



INTELLIGIBILITY OF INDIAN ENGLISH

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this research article is to stress up on the influence of 'Indianism' in English language spoken by Indian speakers and how they carry their mother tongue influence (MTI) on target language. It is well known fact that, Indians speak English differently from Native speakers that is why English spoken by Indians named as Indian English. This article also highlights how Indian speakers of English deviate from Standard English in terms of pronunciation, grammar, use of idioms and phrases, titles, interjections and casual references and other strange and common usage.

Key Words: Indianism, Received Pronunciation, BBC English, Vernacular languages

INTRODUCTION

According to Wikipedia, the word 'Indianism' refers to word or expression exclusive to Indian English. Online English Oxford Living Dictionaries define 'Indianism' as devotion to or adoption of the customs and culture of North American Indians or a word or idiom characteristic of Indian English. In general understanding 'Indiansism' can be defined as language features of English spoken by Indians.

In accordance with Wikipedia, Indian English refers to dialects or varieties of English spoken mainly in India and also by Indian Diaspora elsewhere in the world. Due to British colonisation we are using more British English than any other variety. It is true that India has many vernacular languages, due to this English was chosen to be the official language of the Govt of India. The whole world considered "Received Pronunciation (RP) or British Broad Casting (BBC) English" as the standard variety for the reason that it is spoken by well educated people of some part of England.

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1Page

UGC Approved Journal No 48520 (Arts & Humanities) ENGLISH 272

VOL 3, ISSUE 4 www.puneresearch.com/english JULY – AUG 2017

(IMPACT FACTOR 2.14) INDEXED, PEER-REVIEWED / REFEREED INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL



Let us discuss some of the important ground realities why and how Indian speakers of English deviate from that of Standard English or so called Received Pronunciation (RP). The first and primary reason is that the existence of many vernacular languages. Secondly, it is true that Indians who speak English learn their mother tongue first. Thirdly, by the time they start learning English, they find it difficult to follow the pronunciation of target language. Fourthly, Indians have in them very strongly formed linguistic habits that interface with their learning English. Finally, the phonological system of the mother tongue will have an influence on the phonology of their English.

Because of all these variations and deviations, Indian English has emerged as another variety of English just like the American English, Australian English, Newzeland English, Canadian English, South African English, etc, with its own characteristic features. Since there are a number of languages spoken in India, there cannot strictly speaking, be something called French English or German English; instead we have a variety of English spoken in India, such as Hindi English, Bengali English, Urdu English, Tamil English, Kannada English, Malayalam English, Telugu English based on all these variations it can be named as Indian English.

Indianism in Pronunciation:

It is true that, lot of research already taken place on intelligibility of Indian English. One of the best examples for such is that, English and Foreign Languages University (EFLU). It has been doing extensive research on intelligibility of Indian English. In fact this is the only university which has a separate department for Phonetics in India. As a result of this, great scholars like M.A.K.Halliday, R.K.Bansal, Balasubramanian, Sethi & Dhamija, Prabhakar Babu and etc have done research on Indian English and come up with interesting findings, suggestions and solutions. Some of the fascinating findings which they have indentified are as follows;

1. Urdu speakers' Pronunciation:

It is fact that majority of Urdu speakers of English differ from the standard variety of English particularly Kashmiri Urdu speakers of English when it comes to pronunciation of some English words. Predominantly, words where two consonant sounds come together they add /I/ in the beginning of the word for example 'school' as '*iskul*', 'stamp' as '*istamp*', smile as '*ismile*' spend as '*ispend*', speech as '*ispeech*'. Other interesting deviations are glass as '*galass*' and clear as '*kiliar*' etc. In these words they have a tendency to insert or add /a/ and /i/ in between consonant sounds. Wikipedia sources and research findings also say that some of them replace /f/ with /p/ as in 'fail' is pronounced as '*phail*' and 'fifty' as '*phipty*'.



2. North Indian Speakers' Pronunciation:

North Indian speakers whose mother tongue is Hindi tend to mispronounce some English words borrowed from French are sometimes pronounced as written in English spelling. For example, "Bouquet" is pronounced as "boukwet". It is also true that majority of the Indian speakers of English do not differentiate between /v/ and /w/ as, 'va' and 'wah' so, 'wine' is pronounced as 'vine'. Another typical feature of Indian English is that, usage of 'ing' words, an addition is added such as 'ga', like instead of 'singing' we use 'singinga' or 'reading' as 'readingga', going as 'goingga' and coming as 'comingga' etc. It is also true that we hardly differentiate 'cot' and 'caught'. Some of the North Indian speakers pronounce 'technology' as 'techknowlogy', 'school' as 'saku:l' and sit as 'si:t' etc.

3. South Indian Speakers' Pronunciation:

Most of the Tamil speakers of English mispronounce 'egg' as 'jegg' and also replace 'k' with 'g'. For example name Sivakami pronounced as 'Sivagami'. Whereas Telugu speakers of English, say 'dzoo' instead of 'zoo', 'sat' as 'short' wet as 'vet' etc. Similarly, Malayali speakers of English replace some of the English sounds /t/, /p/, /b/ with the sound of 'da', such as 'temple' is pronounced as 'dembel' and 'canteen' as 'candeena', simple as 'simble' and uncle as 'ungle'. Some Indian speakers of English mispronounce 'English' as 'inglis', and 'ship' as 'sip'. Another variation of Indian English is that Indians do not aspirate /p/, /t/ and /k/ sounds where as native speakers of English add aspiration if these sounds are located beginning of a word and if that syllable carries stress mark on it.

Indianism in Grammar:

Some Indian speakers of English deviate or misuse when it comes to structure of the certain sentences or grammar. According to Wikipedia, the deviations which mentioned are as follows; the progressive tense in stative verbs "I am understanding it", "she is knowing it" instead of "I understand" and "She knows". This is the influence of Hindi grammar. It is common in Northern States. Some of the Indian learners of English say 'my cousin brother' instead of 'my cousin' some of them even say 'blunder mistake' instead of 'blunder'. It is also well known fact that, some of us use 'I can able to speak' instead of 'I can speak'. The usage of "isnt it", "no", "na", as tag questions; like "you are going, isnt it?", "I am going, no?", "she likes it, na?" instead of "you are going, aren't you?", "I am going" and "does she like it?". Use of 'yaar, ma, cha, abey, aray', while conversing in English by many of Hindi speakers of English. It is also fact that word 'da, dai, re, ra' are commonly found in the speakers of South India. Use off 'off it' or 'on it' instead of 'switch it on' or 'switch it off',



'current went' and 'current came' instead of 'power came back' and 'power went out'. Use of the word 'wallah' to denote occupation as in 'the taxi wallah over charged me' 'the grocery wallah sold me good grains'. Over use of the words 'generally', 'basically', 'actually', 'obviously' at the beginning of the sentence, like 'actually, I am not feeling well today', 'generally India will win the match today'. Use of 'he is older to me' instead of 'he is older than me'. Usage of 'out of hundred' instead of percent, like 'he got hundred out of hundred' or 'sixty out of hundred' the correct usage must be 'he got a one hundred percent' or 'he got a hundred'

Indianism in Idioms & Phrases:

Influence of Indianism on usage of idioms and phrases of English language. Wikipedia clearly stated that several idiomatic forms crossing over from Indian literacy and vernacular have made their way into the English of masses. These might look odd to a person for whom English is the first language. "Your good name please?" instead of "What is your name"- carry over from Hindi expression "subhnaam" which means "auspicious name", "out of station" instead of "out of town", "deadly and hi-fi" which means, 'deadly'-intence and 'hi-fi' stylish or beyond the perception of the average person. Eg-"that movie was deadly yaar, what an action scene", "that shoe is hi-fi, where did you get it from?", "hello, what do you want?" used by some while answering the phone, which is actually impolite, "tell me" used when answering the phone, meaning "how can I help you?", "order for food" instead of "order food, as in "lets order for sandwich", "pin drop silence" literally means that such a silence should be maintained that even a pin drop can be heard.

Indiansim in usage of Titles:

Indian speakers of English use different way when it comes to Titles. They usually carry their first language influence on target language. Let us have a look at some of the examples how Indians speak differently from Standard English. Referring to elders, strangers or anyone meriting respect as "jee"/"ji" (suffix) as in "please call a taxi for Guptaji". Use of a prefix "shree"/"shri"(Mr) or "Shreemati" / "shrimati"(Mrs/Ms); as in "shree Ravishankar", "mr" and "mrs" as common nouns, "Jyothi's Mr came home yesterday". "My Mrs is not feeling well". Use of "Mr" with the first man, for ex- Ashok Kumar might be addressed as "Mr Ashok" instead of "Mr Kumar". Use of suffix "uncle"/ "aunty" while addressing relatives, strangers, friend's parents, etc. such as "shopkeeper uncle", "watchman uncle", 'Prameela aunty', 'respected sir' instead of 'dear sir' while addressing a letter.

In fact, in Indian culture, children or teenagers addressing people as "Mr Patel" or "Mrs Patel" is often considered as an offence or disrespect. If a person is really one's uncle or an



aunt, they will not be addressed as *'uncle/aunt'* but with the name of the relation in mother language. For example, if a woman is one's mother's sister, she would be addressed as "Shantha maasi" instead of "Shantha aunty" (maasi-Hindi).

Indianism in usage of Interjections & Casual references:

Indianism in use of interjections and other casual references is also found one of the typical features of Indian English. With reference to Wikipedia, let us discuss how Indian speakers of English differ from Standard English in terms of interjections and other casual references. Casual use of the words *"yaar"* (friend, buddy, man), *'bhai'* (brother), *bhaiyya'* (elder brother), *'array'* and *'accha'*; much with the American English *'man'* or *'buddy'*, as in *'aray comon yaar! don't be such a jerk' or 'long time no see bhai?'* used to express range of positive emotions but not occasionally as such *"array yar what a bad luck!"*, *'T-K'* instead of *'Okay'* or *'OK'*, like *'T-K I will meet you tomorrow'* (T-K=Thek hai in Hindi), use of the word *"uff!"* to show distress or frustration, as in *"Uff! The baby is crying again!"* Along with *'uff'* there are words such as *'oh foe!* Which mean *'oh no'* which is more whining and the south Indian equivalent is *'aiyo'* expanded by *'aiyaiyo'* as in *"oh foe I shud do this again"*, *"Aiyo I fell in the water again"*, *"Lady's finger"* which means *'okra'* and *"brinjal"* means *'eggplant or aubergine'*. *"Hotel"* means restaurant in India. *"I ate in a hotel"*, *"Lodge refers to a place where you stay (in room) and "hotel" is the place where you eat.*

Indianism in usage of Vocabulary:

Indianism in use of vocabulary or replacing words is also found one of the strange features of Indian English. Let us examine how they differ from Standard English. The word *"marriage"* used instead of *"wedding"* as in *"She is attending Samantha's marriage"*, the word *"mutton"* is used to mean goat meat instead of sheep meat. (in a broader sense any red meat, not poultry or fish), *"saloon"* instead of *"salon"*, as in *"I will visit the hair saloon"*, greetings like *'happy birthday'* is also said like *"today is my happy birthday"*, use of *'reduce'* meaning *'lose weight'* as in, *"have you reduced?"* The use of phrases such as *'today morning'* or *'today evening'* instead of *'this morning/this evening'*, use of *'this side and that side'* instead of *'here'* or *'there'*, like *"bring it this side"*.

Indian English:

Other common usage of Indian speakers of English is also found as one of the deviations from the standard variety of English. According to Wikipedia there are some interesting findings how Indians go wrong in terms of usage of words, *"only"* where the word *"just"* would be used in other dialects. For example, *"These people are like this only"*. The word



"healthy" as a euphemism for fat people, in North India and in general as in "His build is on the healthy side" to refer to an overweight person. "Full Shirt" is used for "Full Sleeves" and "Half Shirt" for "Half Sleeves" or "Short Sleeves". Similarly 'full-pant' means trousers and 'half-pant' means shorts. (Telugu speakers may say "Half Hands" and "Full Hands" in a similar fashion). Use of "blood pressure" or "BP" to refer particularly to high blood pressure, as in "I have BP!" to mean "I have high BP or hypertension". Adding "U" to all English words e.g. *Left U for left, Bus U for Bus*; especially people from South Indian states mainly Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh have the habit of when speaking Tamil and Kannada and Telugu respectively "tight slap" to mean "hard slap". Time pass - 'Doing something for leisure but with no intention or target/satisfaction' For example, "How's the movie?" reply - "Just time pass man... nothing great about it." "Hill Station" means mountain resort.

Conclusion & Suggestions:

Firstly, in this article, we have discussed how Indian English is different from other varieties of English and also discussed some reasons for it. Secondly, we talked about how mother tongue influences target language. Thirdly, it emphasized how Indian English differs in terms of pronunciation and grammar. Fourthly, it highlights how we can get rid of Mother Tongue Influence (MTI). Lastly, how we can have intelligibility of in terms of pronunciation and grammar. To conclude, research on intelligibility of Indian English clearly says that it is not difficult if we focus and develop passion towards on improving English to get rid of all the above mentioned problems, variations and deviations. It is true that most of us have wrong notion in understanding the word intelligibility because we think that we have to speak like a native speaker but it is not. It is all about speaking English with clarity like an Indian but not necessarily to speak like neither American nor Britain speaker.

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