Characteristics of Indian English

Contents.

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Thanking you,

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Characteristics of Indian English.

English plays a major role in today's world as it is the leading language of many international discourses. Being a language that has developed over the course of 1,400 years, English has been constantly evolving till the present day. The modern form of English (Modern English) has been spreading across the world since the 17th century. As the language transgressed many geographical boundaries, it began changing its form variably. Among them, one of the class variety is Indian English, which is the English language spoken in India as well as spoken among the Indian diasporas across the world.

The history of Indian English traces back to the East India Company established in 1600s. English was spread at a high pace throughout the country because of two main reasons. Firstly, the Europeans pushed Indians to converse in English as they needed a common medium of language for communication. Secondly, teaching English was one of the goals of the British to civilizing the country. As the language continued to expand over the Indian landmass it started acquiring new varieties. Slowly it started competing with the Indian local languages and then in the year "1774 English became the language of the Supreme Court in Calcutta" (Rizwan).

People such as T B Macaulay had a great influence in introducing English into the education system of India. He pushed to make English the official language and as the medium of instruction in all schools. Even though there was a high chance of making Hindi the sole official language of the country, but the pressure from non-Hindi speakers retained the use of English for official purposes. In the contemporary world, English remains one of the official languages in India. . In the preface of his classic *Kanthapura*, first published in 1938, Raja Rao writes, "We cannot write like the English. We should not. We cannot write only as Indians. Our method of expression has to be a dialect which will some day prove to be as distinctive and colourful as the Irish and the American. Time alone will justify it." (Raja Rao; 1938)

In India, less than four percent of the population speaks English but because of the large population, the three percent of English speakers made India among the top four countries in the world with the highest number of English speakers. English language in India has undergone changes a lot since the British English as it has taken a new form called Indian English. It has its new functions, characteristics, and usage as the language has been influenced by many local languages. The Indian English may not be understood by the British as many words have different meanings in India. It would be complicated for them to learn Indian English as the slang, tone, and rhythm are composed in a typical Indian style. There are also many borrowed words from the regional languages in Indian English. The formation of dialects in the language is because of the difficulty of Indians to produce certain sounds in Received Pronunciation. This paper tries to shed light on the characteristics of Indian English. In the contemporary world, when people have the technologies to travel across the globe, there has to be a common language by which they can

communicate to anybody irrespective of their nation. Thus, English which serves as a common language for the world has the utmost relevance in our day-to-day life. It is as well important to know the different variants and dialects. And this paper helps to give the reader a brief knowledge of the Indian variant of English.

Why English to Indian English?

This can be a curious question for foreigners, what is the need for changing English rather they could have only changed the accent? In India only less than three percent of the people speak English, all the others have an L1 of Indian languages. A total of 22 languages are spoken at present in India, they all differ from each other in various aspects such as phonology, word – structure, syntax, rhythm. Emerging from a wide variety of linguistic communities Indians couldn't speak English the same way everywhere. Indian English is something that is easily graspable and sociable. Unlike the RP (Received Pronunciation) and GA (General American), Indian English has its own certain pronunciations and morphologies. It is never implemented nor published, whereas the pronunciations have been changed through people's communications for many years. People have been writing English in a way they used to write in their L1 which makes the syntax of Standard English go haywire. Also, words have been forming and have been used with new meanings. These new morphological features led to the creation of a new lexicon for Indian English. In conclusion, Indian English isn't something that formed instantly, whereas it formed over the course of many years making English easy for the Indians.

Vocabulary.

Indian English has a long list of vocabulary which is a result of the influence of native languages. Even the words from India have been introduced to the world too, such as jungle, bungalow, punch, shawl, veranda (Sawant).

Meanings of words are changed occasionally such as the word "high-tech guy" in Indian conversations is not used for a person who is technologically advanced nor a person who wears all modern gadgets. But one who is dressed very modernly and has the features of luxury and style. In Indian English, there is a direct translation of the repetition of words termed as 'Reduplicatives" from most of the native languages. In Hindi people say chotti-chotti and in Malayalam people say cheriya-cheriya which means "small/tiny". As people try to use the same phrase for the same effect in English, they say "short-short", "small-small", "tall-tall". This reduplication is used to show the degree, which means "short-short" is shorter than just "short", all these reduplicated words have semantic connotations and inferences –

For example:

- Did you see those *tall-tall* buildings in Dubai?
- I have *small-small* puppies at my home.

All these vocabulary makes Indian English easy to learn.

Morphology.

The morphology of Indian English is very easy to grasp, it is often added with creative new terms and usages. Many words in English that don't offer a clear cut idea have been changed in Indian English and compounded with other words to give a better understanding. Words such as "guy" and "friend", "cousin" and "brother" are grouped together making it as "guy-friend" and "cousin-brother" to offer a clear understanding of the gender. In this instance, Indian English is much easier to understand and also provides greater details comparing to the standard dialect of English. Other compound words include pin-drop silence, batchmate or batch-mate (for classmate) chalk-piece, key-bunch, meeting notice, and age barred (Rizwan). "Time" and "pass" have been added together which appears as "time-pass" meaning to pass time.

- "My friends walked along the road for time-pass".

Similar to these, words are grouped with prefixes and suffixes. The word "wheatish skin" is an Indian English word of this kind. It means a person who has the colour of wheat. It is often added with many terms such as okay making it okayish. In addition to this, many words from the native language have been grouped with suffixes. For example:

- Indian words such as *Gunda*, which means criminal in Malayalam is added with a prefix of "ism" which turns it to be "Gundayism" which apparently means criminalism.
- *Romanjam*, a Malayalam word which means simple "Goosebumps" and it is being modified to "Romanjification". The usage of "ification" denotes the process; the process of making one feel goose bumps.

Likewise, many words have been modified in English, also the influence of English has changed the words of the native language. The word "Super" can be considered as one of the most famous words of English in India. People who don't even know English might know what "super" means might be using it wherever he finds it appropriate. It has been added as a prefix for a lot of words. "Super Market", "Super Store", "Super Salon" all these means nothing but an upgraded version of these shops. Like, "Super Markets" may contain more goods and stationaries than normal markets. This has been a tradition for a long since now. Another convention of Indian English is the non-pluralization of words. It is often to hear in conversations when you are in India. In sentences such as "Ravi is one of relative", "I have one of the disc". The possible reason behind this might be the word "one", when "one" is used in these sentences people are being confused and uses singular.

Words are often cut short in Indian English to make it easier to converse. Also, making words shorter is more convenient. Same as most people have a nickname that is shorter than their full name. For example: The name "Sidharth" is made to "Sidhu", "Lakshmi" is made to "Lachu". Similarly, "Enthusiasm" is cut short into "enthu". It can be the result of difficulties in pronouncing "siasm". There isn't any popular word in Indian languages which sounds similar to it making this sound very odd to Indians. So Indians speak: "Cristiano Ronaldo is a very enthu person". "Fundamentals" is shortened to fundas and the word "fundu" means wonderful or brilliant (Baldridge). For example: "My friends are really enthu people." Similarly, "suppli" is a word that

took over the place of "supplementary" especially in engineering colleges of South India. The words such as "Have you finished your suppli exams?" have been echoing inside the college halls for a long time now. Considering all these, we can conclude the Indian English stands out from other variants as it has a creative and simple morphology.

Native words and Indian English.

In daily lives, when people struggle to get a flow or to have fluidity they insert their L1 words to maintain it. Using these native words in the middle of English sentences eases their flow and fluidity. Also, many English words are very well used in villages; such as the word "hopeless" in a village called Dadri is very well used. Even though people don't know their exact meanings, they tend to use it whenever they go through a bad situation. Such as when a lady was trapped inside a room and the door is jammed she said "Madam! *Mem* hopeless *se hogaye*!" after rescuing her (In class-lecture reference).

Hindi speakers uses words such as *achcha* and *pakka* even when they are speaking in English which means "good" and "sure" relatively. This can be considered as code- mixing. Some of the examples are:

- You are doing it *achcha* go on!
- If you are going to do it, *pakka* you will get punished.

Tamilians uses the word *machaa* which means "friend" in Tamil.

- *Macha* I like your voice.

Keralites inserts a lot of *pakshe* and *sheri* in between English sentences to have language fluidity. It means "but" and "okay" respectively.

- I am very lazy *pakshe* I always gets motivated when hearing APJ Abdul Kalaam's stories.
- *Sheri* I will train harder.

Apart from these, when you visit a university having students from all states, we can see Indians calling *yaar*, *da*, *rey* each other no matter from which state they are. These words have come out of their own respective languages and are used commonly by all people.

- I have a lot of assignments to do *yaar!*
- How are you *rey*?
- How are you *da*?

Lexicon.

The Indian English lexicon has a lot of distinct terms. Just like other languages, this lexicon has arrived due to the morphological changes at many stages. Filled with a lot of abbreviations and acronyms, the Indian English lexicon may make a foreigner alienated even if he knows English. Terms that would make foreigners confused includes:

Jan	January
Feb	February
Subsi	Subsidiary
Supli	Supplementary
Soopi	Superintendent
Princi	Principle
G. Sec.	General Secretary
Soc. Sec.	Social Secretary
Pres.	President
Lab ass	Laboratory assistant
Dep.	Department
Agri	Agriculture

Table 1.1 abbreviation (Rizwan).

Unlike native speakers of English, who reads "pres" as President, Indian English speakers would read it as "pre-es". Similarly, "sup –li", "sub-si", "jan", "feb" are often found in conversations through Indian English. It is one of the main reasons for an outsider to not to understand while an Indian is reading something out loud.

Whenever a tourist or a foreigner visits India their day won't pass without asking "what does this stand for?" Indian media, newspapers, and magazines are all covered with acronyms that won't be understood easily (Rizwan). The use of acronyms makes conversations easier. Most of the Indian languages have a great pace during conversing, this might be one of the reasons for the growing number of making these acronyms and using them in daily lives as these can boost up the speed of conversing. Some common acronyms are as follows:

MCP	Male Chauvinist Pig
FOC	Free of Charge
MPK	*Maine Pyar Kiya*
QSQT	*Qayamat Se Qayamat Tak*
ILU	I love you
ABCD	American Born Confused Desi
FOB	Fresh off the Boat

Table 1.2 Indian acronyms (Rizwan).

It is the same with case with political parties of India, they all have an abbreviation for which they have been known for years. It has been used very thoroughly all over the country which even made many people forget the full form of these parties.

CPI	Communist Party of India.
UDF	Upper Democratic Front.
LDF	Left Democratic Front.
DYFI	Democratic Youth Federation of India.
NCP	Nationalist Congress Party.
BJP	Bharatiya Janata Party.

Table 1.3 Indian political parties.

Phonology.

Unlike Morphology, Phonology isn't something that changes easily. The phonology of English has changed to the Indian English phonology over the course of many years. It changes eventually as the speakers of Indian English converse. The changes occur at a very slow pace as people tend to speak according to their ease. With the aid of time, Indian English has shifted a lot from Received Pronunciation in terms of phonology. Thus, it is this part of the Indian English that appears as the most deviated element from the original form of English. All the twenty-two languages of India have their own special kinds of rhythms and tones. And the Indians who are well adapted and adjusted to their slang have a greater tendency to use it for English too. People change difficult words according to their ease. The native languages in which the Indians converses since their birth has taught them certain sounds but Indians find it difficult to produce many sounds of the English language. The Indian English speakers tend to drop the past tense "ed" after the sound /k/. "Talked" becomes "talk" and "walked" becomes "walk". This is because of their difficulty to pronounce "ed" just after /k/. For examples, Indians would say:

- He talk about badminton.
- We walk across Birmingham.

Indians are also seen to speak vowel sounds, but according to the Received Pronunciation, the vowel sounds should be dropped while pronouncing. Such as: the word "typically" should be pronounced as /tipikly/ but Indians who includes the vowel sounds pronounce it as /tipikaly/ (Baldridge). This makes people's life easier as they have the freedom to read what they are seeing; they read the actual spellings. In Indian English, the sounds: /t/, /p/, /k/ are not aspirated. Whereas, in Received Pronunciation, it is often aspirated word-initial stressed syllables (Rizwan). It can be due to the difference in the breathing pattern of Indian English and Received Pronunciation to produce certain sounds. Similarly, the difference between producing /v/ and /w/ are indeterminable in Indians (Sawant). In Received Pronunciation, /v/ is a sound from the category of labio-dental sound, and /w/ is from velar. But, when Indians produce it, it is less distinguishable. A well-known example of this is the Indian pronunciation of the term "volleyball". "Volleyball" is pronounced

as "Walleyball" in India. In the same case, the sound of open-back rounded vowel /ɒ/ has been shifted to /a/. This happens a lot in the southern part of India as south Indians find it difficult to produce this sound. They say:

Word	Received Pronunciation	Indian Pronunciation.
Box	/bɒks/	/baks/
Problem	/ˈprɒbləm/.	/ˈprabləm/
Shop	/ʃɒp/	/ʃap/
Body	/ˈbɒdi/	/ˈbadi/

Table.1.4 when /ɒ/ is changed to /a/.

Similarly, there are a lot of sounds that are mixed with each other. But the major difference in phonology comes in the stress pattern. The Indian native languages are syllable-timed they have no relation or dependence with stress. On the other hand, the English language is solely based on the timings of stress. The word "conduct" is a noun and a verb, thus it has two kinds of pronunciations. The noun "conduct" is pronounced as /kɒndʌkt/ and the verb "conduct" is pronounced as /kənˈdʌkt/. Even though there is a difference in stress pattern for pronouncing both the words, Indians do not follow the shift of stress. Thus, an outsider will not be able to differentiate the noun "conduct" and the verb "conduct" when someone speaks in Indian English (Kachru, 2008).

Conclusion.

Even though Indian English is a bit different from other variants of Received Pronunciations, Indians are never hesitant to use it or to speak it out loud. They respect their variant and have much enthusiasm while speaking it to the rest of the world. A solid example of this in history is the speech made by the late President. Dr. APJ Abdul Kalaam at a conference with the European Union. Abdul Kalaam who was never hesitant to speak with his unique Indian English accent delivered a magnificent speech in 2007 at Strasbourg, Germany. After delivering his speech, he received a standing ovation from the European parliament for his ideas and confidence (News Hour India).

The articulation of Indian English in India for many years has benefitted a lot of native languages. It has influenced the slang and diction of languages. Many words have been borrowed and replaced in Indian English vocabulary. The language has helped India to emerge as an independent country that has a diverse culture. English language has eased conversations between interstates (having different languages) and keeps all the twenty-nine states under one umbrella. It has also influenced India to be known among other developed countries just like Kalaam did at the European Union.

Indian English literature has also taken the country's position a lot higher in the realm of literature. Novels such as The God of Small Things, A Glass Palace, and A Suitable Boy have reached top charts in the whole world. Moreover, it is clear that the Indian native culture and its atmosphere can be only represented using Indian English. No other variant can't match with it when in relation to India. In conclusion, the language dominates in the sub-continent and represents the country's soul to the world.

Factual Review.

The topic of this paper is a very widely researched topic, this gave the writer a lot of research materials. The writer experienced difficulties when he knew he was not speaking in Received Pronunciation, and he did had his own experiences as materials to the paper. This paper has a very relevant content which everyone has to read if they are planning to go abroad.

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