



Sociolinguistic Contexts in Education with Particular Reference to the Transfer of Indianisms in Indian English

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ABSTRACT

Since the arrival of English in India, it has been establishing itself toward gradual development. In its long sojourn on our native soil, English has indianised itself considerably. Under the above title of this paper, I discussed some of the features of this Indianisation. Till now a vast body of literature has been written in English. I am also concerned about the role of English, vis-à-vis the 'Indian' languages in the post-independence era. Since, the establishment and development of English in India, English has been used as a second language (L_2) rather than as the mother-tongue or a native one (L_1). Hence, there are bilinguals and sometimes multilinguals responding to an Indian context. English functions in the sociolinguistic setting, used as a link language both intra-nationally and internationally and is used in Indian English writings. In fact, it has won international accolades in this field. The transfer of indianisms in Indian English involves in two ways: a translation of an Indian item and a shift based on an Indian source item. Translation is an establishing equivalent or partially equivalent formations in Indian English from the formation in Indian languages. The shift is usually an adaptation of an underlying formal item of an Indian language which provides its source.

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People are able to successfully communicate despite rampant variation because one of the varieties or dialects acquires the status of a standard, a variety because it is used by the educated, the cultured and other important sections of the speech community. A number of factors such as 'consolidation', 'authority' and 'standard' contribute to the rise of a standard. From 16th century onwards the East Midland dialect, has become the medium of a significant

body of literature. Migration to other lands from 16th century onwards and the rise of British as an imperial power, make its roots in lands other than Britain and there emerges a number of non-native varieties of English like American English, Canadian English, Australian English, and englishes of South-East Asia including Indian English. These historical processes of migration, settlement and contact produced these language varieties. Thus, Adil Jussawalla remarks:

...in India English came into its own as a language capable of poetry only after Indians got rid of its original speakers. Indian poetry doesn't seriously begin to exist till after Independence.¹

In this paper, I will examine the Indian varieties of English, its related field – bi and multi-lingualism and its social and cognitive dimensions, its contextual, cultural and formal features and the burgeoning of Indian writing in English. English language has developed a standard dialect though this process had begun early and had reached its culmination in the 18th century. Some illustrious figures like Dr. Johnson in this century gave the language certain prestige and credibility by standardizing various aspects of language like spelling, pronunciation etc. This process of standardization involves four different complex stages: selection, acceptance, elaboration and codification and intricately associated with the power-relations within the English society. However, it must be kept in mind that the English of our use is our own not English of our colonial masters. In the post-independence era, the language policy was supposed to be pro-vernacular rather than pro-english. After the departure of British from India in 1947, Indian Constitution declared Hindi in Devanagri script as the official language and therefore, an integrated language policy became all the more necessary. The emphasis was on the need to introduce the vernacular though retaining English for a variety of needs without giving any weightage to the study of English.

At present, in India the position of English is as a language recognised by Constitution – the Associate National Official language and the inter-regional link language. In academic field, it is an essential component of formal education and the most sought medium of learning. Socially, it is regarded as a mark of education, culture and prestige. Moreover, in this era of globalization, English as a language has grown even more internationally. Since the arrival of English in India, it has been establishing itself toward gradual development. In its long sojourn on our native soil, English has indianised itself considerably. Since the establishment and development of English in India, English has been used as a second language (L₂) rather than as the mother-tongue or a native one (L₁). Hence, there are bilinguals and sometimes multilinguals responding to an Indian context. English functions in the sociolinguistic setting, used as a link language both intra-nationally and internationally and is used in Indian English writings. In fact, it has won international accolades in this field. As far as Indians are concerned, they use English as a complementary language in their Indian contexts. In written medium of Indian English, it is conditioned by the reading public of the concerned work as we see

in the works of Indian English writers. This leads us to the division of two forms of Indian English – one is native and the other is for outside India for Indians or non-Indians. English in India can be termed as ‘in contact’ situation that involves transfer at different levels.

There involves at least two languages and two cultures that interact through transfer of context, of formal items and of form or context components. When some of the words are contextually transferred to the other language, the meanings of these Indian words take the form of native language. When used in the other language, transfer of formal items indicates structural features of native language being transferred to the other language. First they are transferred from different ranks of the native language like sentences, clauses, phrases, fixed collocations compound etc. – for example turmeric ceremony, spoiler etc. Secondly, the meanings of the first language are transferred to the items of the other language. In fact, the items defining context are made understood through the change of register in Indian English. In India an idiom of English has developed. The reason of such development is that there are formal and contextual exponents of Indianness in writing and the defining context of such idioms is the Indian setting. It is by inter-relating the socio-cultural and linguistic factors of India that make the distinction between those formations that are called deviations and the formations which are termed ‘mistakes’ or sub-standard formations. In fact, Indian English has evolved in a multilingual situation prevalent in India and it is this multilingual situation that makes Indian English ‘distinctive’.

Now we shall discuss mainly the formal features of some of the transferred Indianisms. This transfer is collocational or grammatical deviations in terms of lexical structure and grammatical structure. The transfer of Indianisms in Indian English involves in two ways: a translation of an Indian item and a shift based on an Indian source item. Translation is an establishing equivalent or partially equivalent formations in Indian English from the formation in Indian languages. The shift is usually an adaptation of an underlying formal item of an Indian language which provides its source. While translating there is no need of one-to-one correspondence between the items of the native and other language. To give an example the word ‘*namak haram*’ has been translated by Mulk Raj Anand as the ‘spoiler of salt’. Besides this, there can be translations in which the nearest equivalent of English is attempted following the same patterns of native languages as ‘car-festival’, ‘caste-mark’, ‘cow-worship’, and ‘cousin-sister’ etc. Shifts are better explained if properly used in their appropriate contextual units from Indian culture as “may the fire of ovens consume you”. In fact, the underlying source item for a shift is a fixed collocation of an Indian language.

Still the fact remains that an absolute literal translation, in any case, is impossible in literature but the degree of literalness can be decreased. At the same time some freedom may be claimed by the translator when he has a definite audience in mind. In fact, Indian English literature reverses the basic principle that the language of translation should be the translator’s own

first language. Indian English literature consists of translations from the 'mother-tongue' into English which is rarely the first language of an Indian. Very few Englishmen are curious to study India's languages and so the translation into English has to be done by those whose mother tongue is the language from which the translation is to be made. Hence a translator must be careful for both grammatical and idiomatic accuracy.

There is still another category of translations to which the term '*transcreation*' is applied. Such translations are made by an author of his own works in his mother tongue. The original is not closely followed but there is considerable alteration and improvement in the process and it becomes a different work. Tagore's *Gitanjali* as well as his other translations is the only outstanding work of such '*transcreation*'. Thus Indian English must express Indian sensibility, *i.e.* to convey the feel of the cultural and emotional life of the people to the readers. This is certainly a difficult task yet a number of eminent writers who have overcome these difficulties posed by the medium of expression. The Indian writer in English must keep his language flexible and varied to suit different fictitious characters drawn from most varied professions and strata of society as well as Indian enough to create the impression of versimilitude and authenticity. Mulk Raj Anand has tried to solve the problem of medium by indianisation of English words, by literal translation into English of Indian expressions, proverbs, etc. Raja Rao has more successfully solved this problem and transmutes into English, the idiom, the rhythm and the tone of natural speech of characters. R. K. Narayan writes 'admirably clean English' which expresses the emotional and intellectual life of Indians.

An Indian English collocation has such formations that have characteristics as such formations may deviate grammatically from American and British English formations. With the publication of Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, Indian English writing has entered the new phase of life. Following in the wake of Rushdie, writers like Upamanyu Chatterjee, Amitav Ghose, Vikram Seth, Arundhati Roy, Kamala Das, Nissim Ezekiel, A.K. Ramanujan, Arun Kolatkar, Girish Karnad, Mahesh Dattani and many more have followed the tradition of Indian writing in English and have opened up new possibilities in the English language. There are many practitioners who boldly asserted their freedom to choose such a language for creative expression. To quote one such example of Kamala Das:

*The language I speak
Becomes mine, its distortions, its queernesses
All mine, mine alone, it is half English, half
Indian, funny perhaps, but it is honest
It is as human as I am human,....²*

After the post-Independence era, Indian poetry in English has not only spread abundant swelling in volume, catching a wider audience but has built up a tradition also, shooting its roots in national consciousness. This era has proud to be the most productive one. A casual glance at any good anthology of Indian English poetry can unfold a score of names that have become well-established in the sphere. The excellent examples of such anthologies are R. Parthasarathy's *Ten Twentieth-Century Indian Poets*, Keki N. Daruwalla's *Two Decades of Indian Poetry: 1960-1980*, and A.N.Dwivedi's *Indian Poetry in English*. All the usual and recurring names can be found there: Delip Chitre, Keki Daruwalla, Kamala Das, Gauri Deshpande, Eunice DeSouza, Adil Jussawalla, Arun Kolatkar, Shiv K.Kumar, Jayanta Mahapatra, Arvind Mehrotra, Gieve Patel, and, of course, the most prominent ones-Nissim Ezekiel and A.K. Ramanujan. These poets have interpenetrated and conglomerated Indian and English sounds and tried to acclimatize the English language to our cultural overtones that give different lexical contexts to the same words. This may bring them fresh laurels to vindicate the real variety of Indian English poetry.

In fact, Ezekiel has taken lead in the direction of evolving a new kind of idiom in post-1960 Indian poetry in English. He is excellent in revealing the spirit of the actual character and situation. In an attempt to expose a self-praising character who pretends to be a patriot, Ezekiel delineates very aptly the deriding situation of such a patriot:

*I am standing for peace and non-violence.
Why world is fighting fighting
Why all people of world
Are not following Mahatma Gandhi,
I am simply not understanding.
Ancient Indian wisdom is 100% correct.
I should say even 200% correct.
But modern generation is neglecting-
Too much going for fashion and foreign thing.³*

Thus in spite of being a foreign tongue, English has been harnessed much and more to the Indian literary experience. This Indianness also finds its expression through their imagery. In this respect, they exhibit an important aspect of modern Indian culture that is the acceptance of modernity in their form and content while retaining their native tradition. They feel no need to turn back to Orpheus's and Leda's swans as their world of imagery exhibits the dominance of cultural heritage, just like their experience which is quite indigenous. Giving his thought to the question of Indianness, Prof. V.K. Gokak rightly remarks that "the Indianness

of Indian writing consists in the writer's intense awareness of his entire culture." ⁶ Another astute Professor of English, Dr. K.R.S. Iyengar, has recognised certain well-marked areas of operation for what is 'Indian' or 'Indianness', and these areas include "the choice of subject", "texture of thought and play of sentiment", "the organization of material" and "the creative use of language." ⁷ Thus such scholars confirm a writer's intense involvement with his native culture and milieu. With the futile attempts of the poets to imitate the West or it must not be considered a substitution game, for Indian poetry in English is not 'Matthew Arnold in Sari' ⁸ as Gordon Bottomley has put it. Quite contrary to such remarks, Indian writing in English proved to be extremely receptive and assimilative to English education and English language. It never weighed on the native colour, taste, opinions, morals and intellect as an imposition.

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