
CHAPTER I: WHAT IS INDIAN ENGLISH

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1. Introduction

Indian English as a variety of the language has been debated for a long time. With the publication of Kachru (1983) it seems that many problems have been sorted out and Indian English is no longer a mere imaginary concept or notion but it has become an accepted fact. Kachru is one of the earliest to identify and describe Indian English as a variety. He was inspired by the positive attitude of Prof. Dastoor at Allahabad University who claimed that 'there will always be a more or less indigenous flavour about English. In our imagery, in our choice of words, in our nuances of meaning we put in our words, we must be expected to be different from Englishmen and Americans alike'. This attitude was in sharp contrast to the earlier attitude towards Indian English. So far, the word 'mistake' was used to describe peculiarities of Indian use of English. Dastoor was very careful about the use of terminology; he made a distinction between 'mistake' and 'deviation'.

2. Kachru

Kachru started his serious study of Indian English with his research dissertation entitled 'An Analysis of some Features of Indian English' at Edinburgh in 1961. In the last twentyfive years he has written over two dozen papers on various aspects

of Indian English. Some of these papers have been collected and published in a book form entitled 'The Indianization of English: The English Language in India' in 1983. In the introduction to this volume Kachru points out that "the 'Indianness' in Indian English is the result of the acculturation of Western language in linguistically and the culturally pluralistic context of the sub-continent." Kachru believes that the Indianization of English language is the consequence of 'interference' or 'transfer'.

Quirk calls it an interference variety of English in the Foreword to this volume. According to Kachru, the Indians are using this nativized variety of English to serve typically Indian needs in distinct Indian contexts for two hundred years. Indianisms in Indian English are, then, linguistic manifestations of pragmatic needs for appropriate language use in a new linguistic and cultural context. He prefers to call them 'deviations' not 'mistakes' and the deviations are motivated, not any deviations. The motivation being the need to express the peculiar Indian social, cultural and pragmatic fact, such deviations are bound to be variety specific. The productive aspect of such (deviant) formations and their functional relationship to new contexts makes them formally and pragmatically a part of specific variety. These formations are not idiosyncratic and they have a role in what Firth calls 'the context of situation'. He has treated the following types of formations

as Indianisms:

1) Author-specific e.g., rape sister, sister sleeper, salt giver etc., in the novels of Mulk Raj Anand.

2) Text-specific e.g., as honest as an elephant, as good as kitchen ashes, in Kanthapura by Raja Rao.

3) Register-specific e.g., interdining, intermarriage etc.

4) Area-specific e.g., coconut paysam jibba pocket, military hotel potato bonda, religious diwan, yakka carriage etc.

Commenting on the proficiency of English among speakers in India, he explains it with reference to 'the cline of bilingualism'. At one end of the cline there are educated Indians who speak a near native variety of English. At the other end there are those whose proficiency is very poor. Such variety has been variously called 'Butler English', 'Bearer English', 'Kitchen English' and so on. "The standard variety of Indian English is used by those bilinguals who rank around the central point on the cline of bilingualism." (p. 71)

Coming to the description of Indian English Kachru admits that detailed description of educated Indian English is not available. In his own writings he has touched on the sound system and the grammar of Indian English. He has paid a good deal of attention to the lexical aspect and elaborated on the

different functions of native words and 'hybrid compound' in Indian contexts. He has also described the various functional shifts of higher level elements such as group structures etc. In short, he has a good deal to say about 'lexical innovations' in Indian English.

3. CIEFL Seminar

Apart from Kachru several scholars have investigated different areas of Indian English. A concerted effort to bring together the various views on Indian English was made in 1972 at the Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages, Hyderabad. Many scholars who had worked on Indian English came together and presented their views at the Seminar. Some of these papers were later collected and published in the form of a volume by Ramesh Mohan in 1978. In the preface the editor states "The Seminar came to certain tentative conclusions as to what constitutes Indian English. Indian English is not pidgin English. Indian English is not just British English with a few Indian spices added to it. It has its own distinct identity." The volume contains papers on a wide variety of aspects of Indian writing in English of which a majority of them deal with the literary aspect. Only a few papers deal with the language aspect. Let us look at some of these:

Bansal's article on 'the phonology of Indian English' summarizes his extensive work on the phonological and phonetic

patterns of English spoken by educated Indians, and gives an analysis of ten recorded specimens of English speech of Indian speakers. The segmental phonemes -- vowels and consonants and their distribution are first described and the difference between these and RP phonemes are noted. Prosodic features such as word stress and intonation in connected speech are also described and compared with those of RP. Commenting on the features of IE, Bansal gives great importance to mutual intelligibility between speakers from different parts of India and intelligibility of IE speech outside India. In order to make Indian English internationally intelligible and acceptable, he suggests that certain features need to be acquired. The most important features are prosodic features, stress and intonation. As regards segmental phonemes, some of his suggestions are that vowel length and distribution of vowels and consonants should be acquired and aspiration of plosives in the initial position should also be acquired.

As regards the overall characteristics of Indian English Bansal says, "A language that is used so widely for communication must have its own phonological, grammatical and lexical systems, through which it conveys its distinctions of meaning ... a hybrid variety is not necessarily inferior; it may be in fact more vigorous and effective ... 'correctness' in language is defined in terms of the usage prevalent among the native speakers of language, but if a foreign dialect has emerged in a particular

country as medium of communication among educated people, it has its own status in the community that uses it." (p. 102)

S.K. Verma in his paper on 'Syntactic irregularities in Indian English' has identified a number of systematic syntactic deviations in a sample of educated Indian writings and commented on certain other features such as the lexico-semantic features. He rejects the innovative use of language in the imaginative English writings of Indians as features of Indian English. The syntactic patterns he has identified occur in the writings of educated Indians. The following are the types of deviations he has identified:

- i) Inter-clause sequence of tense
- ii) Conditional sentences
- iii) Indirect questions
- iv) Tag questions
- v) Tense and aspect
- vi) Wh-questions
- vii) 'Want'-type of verb sentence
- viii) Response-type sentences
- ix) 'Know'-type of verb in its progressive aspect
- x) Word-order
- xi) Relative clause followed by corrective pronouns
- xii) Collocation.

Verma asserts that these sentence types have pan-Indian

characteristics which differ from English English. The differences are in tense forms set out in a table which brings out the distinction between English English and Indian English.

	English English	Indian English
Information questions	Wh + Aux + Subject NP + MV + ...	Wh + Subject NP + Aux + MV + ...
	When is he coming?	When he is coming?
An action began in the past (say three years ago) and is going on even at the present moment	(Present Perfect progressive + for + A period of time.) <u>has</u> + been + V + have ing for NP	(Present Progressive - Since - A period of time) be + V + ing - Since NP time
	Mohan has been working here for three years.	Mohan is working here since three years

(Reproduced from Verma, 1972: 216)

Commenting on these features of Indian English as compared to English English he remarks "It has now become a fact and cannot be treated as an accumulation of errors. It is a highly structured system ... it is a variety of English because its primary syntactic systems are the same as those of English English. Both the dialects share a common core of structure."

(p. 217)

C.J. Daswani in his paper 'Some Theoretical Implications for Investigating Indian English' takes a slightly different view. He accepts that some studies of Indian English reveal the fact that it is deviant and violates grammatical and phonological rules of standard English. He says "Indeed, deviation is seen as proof in support of setting up IE as distinct variety of English." (p. 115) He regrets that "However, what is lacking in almost all the studies is serious evidence to support the claim that IE is a viable language in its own right; that is, no study on IE has attempted to show any systematic relationship between other native varieties of English and IE." (p. 126) In his paper he has stated the problems involved in the description of IE as follows:

- 1) Identifying the IE speech community.
- 2) Identifying the specific group of non-native speakers of English in India who are bilinguals.
- 3) Identifying the results of the dissimilarity of the L_1 and L_2 learning process in a language contact situation.

Daswani considers the syntactic, semantic, phonological aspects of Indian English. He examines some of the views of Bansal, Dastoor and Kachru. After carefully examining these views Daswani points out that there are two obvious solutions to this problem: "One, we might argue, that the English of those Indians who claim

it as their mother-tongue be called Indian English. ...

Another obvious solution to the problem would be to agree with Bansal that IE is only phonologically divergent; its grammar and lexicon being that of SE." (p. 125)

Daswani concludes, "What I have attempted to point out in this paper is that it is not at all clear what Indian English is. Before we can identify Indian English and describe its structure, it would be necessary to gather and examine a large amount of data, systematically collected from several varieties and levels of English spoken in India." (Daswani, 1972: 126)

4. Indian and British English Handbook

Paroo Nihalani, R.K. Tongue and Priya Hosali produced a handbook of usage and pronunciation of Indian and British English in 1979. The authors note in its introduction the prevalence of a controversy regarding the existence of Indian English and do not want to commit themselves to taking up a position in this controversy. Their claim is a more modest one ... "the description of a thousand items of the English language which are used in a distinctive manner by large numbers of educated Indian speakers of English." Their data are drawn from the speech or writing of 'persons who are likely to influence the English of Indian learners of the language, namely, University teachers, school teachers, journalists, radio commentators and leaders of opinion in the society'.

Reviewing the handbook, Shastri (1984) has summarized the Indian usage of English contained in the book, under seven heads as follows:

A. Norms-count/ non-count number (formal requirement)

a good advice, an eyewash, accommodations, aircrafts, baggages, equipments, fruits and coffee, deal with in details, full of jokes and so on.

B. L₁ analogy

apply to the director, appoint as secretary, contest for elections, difficult to the reader to understand, inviting for applications, command over English, discuss about politics, I pitied on him.

C. Extra Redundancy

return again, repeat again, bow down to him, bring down, fall down, settle down, enter in(to) the room, emphasize on, pitied on, return back, reverse back, reply back, fill up the post, gets jammed up, left up, rouse up (anger), connect up, end up (my remarks), money-purse, if supposing, comprise of, congratulate for, cope up with (*cover up the syllabi).

D. L₁ transfer

head-bath, body-bath, Raju is the bride-groom this evening, hot

hot curry, cried like any thing, marry with cousin brother,
cousin sister.

E. Condensed noun phrases

beer-bottle, milk-bottle (glass-pane), rice-plate, fish-plate,
ink-bottle, juice-bottle, fish tin.

F. Semantic Coverage (Violation of collocational restrictions)

catch/keep/put; do/make; pain/ache (catch = hold; keep = put;
put = keep).

G. Productive devices

postpone-prepone, light-failure, office-goer.

Besides the distinctive grammatical features of Indian English usage, the handbook includes other phenomena such as idiom, style, lexis in its various manifestations and the social and cultural aspects of Indian life reflected in the usage. It has a substantial section on Indian English pronunciation, in which the authors have suggested an Indian model for pronunciation to promote intelligibility and acceptability.

5. Others

So far, we have taken note of concerted efforts of scholars and institutions in analysing English usage in India. In this section we shall look at certain individual contributions.

Hosali (1983), in her article on 'Indian English' speaks of IE "as being a language composed of different varieties".

(p. 1)

She borrows the terms Basilect, Mesolect and Acrolect from Derek Bickerton's The Dynamics of a Creole System and makes use of these terms to describe the Indian varieties of English.

According to her, the variety spoken by the uneducated (Butler English) is at the Basilect level and the greatest number of non-English forms occur at this level. This variety has undergone a process of pidginization. The second variety which shares the features of Butler English and the Standard English i.e., British Standard (BS) is spoken by the less well educated. This variety is Mesolect. The third variety which is spoken by the highly educated Indian is Acrolect.

"The English knowing bilinguals of the less well educated variety of IE are mainly professional Indians like clerks, pleaders, magistrates and civil servants". (p. 6) She has listed the features of Basilect and Mesolect in her article. We shall reproduce some features of the verb in mesolect which according to her merges into Acrolect and it is difficult to draw a clear boundary between the two.

Verbs

She points out that the speakers of IE differ from those

of BS in their use of verb forms in a number of ways and she makes special mention of the following categories:

Verbs used without the reflexive pronouns + preposition

- (a) 'Come and enjoy'
(BS enjoy yourselves).
- (b) 'Avail this opportunity'.
(BS Avail yourself of) (p. 8)

Verbs used in the continuous form

Are you having a cold?
(BS Have you got cold?) (p. 9)

She makes it clear that BS does not use non-passive 'have' in continuous form whereas the speakers of IE use the continuous form.

Strongly transitive verbs used intransitively

'I would appreciate if you would quickly'
(BS appreciate it)

'Appreciate' used intransitively means 'to increase in value' as in 'share prices are appreciated towards the close of business'. (p. 9)

Intransitive verbs used transitively

'The general backed out the army'. (p. 9)

In BS it is normally intransitive when this verb carries the meaning of 'withdraw'.

Verbs followed by to infinitive

'He can console himself to be in good company'.

(BS console himself with being).

'He made me to cry'

(BS made me cry). (p. 9)

Verbs followed by preposition + gerund

'He doesn't hesitate from using four-letter words

(BS to use). (p. 9)

Verbs used in the present perfect tense

'I have read the book yesterday'

(BS read).

Verbs used in the past perfect tense

'An American couple had adopted an orphan yesterday'

(BS adopted).

Erroneous conditional

'If Ruritania would again make the mistake of attacking

Patagonia she would virtually be committing suicide'.

Active verbs used passively

'My son was graduated last Monday'

(BS graduated).

(p. 10)

She has also noted the behaviour of verbs in question forms and the nature of compounding.

The other features noted by her are the use of articles, prepositions, idioms, and a variety of lexical innovations. She has also commented on the stylistic features of this variety.

Parasher (1983) in an article summarizes the findings of his investigation of some aspects of Indian English. In this paper he is chiefly concerned with the formal aspects of Indian English and he points out that IE is 'a product of language contact and it is used in India, for certain specific purposes in the Indian socio-cultural context'. He states, "Thus, certain registers of IndE may be different from comparable registers of native English. Since the topic of discourse determines to a large extent the choice of lexical items and style, the more culture-bound the topic is, the greater the possibility of IndE differing from native varieties. Moreover, IndE, being a non-native language for most of Indian bilinguals, is bound to have certain characteristics of its own." (p. 27)

He began the investigation assuming that Educated IndE does not differ in its syntax from the usage of educated speakers of standard native varieties of English. He observes, "One can therefore, propose the following hypothesis: the educated variety of IndE should conform to major syntactic rules of BrE, and as a non-native variety IndE should show certain differences at the lexical and stylistic levels." (p. 27) His findings are based on the sample survey conducted by him in Hyderabad and Secunderabad during 1978-79. He selected the correspondence of a nationalized bank and a research institute because the writers belonged to several parts of the country and spoke several Indian languages as their mother tongue. In order to discover the real facts he supplied the data to two native speakers of British English, two native speakers of American English and two Indian University teachers. They were asked to go through the material at leisure and underline expressions they considered unacceptable within the context. They were asked to suggest alternative expressions for the unacceptable ones.

The investigator has listed unacceptable forms and rules which were thought to have been violated. He has summarized his findings regarding the aspects found 'unacceptable' in the following table:

A: SYNTAX		As percentage of all unacceptable forms
1	nominals ...	3.34
2	determiners and modifiers ...	10.84
3	Word order ...	3.84
4	Verb patterns ...	3.74
5	auxiliaries ...	4.32
6	tenses ...	8.31
7	prepositions ...	7.41
8	clause connectors and clause structures	2.28
9	Subject-verb concord ...	0.73
10	Constituent structure ...	1.96
11	Categorical structure ...	1.47
		<u>48.24</u>
B:	LEXIS ...	23.47
C:	STYLE ...	28.29

(Reproduced from Parasher, 1983: 28)

On the basis of this study, he says that there were "very few violations of the major rules of English syntax and none of these had a high frequency of occurrence. ... It is in the deviant lexical and stylistic usage of IndE that its most characteristic features lie." (p. 41). Here, it may be useful to list some of the differences in the IndE usage of syntax, although he considers them marginal:

Verb patterns: Parasher has noted some categories of verb

patterns in IndE that do not conform to BrE. They are, the use of certain transitive verbs intransitively, e.g., avail, inform, assure, request; modal + to + infinitive constructions in place of the subjunctive form of the verb; the frequent use of an infinitive form after with a view to instead of an ing form etc.

Auxiliaries: He found that IndE showed a good deal of difference in the use of modal auxiliaries as compared to BrE auxiliaries. In general there was a tendency to using the past forms of modals where a native speaker would prefer a present tense form. This point has been further corroborated by Katikar (1984). In fact this is one of the concerns of the present investigation into the if-clauses in IE.

Tense and aspect: He also found a tendency in IndE to using the present perfect for the simple past, e.g., I have sent them two reminders last month; and the use of present continuous instead of simple present, e.g., We are manufacturing a malted food. He observes that "the restriction on the sequence of tenses is often not followed in IndE" (p. 33); this is especially so in the case of contexts where backshifting is required.

Shastri (1984) after reviewing the work of several investigators observes that the descriptions available so far are based on ad hoc or available data and so they naturally deal with 'English in India', rather than 'Indian English' as such. He posits a terminological distinction between English in India

and Indian English. Based on a study of six lexical items in Indian English, Shastri (1978) proposes that since lexis is the major component of language structure, 'the key to discovering features of Indian English lies in a detailed study of the lexis of Indian English. Again, he feels that such a study must be based on a solid data base consisting of both written and spoken Indian English. In order to meet part of this requirement he has just completed a million-word computer corpus of written Indian English comparable to the existing British and American corpora.' [Shastri et al. (1986)] Details of this will be discussed in Chapter III.

In another paper Shastri (forthcoming), he makes two important points: (i) he proposes a parameter to account for degrees of Indianness of Indian English, (ii) he discerns two types of code-mixing -- transparent and opaque -- in the process of Indianization of English. In this process, he traces three distinct stages which he calls 'hybridization', 'absorption' and 'assimilation'. Foreign elements (here Indian) are most apparent in the first stage but later at the stage of absorption they become blurred and finally are imperceptible after they are fully assimilated. In other words these features are first transparent and they finally become opaque.

Having discussed these three stages in the process of Indianization of English, Shastri goes on to propose a cline based on the parameter of 'genres of writing'. The cline is posited

as a measure of Indianness of Indian English. Indian English at one end of this cline would be 'heavily Indian' and at the other 'least Indian'. Accordingly "a rough approximation of such a scale may look something like Religion (heavily Indian) through Music, Dance, Art, Creative Writing, Criticism, Social Sciences, Humanities and Physical Sciences (hardly Indian)." According to Katikar (1984), "although in his paper Shastri concentrates on the transparent aspect of code-mixing, the distinction he suggests is very interesting ... (and her) own investigation of the meanings of the modals in Indian English seems to reinforce this point." (p. 47)

This sketch of the views of certain investigators is by no means comprehensive. A good deal has been written on 'what is Indian English', both theoretical and descriptive. What we have summarized in this small chapter is only a very small part of the literature available on the subject. We have selected those parts which we think are relevant to our present work.