

Fundamental Concepts in Sociolinguistics
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Indian English

Welcome to class. Today, we are going to talk about Indian English. You can see a switch from English in India to Indian English. We talked about English in India in some other video. On a long detailing the traces, tracing the history of English in India. And some significant milestones in consolidation of English as one of the languages of this Indian Ecology, Linguistic Ecology of India.

Today we are going to talk about Indian English. And when we say Indian English we are talking about a distinct, unique, customized and culturally rooted variety of English which can be distinguished, identified and noticed from all other speakers of English in the World. We call it Indian English and a number of works like Agnihotri, Mistri, Singh, Rajinder Singh, B Kachru, Rakesh Bhatt, Shridhar, Tej Bhatia and so many other people who have worked in English and Indian English. World English is the talk about.

So we look at it as, and now as an independent variety. So this is not considered subordinate of other perverted variety of the original English. There is a thing called pure language, there in you call the English. If you look at the world and if you look at the works by Braj Kachru.

Now we are talking about Englishes. Which English is the real English? English is spoken in a similar way even in Great Britain. Go to Scotland, go to Ireland, in England and within England different parts, we have different varieties of English spoken. So Indian English is one of the varieties of English, it has emerged now over almost like three centuries. It entered India, it came to India as a language of traders and merchants. But today it has acquired a position of a very consolidated and higher position in the entire Indian linguistic ecology. This journey of English in India is commendable and incredible.

Today we are going to talk about Indian English. In one lecture, we cannot cover all the aspects of it. So, in this lecture I am not going to cover the grammatical properties of Indian English, possibly we will talk about it when we talk about English teaching in India.

But today we will talk about a very generic view. We will have a very generic view and talk about some important representations in different public spheres of Indian English. This is the summary of the class today.

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The slide features a title 'English in India' in the top left, the NPTEL logo in the top right, and three bullet points. A speaker is visible in the bottom right corner of the slide area.


English in India

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- English occupies a very significant space and offers economic, social, and political advantage to its speakers in linguistically diverse country like India.
- English symbolizes a reflection of modernity, higher social prestige and 'believed' to be instrumental in upward social mobility in India.
- English occupies a very large public space dominating all other languages.

We have already discussed the journey of English in India in our other class. But just to recapitulate what we did, we will quickly go over it and start with our main focus on this talk. So undoubtedly English occupies a very significant space and offers economic, social and political advantages to the speakers in India who speak English. It symbolizes a reflection of modernity, higher social prestige and it is believed to be instrumental in upward social mobility in India. That is the position and power of English in India. English occupies a very large political space and it dominates all other languages in this linguistic ecology.

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- Agnihotri & Khanna (1997) conclude after an extensive survey that the needs of globalization and the market economy are such that every child requires learning English. And subsequent developments in education policy prove them right in finding that more than 75% of the states in Indian Union have made learning English compulsory from class one (Agnihotri, 2007: 05).
- Thus, we see that English, though not acquired as first language, is emphatically present and negotiating with other Indian languages as a dominant partner.
- If we look at the recent data available on growth and development of English medium schools in India, the figures demonstrate the exponential expansion of English in Indian education system.
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Some ground-breaking works have been done by linguists like Braj Kachru, linguists like Rakesh Bhatt, linguists like Ramakant Agnihotri, Neel Khanna and so many other people. Agnihotri and Khanna 1997, they conclude that (an) in their extensive survey that they conducted. The needs of globalization and the market economy are such that every child requires learning English. And subsequent development in education policy prove them right in finding that more than 75 percent of the states in the Indian Union have made learning English compulsory from class one.

Agnihotri 2007, mind you the knowledge commission of India or the Indian knowledge commission chaired by Sam Pitroda recommended introduction of English from class one across the country with a belief that by the time a particular student completes twelve years of schooling, the student will have two languages at his or her disposal.

Two, command on two languages, a regional language or an Indian language to connect with the local community and an international language called English to connect with the global community and be part of the global order. And the deductions by Agnihotri 2007 just underlines that when he finds that more than 75 percent of the schools in India have made learning English compulsory from class one and this number has gone further, we are inching towards 100 percent.

Thus we see that English, though not acquired as a first language, is emphatically present and negotiating with other Indian languages as dominant partner. And if you look at the corpus planning and if you look at the acquisition planning, English occupies a very central position in that. And refer to two language policies and the third just introduced in 2020.

So if you look at the language education policy of 1968, that adopted the Kothari Commissions report of 1966 trilingual formula where English was one of the languages in three language formula one regional language Hindi and English. That was replicated and adopted verbatim without any change and deviation in education policy of 1986 and then what we see in NEP 2020, National Education Policy, there is hardly any deviation from three language formula and this also endorses the view that out of the three one, two must be native to India and one language of course international language English. So throughout these policy frameworks we see the position of English getting consolidated. This whole idea started in 1823, grounded in 1835 by Macaulay's Minutes and NEP 2020, English continued to occupy a very significant position in our policies and framework, language policies and linguistic frameworks.

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Report of the National University of Education Planning & Administration, HRD, Government of India.
Published in Times of India, 28 September 2015

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- The data procured from 14.5 lakh schools spread over 662 districts across states and union territories reveal that:
- ... While overall enrolment in schools went up by just 7.5% between 2008-09 and 2013-14, and enrolment in Hindi-medium schools went up by about 25%, enrolment in English-medium schools almost doubled in the same period.
- Interestingly, the highest growth in English-medium enrolment was in the Hindi-speaking states. It was highest in Bihar, where it grew 47 times or 4,700% while Hindi-medium enrolment grew by just 18%.

So if we look at the reports published by the National University of Education Planning and Administration, HRD, Human Resource Development Ministry, Government of India. The data procured from 14.5 lakh schools spread over 662 districts across state and Union Territories and it reveals that, number one, while overall enrolment in schools went up just by 7.5 percent

between 2008-09 and 2013-14 and enrolment in Hindi medium schools went up by about 25 percent, enrolment in English medium schools almost doubled in the same period. Interestingly, the highest growth in English-medium enrolment was in the Hindi speaking states. It was highest in Bihar where it grew 47 times while Hindi-medium enrolment grew only by 18 points.

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- In Uttar Pradesh, English-medium enrolment grew 10 times or by over 1,000% compared to just 11% in Hindi-medium enrolment. In other Hindi speaking states too English medium enrolment grew massively -- Haryana 525%, Jharkhand 458%, Rajasthan 209% and so on.
- ...The highest proportion of English-medium enrolment was in Jammu and Kashmir, where almost all students are in English-medium schools. In north-eastern states like Nagaland, Sikkim and Manipur, the share of English-medium is above 80-90%.
- In Kerala and Delhi, nearly half the enrolment is in English-medium schools. Other states where English-medium has a significant share are Andhra Pradesh (44%), Tamil Nadu (41%) and Himachal (30%)...



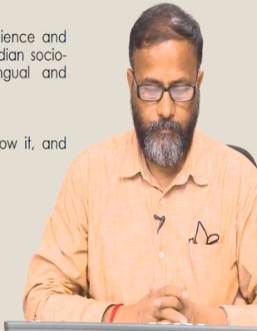
In Uttar Pradesh which is another major Hindi speaking state, English enrolment grew 10 times by over 1000 percent compared to its 11 percent in the Hindi-medium enrollment. And in other Hindi speaking states too, English-medium enrollment grew massively, for example Haryana 525 percent, Jharkhand 458 percent, Rajasthan 209 percent and you can imagine the spread and impetrations of English in our linguistic ecology and education system. The highest proportion of English-medium enrollment was in Jammu and Kashmir, where almost all students are in English-medium schools. In North Eastern states like Nagaland, Sikkim and Manipur the share of English-medium schools is above 80 and 90 percent.

In Kerala and Delhi, nearly half of the enrollment is in English-medium schools. Other states where English-medium has a significant share are Andhra Pradesh 44 percent, Tamil Nadu 41 percent and Himachal 30 percent. You can see the primacy and the space occupied by English in our Education system and look at this apparition of people who look up to English as their social upward mobility where English captures their socio-political development and imaginations. That is the role of English in India.

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- Apart from administration and education, English is significantly controlling technology, trade and commerce.
- The creative imaginations and popular culture are no exceptions as English captures a sizeable space encoding socio-cultural expressions.
- We see the shedding of inhibitions of using typical Indian expressions in English writings without any sense of apology by Indian writers. They are employing such expressions in the text to give a nativized flavour to the language.
- They are creating characters, plots, storylines to address the Indian audience and make it indigenized and Indianized. The texts in English are rooted in Indian socio-cultural space where the characters and events represent multilingual and multicultural background of the environment.
- D'Souza (2001) captures this phenomenon by observing that 'they borrow it, and recreate, stretch, extend, control, and indigenize it' [D' Souza, 2001:150].



And it is growing every day. And the rest is history. We all understand that English has a dominant presence in administration, in governance, in parliamentary proceedings, in our judiciary, in science and technology, in trade and commerce and also English emerges as a link language between Hindi and Non-Hindi states. That is another interesting factor.

Now look at the customization factor that I am talking about. If you look at the Indian linguistic ecology, we have already discussed the diversity and linguistic diversity and culture diversity of Indian society is phenomenal and its way to find in the rest of the world such a great variety of languages cultures and societies. Then we do understand that English spoken as a second language of most of the educated Indians will not be the same. Because we will have a local negotiation between regional languages and English, for example Tamil and English, Telugu and English, Kannada and English, Gujarati and English, Bangla and English, Hindi and English for example. So we have this hybrid nature highly localized and we find varieties of Indian English as well. So we do not have a standard Indian English because we have a lot of hybridity and mixing that comes from the regional, local languages in English.

So it is very difficult to have one national format for English. It is also very diverse, translating the diverse in linguistic diversity of India. But it captures the creative imagination of popular culture and we find a lot of experimental creativity and hybridity in English as well. And now what we see post 1991 when India opened its frontier for global order and a new way of


liberalization and globalization started in India. We see a very frequent and consistent interaction with the outer World. They spread and exponential spread is phenomenal and that allowed English to further settle deep in this linguistic ecology.

Revolution in IT and digital technology has ensured presence of English in all walks of our life and you do not have to be literate anymore to have a small pie of English in your verbal repertoire. The technology has ensured this.


Look at the writers and we can see the format and form that is approved by the users, the variety that is approved by its users. And how users are deriving pleasure and pride out of it is reflected in the published sources. So in the media, in print media, in books, in journals, in news broadcasts, in television broadcast and now in serious documents of administration we see this variety, largely accepted and we are not, we do not have any inhibition about declaring the arrival of Indian English to the World. And if you look at the creative writers they are experimenting like never before. So we see the shedding of inhibitions of using typical Indian expressions in Indian writing without any sense of apology by Indian writers. And they are employing such expressions in the text to give a nativized flavor to the language. They are creating characters, plots, storylines to address the Indian audience to make it indigenized and Indianized. The texts in English are rooted in Indian socio-cultural space where the characters and events represent the multilingual and multicultural background of the environment. And D'Souza 2001 captures this development when you observe that they borrow it and recreate, stretch, extend control and indigenize. D'Souza 2011. So now we have accepted, customized and assimilated English which used to be a foreign language in our own multilingual fold. And we own it. We experiment and we encode our socio-cultural and popular culture imaginations to it.

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Indian English




- Also, English occupies a very significant space and offers economic, social, and political advantage to its speakers in linguistically diverse country like India.
- It is imperative to note that Indian English is not one variety but a composite of many variations based on region, culture, and competence.
- The nature and structure of English in India are heavily influenced by the languages in the linguistic ecology of India.



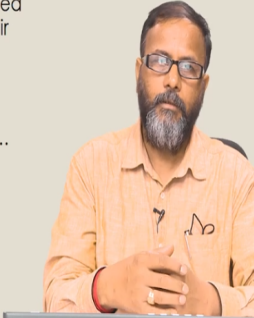
Now, it occupies a very significant position, right? But it is imperative to note that Indian English is not one variety but a composite of many variations based on region, culture, competence and the regions. So we do not have a single form of Indian English variety. It negotiates with all languages, right, all Indian languages. So Tamil-English, Punjabi-English, Gujarati-English, Bangla-English, Hindi-English. So we have these negotiations where you have the flavor and the mixing of these languages into English. And it is an evolutionary process. So overall the media has ensured that a definite form with certain definite characters is emerging and what we call it Indian English.

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Indian English Writing: Fiction

- Do you think your father would allow such comings and goings on here?
◦ (From Ladies Coupe, Page: 13)
- "All over India, people hearing the Indian name announced in pucca British accent *laughed and laughed* so hard their stomachs hurt."
◦ (From The Inheritance of Loss, Page:47)
- Nanda Kaul poured out another and another cup of tea...
◦ (From Fire on the Mountain, Page: 90)

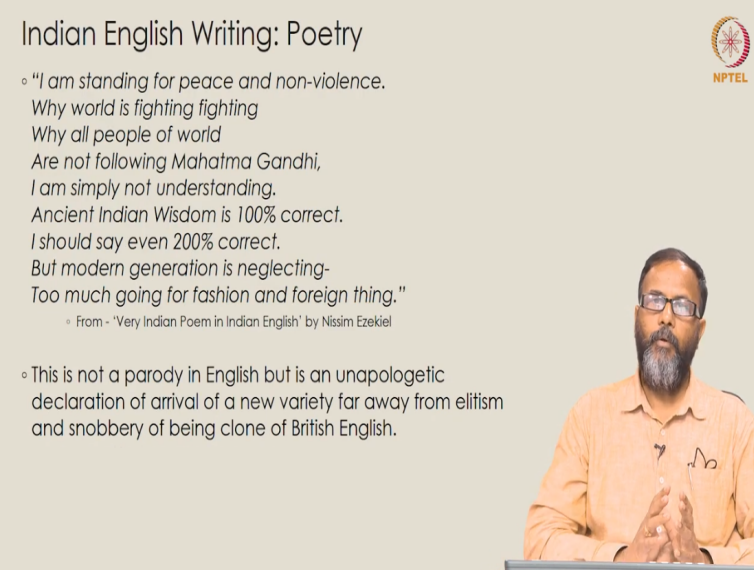


It cuts across the region, religion community and language boundaries. The rest is the history, I would not go into details. Let us move on. Indian English Writing, why am I particular about it? I am particular about is that given our linguistic attitude, oral variety may be considered dynamic, informal and always in a flux. But when we see the same variety in print, it makes a difference. It is a big claim. So Indian writers have adopted English, customized it to suit the Indian audience. And they ground their characters, plots, storylines in the socio-cultural space of India. And that makes the Indian variety of English or the Indian English unique and identifiable. There are some examples from some of the texts. And you can find thousands of such examples in hundreds of writers who are writing in English and they are all writing in Indian English for the Indian audience, for mass consumption. And we find a definite form emerging out of it.

“Do you think your father would allow such comings and goings on here?” Reduplication and echo words, plenty of duplication and echo words present in English which is not an unmarked feature of standard English. What we call RP that we refer to in India, Received Pronunciation from the British. So this is not a standard expression. But as an Indian reader I can relate to it. I relate to it and understand it. It captures my imagination. Yet another example, “All over India people hearing the Indian name announced in pucca British accent *laughed and laughed* so hard their stomachs hurt”(from The Inheritance Of Loss page 47). Now look at the structures, in tactic structures of this language, of this sentence. It depicts a typical Hindi structure. The letters

are in Roman, the words are English but the spirit of the sentence is pure Indian and pertains to any other Indian language though it is an English sentence. Yet another example from Fire on the Mountain page 90. “*Nanda Kaul poured out another and another cup of tea*”, reduplication. It is a common feature of Indian English.

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Indian English Writing: Poetry

◦ "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."
◦ From - 'Very Indian Poem in Indian English' by Nissim Ezekiel

◦ This is not a parody in English but is an unapologetic declaration of arrival of a new variety far away from elitism and snobbery of being clone of British English.

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We will talk about grammatical features of Indian English and Indian language teaching in India in a separate video. But look at this poem by Nissim Ezekiel and he names it Indian English Writing poetry. He names it a typical very Indian Poem in Indian English, interesting to read. I will just recite it to you.

"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 not simply understanding. Ancient Indian wisdom in 100 percent correct. I should say even 200 percent correct. But modern generation is neglecting- too much going for fashion and foreign thing."


This is not a parody in English but an unapologetic declaration of the arrival of a new variety far away from elitism and snobbery of being clone of British English. So we have owned it, we have claimed it. And now we are encoding our popular culture, imaginations, social and political imagination in this language. What is this language? Is it standard English? Is it perverted version of English? We have got out of that snobbery and now we claim it to be Indian English.

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Media and Digital Technologies



- The expansion of English in Indian linguistic ecology is fuelled by the revolution in information and communication technology, which has created multiple digital sites to us.
- The growing footprints of new media technology is consolidating the Indian English in a big way, where the dominant Indian languages with a huge speech community are mixing with English with their 'hands down' (as Harish Trivedi, 2010 puts it in the case of Hindi-English code-mixing).



Now, media and digital technologies have added fuel to this spread and acceptability of English in India. And we are no more very apologetic and shy about using it the way we want to use it. The expansion of English in Indian linguistic ecology is filled by the revolution in information technology. Today we have mobiles. We are texting each other, we are receiving messages, we are receiving calls, notifications. Technology has enabled us to learn English and now the majority of tech users, mobile users were not even literate, who cannot read English are able to understand. The programs aired on radio, the programs on television. Look at the entry of Hollywood films to the Indian audience. And there are so many other platforms; the internet has become a very fertile ground for English to flourish in Indian linguistic ecology. The other Indian languages are also capturing a space on the internet. But no doubt English remains the dominant partner in technological development.

And the growing footprints of the new media technology is consolidating the Indian English in a big way where the dominant Indian languages with a huge speech community are mixing with English with their 'hands down' as Harish Trivedi puts it, 'hands down' the term he puts for this Hindi-English mixing. Where Hindi accepts all these mixings and changes. Hands down, and English dominates in this engagement and negotiation.

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Indian Linguistic Landscape: Sites of English Use in public Space

- Physical Domains
 - Signboards/Billboards
 - Commercial Space
 - Public Notices/Appeals/Warnings
 - Newspaper advertisements/pamphlets
 - Flyers/leaflets/graffiti etc.
- Virtual Domains
 - Facebook/Twitter/WhatsApp/Blogs/Chats/SMS and other multimedia platforms etc.



If you look at the Indian linguistic landscapes and the sites of English used in public space, you find it all over dominantly present. And all sign boards, billboards, go to your local area and market and research. Even if you are a Tamil speaker you will find an English signage on a board for the smallest shop in the corner. That is the power of English. So they are also in Tamil, they are also in Kannada, they are also in Hindi. But the dominance, if you look at the billboards and the signs, even a small hairdressing salon or maybe a vegetable shop or a small departmental store, look at the sign boards. English is so dominantly present there despite the fact that other languages are also present in the public space. English occupies the major space there. All sign boards, billboards, commercial spaces, public notice, appeals, warnings, newspaper advertisements, pamphlets, flyers, leaflets, graffiti, everywhere you find the share of English is much bigger than the share of any other regional language in that locality.

Virtual domains; all the social media sites, all the digital platforms that you can imagine and they are present, all multimedia platforms on the internet. So be it a physical space, be it virtual space, physical domain, a virtual domain, English is present emphatically. English is there very visibly and English has become, Indian English has become a unique variety. Not a perverted one. It has its own linguistic characters, it has its own socio-linguistic characters, it has its own variability, it has its own variations. But it is there, it is present and dominantly negotiating with other Indian languages in our education, in our administration, in our governance, in our documentation and overall in our popular culture and experiences English remains central as a language and we all it Indian English with all its linguistic and socio-linguistic characteristics. We will continue our

discussion on Indian English and its grammatical features; we will talk about English language teaching in our next video. This is it for now. Thank you very much.