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Some Sense Variations of Indian Words in English: A Corpus Based Study

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Abstract:

The process of Indianization of English had started long before Independence. A large number of Indian words have been assimilated into English language. However it is noticeable that the meanings of Indian words in English are not always identical with those in the Indian languages. There is almost always a register-bound restriction of the meaning assimilated in English. The present study is based on 'The Kolhapur Corpus of Indian English'. An attempt has been made to find out whether the words in the corpus are used in the same sense as those given in Webster's Third New International Dictionary.

Keywords: Indian words, assimilated, sense variations, corpus based, Webster's Dictionary.

Introduction:

The process of Indianization of English has started long before Independence. One of the major processes in this phenomenon was the borrowing of Indian words into English language. English is the one language which has had the privilege of borrowing on the most massive scale over the years. Lexical borrowing in English has been discussed at length by a number of scholars. To mention some of the important works: Yule and Burnell (1886), Serjeantson (1935), Subba Rao (1954), Braj Kachru (1961), Hawkins (1984).

A large number of Indian words have been assimilated into English language. However, it is noticeable that the meanings of Indian words in English are not always identical with those in the Indian languages. There is almost always a register-bound restriction of the meaning assimilated in English, as pointed out by Kachru (1975).

The present study is based on '*The Kolhapur Corpus of Indian English*' Shastri et al (1986). It may be appropriate here to discuss the concept of a corpus in brief.

The Random House Dictionary of the English Language (1967) gives the following definition of 'corpus': "A body of utterances or sentences assumed to be representative of and used for grammatical analysis of a given language or dialect." The method of using a corpus was

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practiced by lexicographers in the 18th century and by writers of compendious grammars such as Jespersen, Visser etc. Even for 'Grammar of Contemporary English' the monumental, authentic work produced in recent years by Quirk et al (1972) is based on the survey of English usage carried out at the University College London - - a corpus of written and spoken present day British English. Thus the use of corpus in linguistic description has gained ground once again. It is used as a source material for linguistic study.

The first concerted effort towards a systematic and comprehensive description of Indian English may be said to be the building of '*The Kolhapur Corpus of Indian English*' parallel to the LOB and Brown Corpora of British and American English by Dr. S.V. Shastri in the early eighties. It is a million-word computer corpus of Indian English intended to be a representative corpus of sample texts printed and published in 1978. The texts were largely selected by stratified random sampling process. The corpus consists of 500 texts of 2000 running words distributed over 15 genres of writing representing different styles.

The present study is based on above mentioned corpus of Indian English. There are 1924 Indian words and expressions in the corpus. An attempt was made to find out which of the Indian words in the corpus have acquired currency in the native variety, i.e. occur in the English dictionary (web.). It is noticed that 602 of these Indian words (including derivations) have been assimilated into English.

Further an attempt is made to find out whether the words in the corpus are used in the same sense as those given in web. On checking these it is noticed that there is a variety of differences between the senses of several words recorded in the dictionary and those with which they occur in the corpus.

The Indian words in the corpus that display sense variation:

I. **Words that occur in the corpus with a sense not recorded in the dictionary**:
1. In web the word <u>cutcheri</u> occurs with following meaning:
   India: a public office for administrative or judicial business
   COURTHOUSE; also: any administrative office
   In the corpus it occurs with the meaning i) a public office and ii) also musical <u>concert</u>
   e.g. i) . . . purpose, as stated by the author himself, is to lay bare the corruption and dishonesty of some of the Shirastedars, Karkuns, etc., employed in <u>Kutcheries</u>, under European gentlemen . . . (1810G06)
   ii) There was a small dose of top octave singing mounted on the gandhara which did not seem very natural to the vocalist. Perhaps, it was felt that this was a "must" to fulfil conventional <u>cutcheri</u> requirement (0330C02).
2. In web the word <u>Karma</u> occurs with the following meanings pertaining to religion only:

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1) The force generated by a person's actions that is held in Hinduism and Buddhism to be motive power for the round of rebirth and deaths endured by him until he has achieved spiritual liberation and freed himself from the effects of such force.

2) The sum total of the ethical consequences of person's good or bad actions comprising thoughts, words and deeds that is held in Hinduism and Buddhism to determine his specific destiny in his next existence.

3) A subtle form of matter held in Jainism to develop in the soul and vitiate its purity, to lengthen the course of individual transmigration and to postpone the possibility of final salvation.

In addition to reglious meaning, karma occurs with a different sense in our data.

i.e. grammatical category i.e. element of sentence - - the object in the corpus e.g.

It may be pointed out that reflexives are made from casuals also and here also the verbal stem selects atmanepada suffixes: Panini describes it as follows: The causal of a root, the object (karma) of which becomes agent (karta) in the causal (0290J34) = element of sentence.

The word karma also occurs with the general Indian word meaning (duty) e.g.

Sacrifice was regarded as almost the only kind of duty or karma (0380J52) = duty

And of course with the religious meaning e.g.

(1) . . . great king, this name-and-form commits deeds, either pure or impure, and by that karma another name-and-form is reborn (1250D01) = the force generated by person's actions.   Web-1

(2) Karma . . . works as a link connecting old and new being and that transmigrated from one being to another. (1480D01)   Web-2

3. In web word ma occurs with following meaning:

MOTHER

In the corpus it occurs with the meaning (i) mother and (ii) also fourth note of musical scale.

e.g. i) Almost the first thing every infant in the village knew after knowing its ma and ba, was all about the demon . . . (0860N11).

ii) Leaving aside the Sruti interval from ma, or considering the entire gamut as composed of two terachords, the entire sequence is found to be quite harmonious (650J67).

It may be pointed out that in these examples the word ma is spelt in the same way but pronounced differently, (i) /ma/=mother (ii) /m/=Fourth note of musical scale.

4. In web the word ras occurs with the following meaning:

ras also rasa: a Manipuri dance-drama enacting the legand of the deity Krishna and his consort Radha.

In the corpus it has the following two meanings: (i) dance (ii) sentiment

e.g. (i) She was told that dances like the garba and the ras, and songs, were available in plenty in Bombay, but they were sophisticated and stylized. (0411N14)

(ii) Hindustani classical music has also some association with the theory of <u>rasa</u> in which Bharat and his followers have attempted to classify the aesthetic emotion generated by a work of art into nine kinds. (1380G46)

Similarly, this word is pronounced different i.e. they are homographs: /ra:s/ and /ras/.

5. In Web the word <u>sahib</u> occurs with the following meanings:

1: Sir, MASTER - - used as a term of respect esp. among Hindus and Muslims in colonial India when addressing or speaking of a European of some social status and as a general title affixed to the name or official title of a European or affixed to the title of a man of rank.

2: European: typically: a European official or settler in a largely non-European population.

In the corpus examples it occurs with the meanings:

i)   Reference to Indian who has returned from a foreign country.

ii) Reference to a (Indian) high official.

iii) Reference to honorable (Indian) person in society.

iv) Reference to European.

e.g.

i)   My shirtfront is as fluffy and starched as that of any England returned <u>sahib</u>. (0180K27)

ii) He personally carried the file to the Minister <u>sahib</u> for his signature. (0740K10)

iii) "You mean the article about Khan <u>sahib</u> Karuppiah?" "Yes". "I has seen it before it was published", said Sundaram. (1510K09)

iv) The British hunter despised the local Shikari. In the <u>sahib's</u> view, the Shikari sat over slat licks and water holes. (0590E17)

6. In web the word <u>vanaspati</u> occurs with the following meaning: a hydrogenated vegetable fat used as butter, substitute in India.

But in the corpus it occurs with the meanings:

(i) Edible oil and also

(ii) Voice

e.g. (i) . . . <u>Vanaspati</u>, sugar, paper drugs and medicines without exceptions and basic house building materials are exempted from the new central excise burdens. (1490B08)

(ii) His (Krishnamurthi's) studies renditions of "Pariyachaka" (<u>Vanaspati</u>) and Koniyade (Kokiladhwani) brought out with clarity the ragas' colors... (0160C02)

II. Words that occur in the corpus with an altogether different meaning.

1. In Web the word <u>Ardhamagadhi</u> occurs with following meaning only:

a Prakrit language of north India used in a large part of the Jain canon

But in the corpus it occurs with the following meaning 'kind of song'

e.g. The four kinds of songs or geetis in which the jatis were applied were magadhi, <u>ardhamagadhi</u>; sambhavita and prithule. (1860J67)

2. In Web the word <u>baba</u> occurs with following meanings:

BABY, CHILD

But in the corpus it occurs with following meanings:

i) Hindu Saint

e.g. Today we find that there is a rapid growth of <u>babas</u>, swamis, saints and tantric yogis. (1530F37)

ii) as an interjection expressing impatience

     BABA!

e.g. "Who knows" we know <u>baba</u>, she need not teach us all these. . . (1090K25)

3. In Web the word <u>bhangi</u> occurs with following meaning:

a sweeper or scavenger being a member of one of the lowest untouchable castes.

But in the corpus its occurs with following meaning

e.g. The chauka position and the <u>Bhangis</u> were well-maintained and the abhinaya to the ashtapadis from the Geeta Govinda was performed with dignity. (0630C05)

4. In Web the word <u>brahma</u> occurs with the following meanings:

1: brahma: an Asian breed of very large domestic fowls having pea combs and featherd legs and occurring in light, dark and buff-color varieties.

2: -s : a bird of the Brahma breed.

     2

     Brahma: BRAHMAN

     But in the corpus it occurs with following meaning: i.e. the Creator

e.g. i) . . . the five Eternal Entities Jiva, Ishwar, Maya, <u>Brahma</u> and parabhahman. (0810D08)

ii) in the vedi, the bridegroom lights the havan, --- amd before the great testifier fire and a terrestrial witness the 'brahma' he takes his marital vows. (1560E11)

     Brahma in the sense of the Creator is not recorded in Web.

5. In Web the word <u>huh</u> occurs with the following meaning only:

     Used typically to express surprise,

     Disbelief or disgust

But in the corpus it occurs with the meaning 'expressing agreement'

e.g. I said <u>huh</u> to everything and when I ran back 'Kalyani' shouted at me (1590K29)

As stated earlier in example No. 1 in Web the word <u>magadhi</u> occurs with following sense the Prakrit language of Magadha

But in the corpus it occurs with the meaning 'kind of a song'.

e.g. The four kinds of songs or geetis in which the jatis were applied were <u>magadhi</u>, ardhamagadhi, Sambhavita and prithule. (1860J67)

6. In Web the word <u>pancama</u> occurs with following meaning:

     a member of the lowest caste group in India: HARIJAN, UNTOUCHABLE

But in the corpus it occurs with the meaning 'one of the seven notes in Indian music'

e.g. The base of all Indian music rests on the seven notes and Bharata named the notes sadja, rishava, gandhara, madhyama, <u>pancama</u>, dhaivata and nishada . . . (0370J67)

Conclusion:

The dictionary has recorded the register-bound sense or senses. Many words thus recorded have just one sense and many others several senses, may be in the same register or in different register. The number of Indian words that display sense variation in the corpus compared with the dictionary entries is rather limited. But it seems to be a pointer of the fact that Indian words in English do exploit the resources of both the borrowing and the receiving language.

Abbreviations:

Web: Webster's Third New International Dictionary (1961).

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