

---

## INDIANIZATION OF ENGLISH AND ITS IDENTITY

**Mr. Anil Rangnath Gambhire**

Asst. Prof. Dept. of English

Rajmata Jijau Shikshan Prasarak Mandal's

Arts, Commerce & Science College,

Landewadi, Bhosri, Pune-39.

Email Id: [anilgambhire3@gmail.com](mailto:anilgambhire3@gmail.com)

**Dr. Shrinivas Anand Ippalpalli**

Professor and Head, Dept. of English

PDEA's Mamasahab Mohol

Arts, Commerce & Science College,

Paud Road, Erandwane, Pune.

Email Id: [ishrinivas@yahoo.com](mailto:ishrinivas@yahoo.com)

---

### Abstract :

*Indian English (IE), a variety of English that has evolved within the Indian sociolinguistic environment, represents a unique blend of British colonial influence, indigenous linguistic traditions, and modern global communication needs. As Braj B. Kachru asserts, Indian English has undergone a process of "nativization" or "Indianization" (Kachru, The Other Tongue 24), adapting English to reflect local contexts, thought processes, and communicative norms.*

*In the context of postcolonial India, language serves not only as a medium of communication but as a marker of social identity, cultural expression, and political engagement. English, once the language of colonial rulers, has undergone significant transformation in India and is now an indigenized variety known as Indian English. The journey of English in India exemplifies the complex interplay between language, identity, and multilingualism. Braj B. Kachru notes, English in India is no longer a borrowed tool but a localized and functional linguistic system that reflects the cultural and social realities of Indian speakers (Kachru, Indianization 7).*

*This paper explores the development and characteristics of Indian English in relation to linguistic identity and the multilingual framework of Indian society. It further examines how Indian English functions as a tool of empowerment and social negotiation within a linguistically diverse nation.*

**Key words :** Indian English, Language Identity, Multilingualism, Indianization.

---

### Historical Background and Evolution of Indian English :

The origins of English in India date back to the early 17th century with the arrival of the British East India Company. Initially used for trade and administrative purposes, English gradually became institutionalized through missionary education, colonial administration and higher education systems. With Lord Macaulay's 1835 Minute on Indian Education, English was formally promoted as the medium of instruction and the language of the educated elite (Crystal 117). One of the major Indian personality who persistently strive to demand and force British rulers was Raja Ram Mohan Roy. He was the first, who wants British rulers should

teach English and other science subjects to students in the universities which they established at Calcutta, Madras and Bombay.

After the independence in 1947, debates arose about the future of English in India. While Hindi was promoted as the national language, resistance from non-Hindi speaking states particularly Tamil Nadu led to the retention of English as an associate official language under the Official Languages Act of 1963, later amended in 1967. Today, English occupies a prominent position in Indian society, serving as a language of instruction, governance, science, technology, law, and media (Annamalai 41).

The English journey started with Christian missionary and trade in India, now reached at the place where it stands as a second language or language of connectivity in the multicultural, multilingual, multi-religious and multi-regional country. Today, English language in India has acquired its own identity by its own function and characteristics in different walks of human life such as in education, politics, legislation, sports, media, science etc. Thus, English language today known with so many names such as language of world, language of knowledge, language of class and status, language of trade, language of career opportunities, language of standard etc.

Today, what Raj Rao predicted in 1938 seems to have come true. He states that “we are all instinctively bilingual many of us writing in our own language and in English. We cannot write like the English. We should not...Our method of expression therefore has to be a dialect which will someday prove to be as distinctive and colorful as the Irish or American. Time alone justify it”. (Raj Rao 1983:V)

### **Characteristics of Indian English :**

The term, English in India refer to English language used by Indian people in linguistically and culturally pluralistic Indian country which is at the beginning foreign language and now as a second language. In India, English is dominated in all major fields’, disciplines and commercial world etc. It is not native variety like British English but has acquired vital place in pluralistic context in India.

Indian English (IE) is not a mere derivative of British English but a dynamic variety shaped by phonological, syntactic, lexical, and cultural influences from Indian languages. According to Kachru, this process of transformation is best described as nativization or indigenization in his book ‘The Other Tongue’.

Indian English is not a monolithic entity but a dynamic and evolving linguistic variety shaped by the multilingual environment of India. It has developed unique characteristics in terms of phonology, syntax, vocabulary, semantics, pragmatics, and literary style, distinguishing it from other global varieties of English. These features reflect the influence of indigenous languages, cultural idioms and socio-political contexts. The following analysis categorizes the key features of Indian English:

### **I. Phonological Influence and Phonological Features :**

The phonological system of Indian English is shaped significantly by the native

languages that are mother tongues (L1) of its speakers. As Sridhar observes, phonological interference from regional languages gives Indian English a distinct accent that is widely intelligible but noticeably non-native (Sridhar 38).

Phonological features of Indian English include retroflex consonants, syllable-timed rhythm, and distinct stress patterns influenced by mother tongues. The pronunciation of certain English phonemes often aligns more closely with regional speech habits, resulting in intelligible but distinguishable Indian accents (Sridhar 38).

### Key Phonological Differences :

1. **Syllable-Timed Rhythm:** Unlike stress-timed English varieties (e.g., British, American), Indian English follows a syllable-timed rhythm, where each syllable receives approximately equal emphasis, mirroring patterns in Indian languages.
2. **Retroflex Consonants:** A unique feature is the retroflex articulation of /t/, /d/, /n/, influenced by languages like Hindi and Tamil.
3. **Non-Rhoticity:** The /r/ sound is often pronounced clearly even when it appears after a vowel (e.g., "car" → /ka:r/), deviating from standard Received Pronunciation norms.
4. **Consonant Substitution:** In Indian pluralistic context, Indian English users often use substitution of following consonants;
  - /v/ and /w/ confusion: "wine" and "vine" may be indistinguishable.
  - /θ/ → /t/, /ð/ → /d/: "thing" becomes "ting", "this" becomes "dis".
  - /z/ → /s/: "zoo" pronounced as "soo".
5. **Spelling-Based Pronunciations:** Words are often pronounced phonetically as spelled (e.g., "debt" with /b/), especially among rural or formal speakers.

### II. Syntactic Features: Grammar and Sentence Structure :

Syntactic features of Indian English reveal how L1 grammar influences English sentence structure. This results in both idiosyncratic expressions and systematic patterns. The following are the some Common Syntactic Features:

1. **Present Continuous for Habitual Action:** "He is coming to school every day" instead of "He comes to school every day." Which is the feature influenced by the structure of Indian languages.
2. **Overgeneralization of Progressive Forms:** For example "I am knowing him" instead of "I know him." And "He is going school every day instead of "He goes school every day.
3. **Tag Questions:** Most of the time, Indian English users' use what naturally comes from their mother tongue language. Thus, the Influence of vernacular speech can be found in following examples:
  - a. "You are coming, no?"
  - b. "You're not well, is it?"

4. **Word Order Variations:** Sometimes influenced by Indian languages' SOV (Subject-Object-Verb) structure:
  - a. "My all friends are here" instead of "All my friends are here."
5. **Misuse or Omission of Articles:** Articles ("a", "an", "the") are frequently misused due to their absence in many Indian languages. Such as;
  - a. "He is doctor" instead of "He is a doctor."

### III. Lexical Features (Vocabulary) :

Indian English incorporates words and phrases from Hindi, Sanskrit, Tamil, Urdu, and other regional languages. Common expressions such as "do the needful," "prepone," and "out of station" are grammatically acceptable in Indian English but deviate from native-speaker norms. These expressions reflect semantic transfer and syntactic adaptation based on Indian language structures (Kachru, Indianization 17). Indian English is lexically enriched by loanwords, neologism and semantic shifts which are borrowing from Indian Languages such words from Hindi, Tamil, Marathi, Urdu, Bengali, etc., are integrated into Indian English:

#### Key Lexical Innovations :

1. **Borrowings from Indian Languages:**
  - a. Words like chai, guru, ashram, puja, dharma, bandh, chana, Kunkum, Saree and ghee are widely used.
2. **Semantic Extension:**
  - a. "Hotel" refers to a small restaurant, "pass out" means graduate.
3. **Coinages and Indianisms:**
  - a. "Prepone" (advance a date)
  - b. "Timepass" (leisure activity)
  - c. "Cousin brother/sister" (explicit kinship)
4. **Reduplication:** It is Common for emphasis: "small-small things," "going-going", "fast-fast," "eating-eating."

### IV. Semantic Features: Meaning and Interpretation :

Indian English frequently mirrors the thought patterns of Indian languages, resulting in literal translations and extended semantic ranges. The examples:

1. **Literal Translations:**
  - a. "My head is paining" for "I have a headache."
  - b. "He is having too much tension" for "He is very stressed."
2. **Contextual Meaning Expansion:**
  - a. "House" may mean an extended family dwelling.
  - b. "Missed call" carries the functional meaning of an intentional signal rather than a failed call.

## V. Pragmatic and Discourse Features

The pragmatics of Indian English reflects cultural norms of politeness, hierarchy, and formality. It also demonstrates unique rhetorical strategies adapted from Indian traditions.

### Notable Features:

1. **Honorific Usage:**
  - a. “Sir”, “Madam”, “Ji”, “Uncle”, “Aunty” used for strangers or elders.
2. **Indirectness:**
  - a. Requests or refusals are often softened: “I’ll try” instead of “I won’t.”
3. **Oral Traditions and Rhetoric:** Repetition, proverbs, and storytelling styles influence written and spoken English in India.

## VI. Literary and Stylistic Features :

Indian English literature represents a creative adaptation of the language, showcasing its full expressive potential.

1. **Code-Switching and Code-Mixing:** Mixing English with Hindi, Tamil, Urdu, or other languages is common in literature and popular culture. One of the defining features of Indian English usage is code-switching—the alternating use of English and Indian languages in conversation or writing. This reflects not confusion, but creativity and cultural fluidity. Consider phrases like:
  - a. “Let’s go to the bazaar after the meeting.”
  - b. “This idea is total jugaad.”

According to E. Annamalai, this functional multilingualism allows speakers to fluidly switch between languages depending on context (Annamalai 53). For example: A Tamil speaker may use Tamil at home, English at work, and Hindi in public interactions. English is used in formal education, legal discourse, science, and media, often coexisting with mother tongues.

2. **Cultural Embedding and Subversion of Norms:** Indian English literature often mirrors India’s multilingualism. Authors integrate native words, syntax, and cultural references, creating a distinct aesthetic. Writers infuse texts with local customs, mythology, and traditions. For example, Salman Rushdie’s “chutnification of English” blends multilingual idioms and cultural humor.:
  - a) Salman Rushdie's “chutnification of English” blends Indian languages with English, reflecting postcolonial hybridity.
  - b) Arundhati Roy and Girish Karnad use English as a medium while embedding it with local speech rhythms, cultural symbolism, and non-English phrases.

- c) Girish Karnad, in particular, uses multilingual dialogues in his plays to reflect the lived linguistic diversity of Indian society. Girish Karnad blends Kannada expressions into English with Indian rhythms and syntax.

3. **Indian Idiom:** Raja Rao wrote, "We cannot write like the English. We should not." (Kanthapura v), where advocating for an English that reflects Indian realities.

The characteristics of Indian English are not anomalies but systematic linguistic expressions grounded in India's multilingual and multicultural fabric. Indian English represents both linguistic innovation and socio-political adaptation. It is a fully functional variety of English, enriched by local cultures and global influences. As Kachru emphasized, Indian English is a "norm-developing variety" with its own rules and literary legitimacy (Indianization 29). In embracing and legitimizing these features, Indian English serves as a powerful medium for communication, identity, and creativity in contemporary India.

### Conclusion :

Indian English exhibits a wide range of distinctive features shaped by the sociolinguistic realities of India's multilingual culture. It is neither inferior nor a mere imitation of British or American English but it is a vibrant and autonomous variety with its own rules and expressions. These characteristics allow Indian English to serve as a medium for both global communication and local expression, reflecting the plurality, hybridity, and creativity of Indian identity. In literature and daily use alike, Indian English challenges the idea of single 'standard' English and established it as Indian English in the world.

### Works Cited :

- Annamalai, E. Managing Multilingualism in India: Political and Linguistic Manifestations. SAGE Publications, 2001.
- Agarwal, B. R. Major Trends in the Post-Independence Indian English Fiction. Atlantic Publishers, 2012.
- Chakraborty, Kaustav. Indian Drama in English. PHI Learning Pvt. Ltd., 2014.
- Crystal, David. English as a Global Language. 2nd ed., Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- Dattani, Mahesh. Collected Plays: Volumes I and II. Penguin Books, 2000.
- Iyengar, K. R. S. Indian Writing in English. Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 2012.
- Kachru, Braj B. The Indianization of English: The English Language in India. Oxford University Press, 1983.
- Kachru, Braj B, editor. The Other Tongue: English Across Cultures. University of Illinois Press, 1992.
- Karnad, Girish. Collected Plays. Oxford University Press, 2005.
- King, Bruce. Modern Indian English Poetry. Oxford University Press, 1987.
- Mehrotra, Arvind Krishna, editor. A History of Indian Literature in English. Columbia University Press, 2003.





- Mukherjee, Meenakshi. Realism and Reality: The Novel and Society in India. Oxford University Press, 1985.
- Naik, M. K. A History of Indian English Literature. Sahitya Akademi, 2007.
- Naik, M. K. Aspects of Indian Writing in English. Macmillan, 1979.
- Rao, Raja. Kanthapura. 1938. Oxford University Press, 1989.
- Sridhar, Kamal K. Social Dimensions of English in India: An Empirical Study. Oxford University Press, 1982.