most of the Indian languages and is used as a second language or the third language frequently. In some of the states, it is enjoying the status of the first language also. As Raja Rao says(1978a:420), "...as long as we are Indians – that is not nationalist, but truly Indians of Indian psyche- we shall have the English language with us and amongst us, and not as guest or friend, but as one of our own, our caste, our creed, our sect and of our tradition." [1]

## **III. MAJOR FUNCTIONS OF ENGLISH IN INDIA**

As the result of the frequent use of English in a multi-lingual country, a number of varieties have also been sprouted and flourished in the country. English has now acquired four major functions: e.g instrumental, regulative, interpersonal and innovative or creative.

### **3.1 Instrumental**

The Instrumental function refers to the use of English as the medium of learning and instruction at various levels of education.

### **3.2 Regulative**

As the language of legal as well as administration system English performs the Regulative function.

### **3.3 Interpersonal**

The most important role of English is, however, is to provide a code of communication to linguistically and culturally diverse groups for Interpersonal communication. In this capacity, English has aided regional and national mobility for a certain stratum of society.

### **3.4 Innovative or Creative**

The Innovative function refers to the use of English that has also been resulted in the development of a significant body of Indian English writing in various genres. Therefore, said functions of English have also resulted as the development of various varieties of English.

India has been counted among the non-native users of English, and the English used here is considered among the varieties of the South-Asian Englishes. As the result of the various functions and usage in various domains in multi-lingual country, many a varieties of English are also formed automatically as well as naturally. The words ‘automatically’ and ‘naturally’ refer to the tendency that occurs spontaneously without any intentionally made efforts. These all varieties are the outcome or the result of the surroundings and need for the communication among the people. “When a language stays away from its native land for a long time, it begins to take roots in its immediate environment and gets moulded accordingly. Sociolinguists refer to this phenomenon as “Contextualization” [2]

## **IV. SUB-VARIETIES OF INDIAN ENGLISH**

In this part of the research work only the Indian sub-varieties of English are highlighted. The Existing and Non-existing sub-varieties of Indian English are:

### **4.1 Butler English / Tamil English**

The English used in Chennai (earlier known as Madras) has been mentioned as Butler English. It was mostly used during 19<sup>th</sup> Century and now this variety is almost disappeared in India. It is “faulty or broken English.”[3] The best example of Butler English is: ‘...the broken English spoken by native servants in the Madras Presidency which is not very much better than the Pigeon English of China.’[4] It is a singular dialect ; the present participle (e.g.) being used for future indicatives , and the preterit indicative being formed by ‘done’; thus ‘I telling’ = ‘I will tell’; ‘I done tell’= ‘I have told’; ‘done come’= ‘actually arrived’.

### **4.2 Babu English/Bangali English**

The name is given to the sub-variety of English used in Bengal and its nearby regions. The main characteristic of Babu English is its extremely stylistic ornamentation and “... in Bengal and elsewhere, among Anglo-Indians, it is often used with a slight savour of disparagement, as characterizing a superficially cultivated but too often effeminate Bengali.”[5] One can provide illustration of this sub-variety from official and administrative registers. Following example from Schuchardt (1891): ‘The extreme stimulus of professional and friendly solicitation has led me to the journey of accomplished advantages to proceed with these elucidatory and critical comments; wherein no brisking has been thrown apart to introduce *prima facie* and useful matter to facilitate the literary pursuits of lily like capacities. “If the aimed point be embraced favourably by the public, all in all grateful acknowledgements will ride on jumping border from the very bottom of my heart.”[6]

#### **4.3 Punjabi English**

The touch of Punjabi language can be very well noticed in the works of renowned writers like: Khushwant Singh, Mulk raj Anand, etc. “In case of Mulk raj Anand it is apparent that his Punjabi English is the result of this deliberate strategy to safeguard his truth, his examinations of class and caste.”[7] The impact of Punjabi English can also be easily traced in Rupa Bajwa’s famous novel ‘The Sari Shop’, Khushwant Singh’s ‘Train to Pakistan’ and in several other novels. The touch of Punjabi language can also be easily traced in the following translated or hybrid phrases: ‘Kings of Pearls’ (Train to Pakistan,79) means ‘motiyanda badshah’ and ‘the bridal ivory chooda’ (The Sari Shop, 87) means ‘ivory bangles to be worn by a bride for first few months of her marriage’. This is nominal belonging to unit group in the native language.

#### **4.4 Gujrati/ Parsi English**

Gujrati/Parsi English is one more variety of Indian English. There are several Gujaratis / Parsies who “have made successful careers through their writing. Some of the have won prestigious national and international awards. Though not born into English language (as Gujarati with a distinct dialect is their mother tongue), they have mastered and made the English language to express their true spirit and distinct minority experience.”[8] A number of features of Gujarati language and culture can be easily traced in the novels of Rohinton Mistry’s ‘A Fine Balance’, Firdaus Kanga’s ‘Trying to Grow’ Farrukh Dhondy’s ‘Bombay Duck’, Bapsi Sidhwa’s ‘The Crow Eaters’, ‘The Pakistani Bride’, ‘Ice Candy Man’ and ‘An American Brat’; and Chetan Bhagat’s ‘3 Mistakes of My Life’, ‘Five Point Someone’, ‘One Night @ the Call Centre’ and ‘Two States’.

#### **4.5 Hindi English**

The Hindi English Variety is prominent in the novels of Shobha De and in the writings of many other writers of Hindi region. One may also hear and catch drastic variations in English language when it is pronounced in Hindi region. Many examples can be seen and heard in day-to-day life. The examples quoted form Hindi-English language are : “It ij terribull. Prejence ij poor in i-school.” (It is terrible, presence is poor in school.), “It is piZZa Say it properly...There’s a T in the middle Peet Zah. Don’t correct my English Ashok. There is no T in pizza. Look at the box.” (The White Tiger, 131) Quite a few lexical items in Indian English are the result of hybrid formation, i.e. *pan-maker*, *double-roti*, *motor-gari*, *bhabhi-hood*, *coolidom*, etc. Often such formations are in the nature of fixed collocation and are bound by what Kachru calls "structural constraints"[9]

Even more interesting is the way in which Hindi words are made to behave with English inflexional endings added to them. Look at the following illustrations drawn from the private letters of some university students in India:

I *lagaoed* a lot of pull.

I *phiraoed* a couple of girls in the bazaar.

You must *maro* at least 80% marks if you want a good job.

Mr. Gupta was *gheraoed* for two hours last evening.

Some other examples of this type are: *salammed*, *kukru kruing*, *dhotied* blackman.

An example of the kind given by Goffin is:

“The engine does not *chal* properly.”

#### **4.6 English Used In the Standard English News Papers of Hindi Region**

Following excerpts from standard news paper are illustrative of register restricted items: ‘He set the pace for the recital with a briskly rendered *Pranamamayakam* in Gowla, a composition of Mysore Vasudevachar. One liked the manner in which he and his accompanying *vidwan* built up the *Kirti* embellishing it with little flourishes here and there.... Then, came Kamboji alapana for Pallavi...with Vedanayagam Pillai’s Nane Unnie Nimbinane in Hamsanandi, the recital came to a glorious end.’ (The Statesmen, New Delhi, 14 December 1969)

Again:

‘This is clear from the result of *Panchyat* elections announced yesterday. The elections were held on Sunday and some 170,000 villagers cast their votes to elect 180 *pradhans* and 1500 odd members of *gaon sabhas*. *Pradhans* and members of 15 *gaon sabhas* were elected unopposed.’ (The Hindustan Times, New Delhi, 17 December 1969)

#### **4.7 Boxwala English**

This name was given to the sub-variety of English which was used by itinerant peddlers, who habitually carry a box containing their wares to houses of foreigners and affluent Indians, or to hotels frequented by such people. This sub-variety is close to the sub-variety of Ghanaian English which is known as Broken English and has several characteristics of child language. Examples:

‘I come go’: it means (I am going away but I’ll be back.)

‘One man no chop’: it means (Eating is not a privilege for any one person) etc.

All the above mentioned sub-varieties of the variety of English (Indian English) are not the only result of function of English in the contemporary society and impact of mother tongue but it was also the outcome or the result of the notion- “it is agreed that the aim is not to produce the speakers of British Received Pronunciation: even if this were feasible!”[10]

If anyone among the non-native speaker speaks like a native speaker of English, he is generally considered as affected or even snobbish by others. This prevailing tendency has also caused the birth of these many a sub-varieties of the variety of English.

#### **4.8 Code-Mixed Varieties of Indian English**

In the discussion of the varieties within the different forms of English used in India, the development of code-mixed varieties of Indian English must not be ignored. Code-mixing is the result of language contact and code-switching, and has to be distinguished from just lexical borrowings. Code Switching entails the ability to switch from code A to code B. “There are two categories of Code Switching - Code Mixing and Code Shifting.”[11] Code Mixing refers to the transferring of the elements or units of one language into the general grammatical rubric of another at the intra sentential level; e.g.

‘Mere father kal mere fee jama karege.’

‘ Bank account open karne ke liye address proof dena hoga.’

‘Code Shifting denotes the functional contact in which a multi-lingual person makes alternate use of two or more codes according to situation, topic or domain. In the case of Hindi English code switching we have: ‘I am afraid of nobody. Is waqt mujhe Manila ki fikr hai’ (Vimal Mitra)

Such a transfer results in developing a new restricted or not so restricted code of linguistic interaction. We find such code switching in most of Indian English as S. N. Sridhar has shown that: ‘...the more educated the person the more he tends to mix elements from English in his mother tongue.’ (1978:109)

In most parts of South India the word ‘vessel’ means ‘utensils’. ‘Vessel’ is not usually used in this sense, in any other part of India. The husband of wife’s sister is called ‘co-brother’ in Karnataka and Tamilnadu. These terms are also unknown in other parts of India. The term ‘outbooks’-meaning books outside the prescribed course is very common in West Bengal but unknown in the rest of the country. Similarly, the fictional writings of Khushwant Singh and Mulk Raj Anand often create difficulty in understanding among non-Punjabi speakers on account of the pull of the regional language in them.

At other parts of country, at phonological level one perceives several kinds of Indian English, each one showing unmistakably its allegiance to a regional language whose phonetic features influence it. Thus, one can speak, among others, of Tamil English, Bengali English, Punjabi English, Hindi English and so on. This has been well demonstrated by a reader in a letter to the editor of The Illustrated Weekly of India: e.g.

‘Eye yate yeleven yeggs.’ (I ate eleven eggs.)- (Tamil English)

‘Go suttrai in the suttreet and ju bill find the house ju bant!’

(Go straight in this street and you will find the house you want!) (Sharma, 1974:6).-(Punjabi English)

In addition to this, some of the varieties on the lexical level are also found in English— such as in Standard English the word ‘cousin’ is a common noun but in Indian English ‘cousin’ is categorized as ‘cousin sister’ for feminine gender and ‘cousin brother’ for masculine gender. Similarly, in Standard English the word ‘expire’ is mostly used in the meaning of ‘to dispatch’ or ‘to send something’ but in Indian English the word ‘expire’ is also used in the meaning for ‘death’; e.g. His grandfather ‘expired’ yesterday.

Some Indian cultural terms which cannot be translated into English, are also used by many famous Indian writers, in their original form, i.e. mother tongue, and they gave their meaning and explanation at footnotes. The renowned Kannad novelist U.R. Ananthmurthy has written a novel named ‘Samskara’ and has used the word ‘Samskara’ for 58 times in the novel; but when the novel was translated the term ‘samskara’ could not be replaced by any other equivalent word; for it contains various manifold meanings. Thus, the translator used the word ‘samskara’ as it is in the English translation.

## **V. CONCLUSION**

Though there are some challenges that Indian English has been facing for so long, yet none can deny the fact that it has been playing a major role not only at regional & National level but also at International level. Indian English is now an efficient and fairly stable variety exiting in its own right, having its own frame of references and symbolizing a distinct socio-cultural reality. In spite of the models set by the BBC and Voice of America, IE (Indian English) could not but develop on lines of its own, independent of the mother tradition.

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