

English in A Globalized World

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English has undoubtedly emerged as the most preferred Global Language in the last century. In the last 25 years, its character has changed significantly because of its use in the newly discovered means of communication and the resultant large-scale assimilation from other languages rooted in varied cultural contexts. According to an estimate, one-third of the world population has developed basic proficiency in English and the number of non-native speakers far exceeds the number of native speakers.

English is the dominant international language in communication, science, business, aviation, entertainment, diplomacy and the Internet. A working knowledge of English is required in many fields and occupations. It has become necessary for most countries today to teach English as one of the compulsory subjects at the school level besides the mother tongue. In India alone, more than 100 million children are going to learn 'English this year. A lot of attention, therefore, needs to be paid to the teaching and learning of English.

A first look at the existing English Language Teaching (ELT) methodology reveals that „ most of its proponents came from the West. Strangely, there is little contribution from non-native practitioners of ELT in the world even when there is a strong tradition of ELT in countries like India; and it is at such a vast scale. While so much in the world has changed, in India, English continues to be taught at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels through the teacher-centered methodologies like the lecture method. Moreover, the content of teaching at these levels is largely English literature rather than the much needed language skills. Most of the literary texts prescribed at these levels are works of the native writers, whereas a lot of literature has already been produced by non-native writers writing in English in almost all parts of the world which if used would be very helpful in inculcating a balanced world view among the learners. What is greatly disturbing is that most learners in the English classes do not have the basic linguistic skills and feel themselves at sea when faced with the additional task of deciphering works of prominent English authors such as Shakespeare and Milton, and the like. Also, hardly any new methods of teaching lecture have been implemented in our classrooms. They mostly learn the answers by rote and produce them in the three-hour final examination without much understanding either of the contents of their lessons or having acquired any of the desired communicative abilities.

In the wake of the focus on communication in recent years, some efforts have been made to teach some linguistic skills, especially speaking. However, a lot more needs to be done if we wish to achieve the true aims of education through language teaching.

Most definitions of language in vogue today highlight the communicative function of A language. However, Language is also a powerful tool for human growth and development. It is aptly said, "The heart is like a box, and language is the key. Only by using the key can we open the box and observe the gems it contains." Indeed language is the most potent source of empowerment and bringing about holistic development of man in the world. For instance, the selection of a universal auxiliary language, by itself, can usher in the era of unity and peace because the function of language is to portray the mysteries and secrets of human hearts. No wonder, therefore, it has been suggested by eminent linguists like David Crystal that linguists need to now prepare to get together in an international congress, whose chief aim will be the promotion of this universal medium of speech after resolving many current issues with regard to phonology, syntax, semantics, and so on.

When we consider language in this light, so many issues need to be addressed in the selection of an appropriate teaching methodology to teach English as a Global Language (EGL). EFL and ESL teaching methodologies might not be appropriate because the terms 'foreign' and 'second' would prejudice the learner adversely in advance. These may also not be suitable in the present context. To prepare our students to be world citizens to effectively fulfil their role in the emerging global civilization, we have to think of appropriate texts for imparting the desired human values, besides training them in the linguistic skills. It must be said that no text is value free, so a careful selection is of the utmost importance. Issues that face the world today may need to be highlighted: such as the human rights, equality of sexes, inculcation of scientific temper, environment preservation, humanity rich cultural diversity, and so on. The report of the UNESCO's Taskforce on the challenges before the learners of the 21st century would serve as a good guide for the aims of Language teaching too with its focus on 'learning to learn', 'learning to do', 'learning to live together' and 'learning to be'.

The other features that we might need to incorporate would be the use of latest technologies for teaching both language and literature. The internet, whose discovery is considered to be as revolutionary as the discovery of language itself, could prove to be an invaluable source in a learner participatory teaching approach, in which teachers would become equal participants in learning and help the independent investigation of the learners towards their desired goal. Similarly the multimedia would lend a great help in developing the listening and speaking skills of the learners.

English as a world Language

Today English holds the unique and distinct position of being the most important-world language. The cultural, economic/ military and scientific and technological importance of the United Kingdom and the 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. There are also significant number of speakers in South Africa, India, Malaysia, Singapore and Hong Kong. English is also one of the primary languages of Belize (with Spanish), Cameroon (with French and African languages), Lucia and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (with French Creole), the Federated States of Micronesia, and Liberia.

It is an official language, but not native to large segments of the population, in Fiji, Ghana, Gambia, Kiribati, Lesathania, Nigeria, Malta, the Marshall Islands, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, the Solomon Islands, Samoa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. It is the most commonly used unofficial language of Israel and other countries such as Switzerland, the Netherlands and Germany. English is also the language most often studied as a foreign language in Europe (32.6%) and Japan, followed by French and Spanish. (Source: [http://www.ruf.rice.edu/~kemmer/ words 04/usage/.](http://www.ruf.rice.edu/~kemmer/words04/usage/))

English in India

In terms of English speakers; the Indian subcontinent ranks third in the world after the USA and UK. Studies suggest that over 150 million people speak English in India. The number might seem small compared to the total Indian population that is about approximately 1.1 billion (2006). But, this small segment of the population 'controls domains that have professional prestige,' says Braj Kachru, a leading English language analyst. English was introduced in India as a tool of imperialism. It is a legacy from the British who ruled the country and since then the language has gradually filtered through some of the most important parts of the society: the government, the mass media, the academics, the judiciary, and most importantly, the social sector. Today in India it is not

seen as a language of the colonial masters but as a medium of international discourse. In recent times, one of the reasons why Indians were able to get a quick start in Information Technology and Business Process Outsourcing was their proficiency in the language. Presently 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 the language has gained so much currency among the educated Indians, particularly the youth, that they use it like it is their own mother tongue and not an outside, borrowed language. 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.

Officially English has the status of associate language in India, but arguably it is the most important language today. After Hindi, it is the most commonly spoken and understood language in India. Indians who know English will try to speak the language in some way or other. Most Indians converse in English even with people with whom they share the same mother-tongue. By some strange logic, the common perception today is that if you know English then you are better educated, better cultured and also in possession of superior intellect. Middle class parents compete with each other to get their children the best English education. And it is being seen that in the last decade or so, students who pass out from these schools feel more comfortable using English for reading and writing rather than their own mother-tongue or the local language. The mother-tongue is used only when speaking and interacting with family and friends. The rest of the times it is the English language which is utilized more, particularly by the educated urban.

English in India in the Formal Sector

As mentioned earlier, even though English is not classified as one of the 18 national languages of India, it still remains the associate official language along with Hindi and the local language. But the real picture is that almost all government letters and circulars, with very few exceptions, are circulated in English and most people find them comfortable to deal with. The type of English that sometimes gets written in the process might not satisfy the purists, but the prevalent notion is why worry about grammar and syntax errors when both the parties are able to understand and communicate with each other.

English language newspapers are published practically in every state. The articles and editorials written in these newspapers are exceptionally well-written, catering to an educated Indian audience which appreciates and adapts the style. Compared to many other developing countries, the Indian press has flourished since Independence and exercises a large degree of independence. Many of India's great English-language newspapers and some of its regional language newspapers began during the nineteenth century. After India became independent, ownership of India's leading English-language newspapers was transferred from British to Indian business groups and the fact that most English-language newspapers have the backing of large business houses, has contributed to their independence from the government. The Indian press has experienced impressive growth since independence. In 1950 there were 214 daily newspapers, with forty-four in English and the rest in Indian languages. By 1990, the number of daily newspapers had grown to 2,856, with 209 in English and 2,647 in indigenous languages. By 2005, the number of publishing houses and Indian registered newspapers /periodicals in English alone has risen to almost 8000, of which 750 regularly reach the newsstand. Today the English-language press, which has widespread appeal to the expanding middle class, has a wide multi-city circulation throughout India. And the style is distinctly Indian with no

sense of apology anywhere. This style and flavour has been ardently taken up by the various TV news channels which are creating a major language influence today on the youth of India.

Higher Education in India is basically the prerogative of the English language. Careers in any area, be it business, industry, government or in academics, require fluency or at least a working knowledge in English. In all these businesses the more proficient you are in English the more promotions you are merited with, although there have been exceptions. Subjects as varied as science, English language and literature, economics or medicine are all taught in the English medium and by Indian academics who are well versed in their own subject as well as the ways and methods in which they should be taught to the diverse section of the students.

English in India in the Social Sphere

Other than administration, education, media and business, English is also the commonly spoken language in India. "English", the terminology as suggested by Gurucharan Das, the noted economist, ("English as she's spoke" *Outlook India*, 3 May 2005) is used more in the non-formal sector. This is the area which is enriching the language by its novelty and innovations. For the Indian youth it is no longer Hindi, Bengali, or Tamil which is their mother tongue, but it is more of a blend of Hindi and English (Hinglish), Bengali and English (Bonglish), Tamil and English (Tamlish) etc. According to Das, this new variations are increasingly becoming 'pan-India's street language.' 'At the intersection of these two trends is the fashionable collision of two languages. It's called Hinglish, but should in fact be called English because it is increasingly pan-India's street language'.... 'It has become both the aspirational language and the fashionable language of the drawing rooms of the upper and upper middle-classes.' Gradually it is becoming a uniting factor for the Indian people like Cricket and Bollywood. It is also the language of advertising, Bollywood, TV Soaps, FM Radio etc. where the need of the hour is a glocal variation, that makes the people feel comfortable with a global language by giving it a distinct local flavour. Advertisers, in particular, are reaping huge benefits from slogans such as. Josh machine. *Have your fil, chill your dil, Life ho to aise, Gofida, Hungry kya. Taste main best, mummy aur Everest etc.* Sentences like, 'I am loving it', 'my leg is paining', 'what is your good name', 'let's discuss about the event' etc. and words like, 'cousin brother/cousin sister,' 'co-brother-in-law,' 'pindrop-silence,' 'Madamji / Sirji,' 'filmy,' 'two-wheelers / three-wheelers,' 'stepney,' 'dicky,' 'would-be' etc. are specific to the Indian context. Abbreviations such as, GC, SC, ST, OBC, SEBC and PH can only be understood by an Indian national. All these and many other India specific English words, phrases and sentences are gaining ground everyday and getting world-wide recognition.

The latest edition of the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) includes such India originated words like *bindaas* (cool), *tamasha* (create a scene), *mehndi* (hair colour), *desi* (local), and *lehnga* (a type of skirt). In an interview, the editor of the OED, Catherine Soannes, rejecting criticism that misuse of English words was being legitimized, said, "We are merely reflecting the language as it is today. Indian English is one of the growing areas of language, which is contributing to the language as a whole." Even the Collins English Dictionary has included commonly used words by Indians. They include *auntiji* and *uncleji*, *gora* (white), *yaar* (friend), *badmash* (bad person) and *changa* (fine) etc. A comprehensive list is available in the Wikipedia website.

Indian English Literature

Indian English Literature is the body of work of writers in India who write in the English language and whose mother tongue is usually one of the numerous languages of

India. It is also associated with the works of members of the Indian Diaspora, especially people like Salman Rushdie who were born in India. As a category, this production comes under the broader realm of postcolonial literature the production from previously colonized countries such as India. Indian English literature has a reasonably long period of growth. It began in early 19th century and has continued ever since acquiring much newer and much larger dimension after Independence, and particularly in the last two decades of the 20th century it got integrated with the development of Indian Bhasa languages and came to be considered as one of the major Indian language literatures for all purposes.

This is interestingly evidenced from a consideration of Sahitya Akademi Awards given every year to the best selected books in Indian languages. The Akademi Awards were started to be given from 1955, to Indian languages and literature, and in course of time they have acquired immense prestige as substantial recognition for the languages. English was listed as a major language of India from the beginning, and books in Indian English literature were given due consideration for the Award every year. But interestingly, in a period of 20 years, from 1955 to 1974, covering from mid-fifties to mid-seventies, only 6 Awards were given, when for example, in Hindi 19 Awards were given, and in Bengali 17, Tamil 16, and even in a much less used language like Sanskrit 10 (*General Information Sahitya Akademi*, 2003). This is doubly interesting when one considers that annual English language publications in India top the list of all annual Indian Bhasa publications. By an estimate India publishes on an average about 20,000 titles in a year in English and about 18 Indian languages, of which about 40 to 45 percent are in English, and it ranks seventh in the world in terms of the number of titles published annually, and third in terms of production of titles in English, next to U.S.A. and U.K. (Ed. P.S. Bhatti 1987). By another estimate (Ed. B. S. Kesavan 1961) the books received by the National Library in Calcutta, in 1960, in 14 Indian languages, including English, numbered 9732, of which titles in English were 3167, the second place being taken by Bengali, 1022. This amounts to a dichotomy, that whereas English language publications in India constitute a very substantial portion of the total publications, the Sahitya Akademi/ or the National Akademi of Letters, thought it fit to accord recognition and honour only to 6 books in Indian English literature in a period of 20 years, the longest ever in that period for any Indian Language. Then again out of six books four were strictly literature that is novel, the rest two are non-fiction, and one of the six authors was a non-Indian, Verrier Elwin.

All that shows one thing the reality aspect of Indian English literature. Even two decades after Independence it had not acquired much credibility and not sufficiently considered at par with other Indian language literatures. But after mid-seventies the acceptance factor became different which we will take up a little later. In fact the importance of English came to be recognized and got well-established in areas other than strictly literary, that is, in matters of communication and administration as well as in journalistic writing, essays and biography etc., in short, mostly non-fiction prose. The first-ever history of Indian English literature, entitled *Indian Writing in English*, by K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar, published in 1962, had a daunting job to do. First of all the second and third editions of the book came after a decade each, in 1973 and 1983 respectively, by itself an indication of the slow recognition that Indian English literature was gaining around, which became different after 1983, when subsequent editions of the book came out more frequently. Secondly, the two points made by Iyengar in the Preface to the 3rd edition of his book (1983) with reference to the condition of Indian English literature in the sixties and seventies, are pertinent, and bear with the facts we are underlining about.

The first point relates to the edition itself, an admission that since the publication of the second edition (1973), "there has been witnessed a burst of activity in Indian Writing in English and something akin to a global proliferation of interest in this new literature." The second point also refers to the same edition where the writer justifies adding a "Postscript Chapter" (about 70 pages) which he thought can also stand on its own "as an assessment of Indian Writing in English during the decade it won general recognition, as a distinctive literature of India".

"Thus, as we have pointed out, the condition of Indian English literature, even after two decades of Independence, was not that stable, and it is only after mid-seventies onwards that it started changing towards better, towards a greater credibility and recognition. Therefore, the first-ever History of Indian English Literature, as Iyengar's was, the account and the history of development, was not strictly confined to literature alone. It went over to a discussion other than literature, the factors which sustain the growth of literature no doubt - the socio-cultural, even political factors, but which are not strictly necessary in a history of literature. Iyengar himself admits it - "In a 'course' like this criticism is apt to fuse disconcertingly with biography, and literary history with political and cultural history and I have tried to bear in mind the implications of this intimate intermingling of literature and life." (Iyengar 1962).

Indian English literature, particularly in one form, that is, poetry, beginning from early 19th century, moved tardily and haltingly, in a limited manner, almost like an appendage of a much larger movement, through the good part of the century, till it came to a fruitful identity towards the end of the 19th century and early 20th, mostly in the 40 years between 1890 and 1930. The large number of poets who wrote in English never thought of it as a foreign language and never used it as such. It came to them almost as naturally as their own mother tongue and assumed a shape and structure distinctly Indian. Secondly, these poets, like the poets in Indian languages, looked at themselves and at the realities and spoke of their creative growth and identity in a distinctly Indian context.

In its early stages Indian English fiction was influenced by the Western art form of the "novel". Early Indian writers used English in its pure form to convey an experience which was essentially Indian. Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* is Indian in terms of its storytelling qualities. Nirad C. Chaudhuri, a self-confessed Anglophile is the writer of *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian* (1951) where he relates his life experiences and influences.

R.K. Narayan is a writer who contributed over many decades and who continued to write till his death recently. Similar to Thomas Hardy's Wessex, Narayan created the fictitious town of Malgudi where he set his novels. Graham Greene, who was a great friend of Narayan, felt that through Malgudi the western audience could vividly understand the Indian experience. Narayan's evocation of small town life and its experiences through the eyes of the endearing child protagonist Swaminathan in *Swami and Friends* is a good example of his writing style.

Among the later writers, the most notable is Salman Rushdie, born in India, now living in the UK. Rushdie with his famous work *Midnight's Children* (Booker Prize 1981, Booker of Bookers, 1992) ushered in a new trend of writing. He used a hybrid language - English generously peppered with Indian terms - to convey a theme that could be seen as representing the vast canvas of India. He is usually categorized under the magic realism mode of writing most famously associated with Gabriel Garcia Marquez.

As we have pointed out, the development of Indian English novel after Independence has been phenomenal. No doubt an awareness of England and English language and literature remained in the subconscious, as all these writers were English-educated,

mostly belonged to the upper echelons of the society, and many of them had close contact with England at a functional level. Yet they remained true to Indian culture, Indian heritage and tradition, and to sprawling segments of Indian life, and what they portrayed in their novels was basically the account of many changes, socially, politically, and in human matters, that came over India after Independence. These writers laid a foundation of a new literature in English, separate from Indian language-literatures, but generally akin to it as a new branch of development, on which, still newer, but more substantial and more truly Indian literature, after 1980, and writers like Vikram Seth (who was the first among the new writers to get the Sahitya Akademi recognition in 1988) flourished. The nourishment they got was from many sources, including the world of Indian living that had got settled by that time, and had enveloped the mindset of all Indian writers, but in no less measure in their attitudes of self-realization and independence from all external influences, in their desire to strike on their own and grow on their own, not only in terms of motivations and points of view, but also in form. What the novelists demonstrated, say Shyamala A. Narayan and Jon Mee, "was a command of the dominant forms of the English- novel, and the right of Indian novelists to be taken seriously in terms of the criteria of Western novel-writing." (Mehrotra 2003, p.231).

Conclusion

David Crystal, noted linguist and author of the *Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language*, predicts that Indian English will become the most widely spoken variant based on India's likely economic success in the 21st century and the sheer population size. "If 100 million Indians pronounce an English word in a certain way," he says, "this is more than Britain's population so, it's the only way to pronounce it." Therefore, we can safely conclude that English in India is well established in the country and is well on its way to acquire its own independent identity. With the increase in Foreign Direct Investments to India and with the flourishing of the BPO and KPO industry, English is now playing a key role in building and expanding business between foreign and Indian companies. People have realized that in this globalised world, it is a language of opportunity, and if for the average Indian it is difficult to adapt to the American or British standard, then the next best thing would be to make the language adapt to the country and people. Just like the Americans, Australians and the British who have their own unique English words, phrases; the India adapted English also has its own unique English, called Indian English. At the same time the standard international English is also used in most formal situations, which shows that most educated Indians are at home with both American and British variants, even though the English normally taught in India follows British spelling pronunciation. Also, this exposure to the language has made Indian English Literature a force to reckon with in World Literature today.

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