

www.galaxyimrj.com

ISSN: 2278-9529

GALAXY

International Multidisciplinary Research Journal

Vol. 3, Issue-IV July 2014



Editor-In-Chief: Dr. Vishwanath Bite

Managing Editor: Madhuri Bite

About Us: <http://www.galaxyimrj.com/about-us/>

Archive: <http://www.galaxyimrj.com/archive/>

Contact Us: <http://www.galaxyimrj.com/contact-us/>

Editorial Board: <http://www.galaxyimrj.com/editorial-board/>

Submission: <http://www.galaxyimrj.com/submission/>

FAQ: <http://www.galaxyimrj.com/faq/>

Reshaping and Reforming English in India

Kamana Srivastava

Research Scholar
Dept. of English & M.E.L
University of Lucknow

Abstract:

This paper focuses on status of English as a global language and how it has been seen and accepted with an Indian identity. Today English is not seen as a language of colonial masters but as a medium of international discourse. The language is now well established in the country and has acquired an independent identity of its own. Fundamentally closer to the British English, with the advent of globalization it has also been heavily influenced by the American way of speaking and writing. Yet, the flavour is distinctly Indian. Furthermore, it highlights one dimension of the Indianisation of English i.e. the coming of English to India; it spread of consolidation in India and the acceptance, use and functionality of English in India. The other dimension of Indianisation of English refers to what has happened to the English language as a consequence.

Keywords: English, Globalization, International discourse, Language, Indianisation.

English is widely recognized as a global 'Lingua Franca'. It holds the unique position of being, the most important world language. The cultural, economic, military, scientific and technological importance of the United Kingdom and United States of America has given English special status as a language of international communication. English is the first language in the USA, UK, Australia, Canada, New Zealand and West Indies. In India English has got the status of second language as it is wrongly associated with the history of colonization. English was introduced as a tool of imperialism. It is a legacy from the British who ruled the country and since then the language is gradually filtered through some of the most important parts of the society: the government, the mass media, the academics, the judiciary and the social sector. Today it is not seen as a language of the colonial masters but as a medium of international discourse.

It is true that its introduction in India by Macaulay was done with an ulterior motive. But it came as a blessing in disguise. It is through the medium of English that Indians came to study the liberal thought of England, which in large measure induced them to raise their demand to freedom. Hence, English Language with its great literary heritage played a constructive role in building up free India. In the nineteenth century Raja Ram Mohan Roy lead a group of Indians in demanding English education for Indians. This group was convinced that English would be more useful for Indians than Indian languages for academic, social, economic, scientific and international purposes. Since independence, several committees and commission have on different occasion stressed the need to learn English. A stage has now been reached where English is considered an integral part of socio-cultural educational and administrative domains of Indian life.

Today in the age of globalization English dominates and serves as a window to the outside world. It helps us to reach vast treasure house of knowledge and information. It is the language of opportunities because it takes one outside one's community to places where more opportunities are available for professional growth and economic advancement. It is an

expressive and flexible vehicle for the transmission of thoughts. In the absence of common Indian language it helped, and is still helping to bring together people from the different parts of India and this has acted to some extent at least as a unifying force. Knowledge of it therefore will enable us to establish intellectual, cultural, economic, commercial and political relations with rest of the world.

The basic assumption is language is not a static entity. It is an ongoing social activity performed by individuals belonging to different groups. For instance a person operating computer has to be proficient in English Language skills. A person who is working in a call center needs to know spoken English. Thus English no longer belongs to any one country the future of English has to be clearly identified as the language of technology and the language of international communication. The Indian subcontinent ranks third in the world, after the USA and UK, so far as the number of English speakers is concerned. In recent years no doubt English has gained wide popularity among the educated Indian, particularly youth that they use it like their own mother tongue not as a borrowed language. It would not be exaggeration to say the language is now well established in the country and has acquired an independent identity of its own. Fundamentally closer to the British English, with the advent of globalization, it has been influenced by the American way of Speaking and writing. Yet, the flavour is distinctly Indian.

This paper focuses on one dimension of Indianisation of English i.e. the coming of English to India, its spread and consolidation and the acceptance, use and functionality. All these stages of the arrival, spread, consolidation and widespread use are, however one side of the story. The other side highlights 'what' has happened to the English language as a consequence. When a language is learnt and used by a large number of speakers in non native contexts it is inevitable that certain very obvious and other not too obvious changes take place in the structure of that language. These changes in the form and structure of the language occur primarily because of three factors: the structural impact of the indigenous languages present in the given context; the learning-teaching situation that obtain the context and the socio-cultural context in which language is used in the new setting.

When English is learnt and used by non native communities of speakers, their own native language or first language often leaves traces on the English i.e. L2 that they acquire. In the Indian scenario this phenomena of interference and transfer leaves its traces on the structure of English i.e. on the sounds, vocabulary and syntax of English. The Indian learners and users of English hail from different regions and have different mother tongues. A Bengali's English carries influence of Bengal; a Tamilian's English has several features of Tamil. Similarly Punjabi's English has features of Punjabi. These influences are most noticeable at the level of sounds. The different Indian languages have a considerable impact on the grammar and lexicon of English and one can find certain typically Bengal or Tamil or Punjabi grammatical features that have crept into English. What is more important is the fact that Indians belonging to different linguistic backgrounds move up on the educational ladder, and as they interact more with other Indians belonging to different linguistic backgrounds, they tend to drop certain regional features which mark their English, a move towards a form of English which is acceptable as standard, educated Indian English. At this point, suffice it to say, that a sort of double denativisation of English takes place. First an English is learnt which is denativised in the sense that it is not really British or American or any other native English but a regionally marked Indian English. Millions of Indians learn and use English in the formal classroom setting so the teachers who teach and the students who learn are typically Indian. In Indian context teachers are supposed to be the role model for the students who themselves use Indian form of English except in case when they have to read books by

British or American writers. The students use Indian English, their parents at home; people in the market place or government offices use Indian English. The Indian learners of English get rare, if any, exposure to models of native Standard English. As a matter of fact, even the written texts are by Indian authors. All this has the inevitable effect that the learners have access to and opportunity for learning Indian forms of English.

Apart from these Indian users of English have to live, interact and communicate in the Indian socio-cultural settings. They have to deal with aspects of Indian reality while communicating other Indian users of English. For example: A garment manufacturer has to market exquisite “Lucknavi kurta pajama suits”, a caterer has to set up “Shamianas”, a journalist has to report on what transpires in the “Lok Shabha” or about “Dharnas”, Walk-outs, “Bandhs”, “Laathi charge”, atrocities on “Dalits”; an art critic has to discuss “vigorous jugalbandi”, “Thekas” and “Thumris” or styles of “Gayaki”. The Indian police have “Hawaldars” and “Thanedars” who maintain “Punchnamas” and “Sipahis” who have to report for duty at the “chowki” or “Thana”; the rich English speaking business man goes on “Vaishno Devi Yatra” or offers “Prasadam” throws lavish parties on the occasion of the “Mundan Sanskar” of his grandson. The politicians have to reminisce about the teachings of “Bapu” or invoke the principles of “Panchsheel” or exhort the masses to vote for their party through “Rathyatras” or “Padyatras”. A surgeon has to be addressed as “Doctor Saheb”, a professor as “Professor Saheb” and a superior in office as “Saab” or “Saheb”.

The point is that the Indian reality, Indian subjects and Indian contexts and norms of behavior reshape and reform English in India. It is this reshaping and reforming of English that leads to what we call the Indianisation of English. It is evident from the quote of Raja Rao:

“...One has to convey in a language that is not one’s own the spirit that is one’s own. One has to convey the various shades and omissions of a certain thought-movement that looks maltreated in an alien language to us. It is the language of our intellectual make-up. We are instinctively bilingual, many of us writing in our own language and in English. We cannot write like the English. We should not.... Our method of expression therefore has to be a dialect which will someday prove to be as distinctive and colorful as the Irish or the American. Time alone will justify it...the tempo of Indian life must be infused into our English expression, even as the tempo of American or Irish life has gone into theirs.”

In its sojourn of three hundred years in India, English has interacted with the Indian languages, influencing them and being influenced by them in turn. This mutual influence has been at the level of sounds, words, grammar and style. Moreover, the unique socio-cultural set up of India has also transformed English, making it closer to the Indian soil. Indian writers writing in English have introduced a new trend of writing to provide us Indian flavour by using Indian words in English, making it Indianised and it has attained wide popularity.

Works Cited:

- Agnihotri, R.K. and A.L. Khanna, ed. *Second Language Acquisition, Social and Linguistic Aspects of English in India*. New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1994. Print.
- Crystal, David. *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1997. Print.
- Gupta, R.S. and Kapil Kapoor, ed. *English in India: Issues and Problems*. Delhi: Academic Foundation, 1991. Print.

Hawkins, R.E. *Common Indian Words in English*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1984. Print.

Kachru, Braj B. *The Indianisation of English*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1993. Print.

Whitworth, George C. *An Anglo Indian Dictionary*. London: Kegan Paul, 1885. Print.