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Characteristics of Indian English: A Study

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Abstract:

It is universally acknowledged that English is an international language and people are broadly using English for all means of communication and other purposes. British English is Standard English. Still there are different kinds of English prevailing in the world due to the influence of local dialects, regional languages and colloquial expressions. Therefore, English spelling, vocabulary, grammar; pronunciation varies partially from country to country. India is no exemption from this.

People in India use English to transform the lives with a better job and to impoverish better social life. Quite interestingly, India is one of the top four countries in the world with the highest number of English speakers. This article attempts to examine some of the special characteristics of Indian English with regard to pronunciation, grammar, syntax, lexical. Besides, it studies the influence of Hindi and other regional languages on English and it follows the list of Indian words in English dictionary.

Keywords: International language, communication, Standard English, impoverish, special characteristics.

Introduction: The British came to India and established East India company to flourish their trade and commerce. When entire India came under their rule, the British gradually imposed English on all Indian educational institutions. So Indian English has been influenced by the British. Today English is an official and academic language of Indians. Some Indians feel that English brought in too much western thought. But the fact is that English in India exports the large amount of Indian culture and thought to the rest of the world.

People in India speak many regional languages and each language has its own grammatical rules and people apply the same rules to spoken English. The articles attempts to examine the variations of Standard English and Indian English with regard to grammar, phonology and other aspects.

Grammatical variations

Prepositions

Use of “of”:

Standard English: Yashwanth has so much work to do.

Indian English: Yashwanth has so much of work.

Present Progressive tense instead of static verbs:

In Indian English, Present progressive tense is used to state habitual actions.

Standard English: I like it very much/ I do it often / She has many friends.

Indian English: I am liking it very much / I am doing it often /She is having many friends .

Certain verbs like-describe, discuss never follow prepositions in standard English

Standard English: They discussed a serious issue / They entered the hall / He described the accident/

I have ordered two cups of tea.

Indian English: They discussed about a serious issue / They entered into the hall / He described about the accident / I have ordered for two cups of tea.

Present Progressive tense instead of static verbs:

In Indian English Present progress tense is used instead of static verbs to tell the habitual actions.

Standard English: I like it very much/ I do it often /She has many friends.

Indian English: I am liking it very much / I am doing it often / She is having many friends.

Differences in noun number and determiners

Standard English: She gives away a lot in charity.

Indian English: She performs many charities.

The absence of subject-verb inversion in direct questions

The word order of questions is often unique in Indian English.

Eg: "What you would like to eat?" and "Who you will come with?".

Word order variations

Standard English: My closets are all empty.

Indian English: My all closets are empty

Standard English: She always does like this.

Indian English: She does like this always.

Answers to question content

A question: "Didn't you take Neha to school?"

Probably answered with:

Yes, I did / No, I didn't (Standard English)

Yes, I didn't. (Indian English)

Over use of seriously/ generally/ actually/obviously etc

Standard English: She is a good person.

Indian English: Seriously, she is a good person.

Inappropriate usage

Standard English: But John was not there.

Indian English: John was not there but.

Standard English: I told her to do that.

Indian English: I only told her to do that.

Incorrect Tag questions

Standard English: They won't come, will they? / She doesn't answer, does she? /

Indian English: They won't come, no? / She doesn't answer, isn't she?

Idioms

Standard English: What is your name?

Indian English: What is your good name?

Region-specific errors

Standard English: I have forwarded the mail to my friend.

Indian English: I simply forwarded the mail to my friend.

Morphology

There are new terms and usages in Indian morphology.

1-Batchmate or batch-mate (Schoolmate of the same grade but not classmate) .

2-Eve-teaser (A man who teases or annoys girls/ women)

3-Felicitate (to congratulate)

- 4-Pre-ponement (change of programme before the scheduled time or date)
- 5- The compound nouns - cousin-brother and cousin-sister are used to designate whether the cousin is male or female.
- 6- Dear sir, (popular opening line in official letters).
- 7-Damn (Adj): extremely.' Eg: The chicken soup in the hotel is damn good.
- 8-Don't do nuisance in public (prohibited urinating in public)
- 9-Every other day: every second day.
- 10-Words such as age-barred, chalk-piece, key-bunch, meeting-notice and pin drop-silence are the familiar colloquial words and expressions of Indian English.
- 11-The singular nouns such as furniture and wood are frequently pluralized as furnitures, and woods in Indian English.
- 12-A food grinder is simply called a mixi.
- 13-In those days Indian cuisine items - samosas, pakoras, tandoori, tikka and paneer - were written in italics. But now they are accepted as part of international English vocabulary and they are found in Oxford English Dictionary (OED) and in Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (OALD).

Some special words originated in Indian English

The frequent use of Indian words has been regularly entered into the Oxford English Dictionary and their popularity is extended into worldwide mainstream English. Some of the common examples are “bandana”, “bungalow”, “guru”, “jungle”, “pundit” and “pyjama”.

Other Unique words/ expressions:

- 1-A woman on her way to buy vegetables tell her friend, she is "marketing".
- 2-A receptionists tells that the boss has gone "out of station" (out of town).
- 3-Himalayan blunder: a grave mistake.
- 4-"One of my relative": It's a quintessential Indian English term.
- 5-Time-pass: It denotes which is not exciting as in "That movie was real time-pass."
- 6-"air-dashing" to a destination,
- 7-"issueless" couples (those without children).
- 8-A driver, when asked what he does, may refer to his occupation as "drivery".
- 9- One tight slap (n.): an act of disapproval with violence.

10-Opticals (eyeglasses)

11-Would-be: (going to be a life partner)

Shortening words

1-funda (fundamental)

2-foot over bridge (A bridge meant for pedestrians)

3-fundu (adj a brilliant or intelligent person)

4-godown (warehouse)

5-Enthu: enthusiasm (One can say, "That guy has a lot of enthu").

Lexicon

The Indian English lexicon has many specific terms which are commonly used by its speakers. They come from acronyms and abbreviations.

Examples of the use of acronyms:

FOC = Free Of Charge

MPK = Maine Pyar Kiya (a popular movie)

ILU = I Love You

FOB = Fresh Off the Boat

Examples of the use of abbreviations:

Jan = January

Feb = February

subsi = subsidiary

supli = supplementary

suptt = superintendent

princi = principle

Gen. Sec. or G. Sec. = General Secretary

Soc. Sec. = Social Secretary

lab asst = laboratory assistant

It is interesting that Indian English abbreviations are pronounced the way they are spelled after they have been shortened.

Influence of Hindi on Indian English

"Aapka shubh naam kya hai?" (Hindi)

Shubh means auspicious or good, and it is basically used as a polite way of asking for someone's full name.

Standard English: What is your name?

Indian English: What is your **good** name?

The most commonly used Hindi terms and expressions:

achcha = good

bahut = a lot

bus = that's it

ek = one (as a number)

ho gaya = done; finished

koi bat nahi = no problem

kya hall hai = how are you

lakh(s) = one-hundred thousand

lekhin = but

masala = spicy; hot (like a film)

muthlab = meaning

pakka = pure

Syntax

The usage of “only” and “itself”: These two are used in Indian English to emphasize time and place and they are not found in other varieties of English.

Eg: "I am in Tripoli only" and

"Can we meet today itself?".

Reduplication: Indian English speakers often use reduplication as a way of emphasizing an action -- I have been told before to "Come come! Sit sit!" Reduplication can also extend something, as in hot, hot water and long, long hair. Such usage is common in spoken Hindi.

Phonological study:

Indian English has a reduced vowel system; /r/ tends to become a flap or retroflex flap; the consonants /p/, /t/, and /k/ tend to be aspirated; and in some regions, /v/ and /w/ are not distinguished (volleyball is the same as wally ball).

Some Indian English speakers have a tendency to drop the -ed ending after /k/ and /t/ (ex: walked became walk). Some interesting things seemed to be happening with the articulation of /ð/ (as in *then*), which normally is pronounced as an interdental /d/, but which sometimes seemed to become alveolar.

Indian words in English dictionary

The following is a small list of Indian words that absorbed into English vocabulary.

<i>Word</i>	<i>Indian Language</i>	<i>Root Word</i>	<i>Meaning</i>
Biryani	Hindi	<i>biryani</i>	fried, roasted food
Chakra	Sanskrit	<i>chakra</i>	wheel, circle

Chutney	Hindi	<i>chatni</i>	a side dish for food
Curry	Tamil	<i>kari</i>	relish for rice, a spicy dish
Dharma	Sanskrit	<i>dharma</i>	decree, custom
Godown	Telugu	<i>gidangi/gadong</i>	place where goods lie
Gymkhana	Hindi	<i>gend-khana</i>	ball-house
Hindu	Hindi	<i>Hindu</i>	an Indian
Kebab	Urdu	<i>kabab</i>	roasted meat
Maharajah	Hindi	<i>Maharaja</i>	great king
Nabob	Urdu	<i>nawwab</i>	deputy governor
Namaste	Hindi	<i>Namaste</i>	Indians way of greeting
Orange	Sanskrit	<i>naranj</i>	an orange fruit
Pajamas	Urdu	<i>pajama</i>	loose fitting garment.
Pundit	Hindi	<i>pandit</i>	a learned person

Conclusion

As in other kinds of English, Indian English has its own characteristics. Many Indians feel that the use of English should be actively encouraged because it has universal character. The Indian writer and philosopher Raja Rao said, “... we shall have the English language with us and amongst us, and not as a guest or friend, but as one of our own, of our caste, our creed, our sect and our tradition”. Indian writers have won appreciation in the literary world with the best works such as *God of Small Things*, *A Suitable Boy*, *Satanic Verses*, *Train to Pakistan*, *An Equal Music*, *The Namesake* and others. English in India is vastly different from American English or any other kind of English. But all kinds of English – whether Indian, American, Australian or British - merge as one single entity - grammatically correct English is always correct English.

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