

UNIT 4 INDIAN ENGLISH

Structure

- 4.0 Objectives
- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 The Arrival of English
- 4.3 The Establishment of English
- 4.4 Consolidation and Development
- 4.5 Post-Independence Language Policy
- 4.6 Cline of Bilingualism
- 4.7 The 'Indianness' in Indian English
- 4.8 Indian Writing in English
- 4.9 Let Us Sum Up
- 4.10 Key Words
- 4.11 Reading List
- 4.12 Questions

4.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit we will discuss in detail about the arrival, establishment and development of English in India. We will also describe the post-Independence scenario vis-à-vis English and the regional languages. We will discuss some of the features of Indian English and Indian Writing in English.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

What constitutes 'Indian English'? Is it a mere conglomeration of certain grammatical, semantic, lexical and morphological features that govern its use; or is it a channel that opens out to a newer world -- a world that entices the learner as well as the user with promises of greater prestige and power? English, in India, is used as a medium of communication by more than eighty million people, an estimate which far surpasses the speakers of English even in Great Britain. That too, in a country where there are nineteen other national languages along with numerous dialects ranging over the thousand mark. What makes English such a widely-spoken language in India? Is it a *local* phenomenon (local, in the etymological sense of, *localized*, spoken among a select few), or does it follow a pattern of pan-Indianness. And if it does, what are the basic features of this English? And what strategies, manoeuvres or even instruments of coercion were used for its establishment and subsequent dissemination? In other words, what were the *a priori* historical principles immanent in the discourse of imperialism? The arrival, the spread, the disseminative principles, the education policies, the language policies, the language politics, the hierarchies of power inherent in a language, and the position of the learner/user vis-à-vis the power-language are some of the pertinent questions that will be raised and analyzed during the course of this chapter, and attempts will be made to analyze the nature of this language that is homogeneously termed 'Indian English'.

4.2 THE ARRIVAL OF ENGLISH

By the year 1600, England had established trading contacts with three continents- America, Africa, and Asia. The growth of English in South Asia, and especially in

India, can be directly correlated with the growth of imperial rule in India. It is customary to trace the roots of English on the Indian subcontinent to 31 December, 1600, when Queen Elizabeth I granted a Charter to a few merchants of the city of London giving them a monopoly of trade with India and the East. It must be noted in this early phase of arrival that the British, first and foremost, were committed to the expansion of trade rather than territory, which meant that the language of administration that required speakers and comprehenders, was still not involved. The language of trade essentially meant the influx of certain Indian words into the English vocabulary and vice-versa for effective communication between two trading communities. The language however, found a different outlet to spread itself—missionary work and proselytization.

With the establishment of trading contacts with India, preachers of the Protestant faith started coming to South Asia essentially for proselytizing purposes. The people of the sub-continent were thus, not only exposed to a new religion (though there is evidence that Christianity came to India as early as the 4th century A.D.), but also to a new language, for the language of the preachers, in the early phase was their native one. The efforts started in 1614 and became more and more effective after 1659, once the missionaries were allowed to use the ships of the East India Company. In 1698, when the Charter of the Company was renewed, a 'missionary clause' was added to it. This 'clause' silenced the critics of the East India Company in Britain, by emphasizing the fact that the company was not merely interested in trading but also in the enhancement of the Church; furthermore, it provided the company with a legitimizing principle for the exploitation that they were perpetrating on the land. This policy, however, changed again in 1765, when encouragement of missionaries was stopped. This created great resentment in missionary circles in England, and the Clapham Sect started agitating for freedom for missionary work in India. Charles Grant was perhaps, the most influential figure who vociferously supported the cause of the missionaries in India.

In 1813, with the efforts of Charles Grant, William Wilberforce, and the Foreign Secretary, Lord Castlereagh, the House of Commons in its 13th Resolution

resolved that it is the opinion of this committee that it is the duty of this Country to promote the interests and happiness of the native inhabitants of the British dominions in India, and that measures ought to be introduced as may tend to the introduction among them of useful knowledge, and of religious and moral improvement.

This helped the missionary work in India, and thus the proselytizing and educational activities of the missionaries—which were very restricted and unplanned from 1600 to 1765—were revitalized.

On 9 July 1854, Sir Charles Wood sent the Court of Directors the Dispatch which came later to Lord Dalhousie, the Governor General of India. It was due to this Dispatch that in 1857, three universities were established in India, at Bombay, Calcutta and Madras. By the end of the Nineteenth century, the Punjab (Lahore) and Allahabad universities were established. With the spread of colleges and the increase of universities, the importance of English was rising, and in the early twentieth century English was formally established as the official and academic language of India. English thus became the 'prestige' language, completely replacing Persian and the Indian languages (what were then called the *vernaculars*). In the second decade of the twentieth century, as the nationalist movement gained strength, an anti-English feeling emerged; but, strangely enough, the medium of the movement itself was English. By 1928 a reasonably influential English press and a taste for English publications had been created.

But we have already crossed the boundaries of the 'arrival' of English and moved towards its establishment. But before we proceed further, we must go back in time to trace, if possible, the founding moment that led to its establishment. But even before that, a word about the Dispatch. The Dispatch contained two interesting clauses—one emphasizing the use of *vernaculars* instead of Sanskrit and Arabic, and second, making English education optional, stating that 'the English language should be taught where there is a demand for it'. This was in fact, an attempt to dilute the Macaulay Minute promulgated in 1835, though the policy of education that was followed in later years was more influenced by the Minute than the Dispatch.

4.3 THE ESTABLISHMENT OF ENGLISH

After 1765, the East India Company became a political power in India; its attention was, naturally, attracted by wider problems. The political suzerainty that they enjoyed over a vast tract of land forced them to take up directly the reigns of administration, and this necessitated a different approach towards a language which till then more or less belonged to the domain of missionary education. The education of Anglo-Indian children became secondary, whereas it had earlier been one of the main objects of schools. In 1787, the Court of Directors of the East India Company appreciated the efforts of the Reverend Mr. Schwartz to establish two schools in Tanjore and Marwar for the children of soldiers, encouraging him with a grant of 250 pagodas per year per school. It was an initial but crucial stage, for it might have left no mark had the later discussions not gone in favour of English.

The highly controversial and very significant Minute of 1835 was passed on 2 February. The Minute, however, was not passed without debate and controversy. There were two views about educating the people of South Asia in English, both the views having their groups of detractors and adherents. Both the views known later as the Anglicist-Orientalist controversy, stemmed from the same argumentative principle: the urge to educate a mass which was considered to be 'barbaric' and 'retrograde'. The controversy was centered around the nature of instruction, the medium through which 'knowledge' could be imparted to the 'natives'. The arguments were further fuelled by the presence of certain Indians in both the camps. Even before Raja Rammohan Roy's plea for introducing English in India, there was already a small group of Indians, especially in Bengal, who wanted to study English in addition to Persian and Bengali. Perhaps this was one way for Hindus to show their concern about the domination of Persian or Arabic; or perhaps this was done essentially for socio-economic and educational reasons. It is well known that, in aiding the passing of the crucial Minute in 1835, Macaulay's hand was considerably strengthened by a small group of Indians led by Raja Rammohan Roy, who preferred English to Indian language for academic, scientific and other international reasons. Roy's often quoted letter to Lord Amherst, dated 11 December 1823, is an important document which contributed to the introduction of bilingualism in English in the Indian subcontinent. Referring to the British proposal of establishing a Sanskrit school in Calcutta, Rammohan Roy said:

When this Seminary of learning was proposed, we understand that the Government in England had ordered a considerable sum of money to be annually devoted to the instruction of its Indian subjects. We were filled with sanguine hopes that this sum would be laid out in employing European gentlemen of talents and education to instruct the natives of India in mathematics, natural philosophy, chemistry, anatomy, and other useful .

Roy's rhetoric was directed in a masked manner against the government support for Sanskrit education, the rhetoric being itself garbed in the apparels of humanist philosophy. This was one of the most potent instruments in the hands of Macaulay who clearly and visibly in his Minute reiterated the same arguments in favour of English education.

As has already been pointed out, the Anglicist-Orientalist controversy centered around the kind of education that the rulers were going to propagate. To put the controversy at a simplistic level, one group led by Charles Grant, Lord Moira and T.B. Macaulay favoured English rather than the Indian languages in the education system of India. They were popularly termed as the **Anglicists**. The **Orientalists**, led by H.T. Prinsep, were against the use of English as a compulsory language, terming the Minute 'hasty and indiscreet'. In his dissenting Minute Prinsep wrote: 'The next step will be to transfer the professors' allowance to teachers of English, and then will follow in due course the voting of Arabic and Persian to be dead and damned'. It is however easy to be waylaid by the Orientalist argument as supportive and favourable towards indigenous teaching. Both the arguments were flip sides of the same coin. Both the arguments were driven by the same pedagogic principles. The logic for both sides of the camp ran the same: the natives are backward and immersed in darkness; they need the 'light' of education to dispel it, but the natives are not fit enough to formulate their own education policy; thus, the ruling race would help formulate it for them. And it was only at this stage, that the Orientalist and Anglicist arguments differed. While the Anglicists argued that education policy should be framed in English, the Orientalists believed that the same education could be imparted through Sanskrit, Arabic and Persian. It was only that the Orientalists needed to mould and re-interpret the literature for them. It was however, the Anglicists' argument that gained the upper hand resulting in the passing of the Macaulay Minute.

The Minute specifically states the agenda of the British educators, being aimed at forming "a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern—a class of persons, Indians in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinion, in morals and in intellect". Referring to Sanskrit and Arabic, he says: 'I have no knowledge of either Sanskrit or Arabic. But I have done what I could to form a correct estimate of their value.. I am quite ready to take the oriental learning at the valuation of the orientalist themselves. I have never found one amongst them who could deny that a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia'. The Minute received the seal of approval from Lord William Bentinck, and on 7 March 1835, an official resolution endorsing Macaulay's policy was passed. This firmly established the beginnings of the process of producing English-knowing bilinguals in India.

The Minute sought now to teach what was termed as strictly 'useful', through English language, literature and culture. However, the 'useful' (i.e., 'science') could have been promoted even through translations into the indigenous languages. It must be conceded that but for Prinsep's strong objections oriental education would have faced complete extinction with the abolition of the Mudrassa and Sanskrit college.

4.4 CONSOLIDATION AND DEVELOPMENT

It was Lord Auckland, the then Governor-General of India, who through his Minute dated 24th November 1839, put an end to the Orientalist-Anglicist controversy by ear-marking additional funds for the development of both the Oriental and the

English education. Auckland favoured the promotion first of Oriental instruction, and only thereafter of the English classes whose principal aim would be "to communicate through the means of the English language, a complete education in European literature, philosophy and science to the greatest number of students who may be found ready to accept it at our hands". Auckland's verdict thereby went in favour of English and as the Indian Education Commission, 1882, noted in its Historical Review of Education in India: "Since that time education in India has proceeded upon the recognition of the value of English instruction, of the duty of the state to spread Western knowledge among its subjects".

The Macaulayan course of language and education underwent a review in Wood's Education Dispatch of 1854, described by some as 'The Magna Carta of Indian Education'. It reviewed the past educational policies and outlined a policy for the future. The occasion for this was provided by the renewal of the Company's Charter in 1853. The Indian Education Commission supported the Dispatch of 1854 in its stated goal of improvement and wider extension of education, both English and vernacular, and made a specific recommendation towards the study of English, that "the English language is to be the medium of instruction in the higher branches and the vernacular in the lower. English is to be taught wherever there is a demand for it, but it is not to be substituted for the vernacular language of the country". The Dispatch itself had stated: "We look, therefore, to the English language and to the vernacular languages of India together as the *media* for the diffusion of European knowledge, and it is our desire to see them cultivated together in all schools in India of sufficiently high class to maintain a school master possessing the requisite qualifications". The Dispatch thus, rejected what according to the British was a retrograde policy as approved by Lord Auckland. Nevertheless, it failed to resolve the basic tension that existed between English and Indian languages. Although the traditional role of classical languages was recognized, the choice of English as medium of instruction in the highest branches of learning, and the spread of modern knowledge and education, could hardly give the vernaculars the importance and position which could help them grow and develop. The practical situation whereby English education helped secure a government job also came in the way of the choice of the medium being placed on the vernaculars.

The Indian Education Commission (1882), appointed to enquire into the Dispatch of 1854, and to suggest methods for more completely carrying out the policy therein laid down, observed that there was no uniform pattern in respect of the medium language. They found that

1. the mother tongue as a medium of instruction was neglected since a child studied the mother-tongue for periods varying between two to four years after which he read English, thus widening the gap between the Anglo-Vernacular and the Vernacular Schools;
2. English was studied as a subject for 2-3 years and then used as a medium thereby leaving scope for improving knowledge of English before its adoption as a medium;
3. at High School, English was invariably the medium of instruction;
4. the highest instruction in the vernacular was upto the middle stage except in Punjab;
5. throughout the Secondary Course, English was employed as the medium of instruction.

were to bring European knowledge within the reach of all classes of people. It was thus thought necessary to correct the practice of learning English for its commercial value and relegate the study of the vernaculars to the background.

Taken as a whole, the period 1854 to 1921 saw a large expansion of the modern system of education at the expense of the traditional system. In spite of the efforts for teaching of modern Indian languages, the medium of instruction still remained English especially at the higher levels of education and the craze for English education continued to spread and dominate the Indian education scene.

The ever-burgeoning national movement in India had its effect on the growth of Education and English in India. Surprisingly, a movement that took the standpoint of ousting the British from the country, was itself divided over the question of English in India. So, on the one hand, we have Annie Besant attacking the predominance of English in Indian education, while on the other, Lala Lajpat Rai who argued that in our need to become modern and to be able to shed the illogical constraints on our thought and society we must learn the modern sciences, the modern literatures and consequently European languages and literatures. In this sense, Lajpat Rai would belong to the tradition of Raja Rammohan Roy. There was however, a strong protest from Mahatma Gandhi who argued that the dominance of English over the vernaculars is unnatural, particularly its use as the medium of instruction at the earliest age possible. The opposition to English was strongly expressed by Gandhi who ridiculed the fake 'elitist' values attached to the learning of English at the expense of one's own mother-tongues:

I want the culture of all the lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any... But I would not have a single Indian to forget, neglect or be ashamed of his mother-tongue or to feel that he or she cannot think or express the best thought in his or her own vernacular.

Between 1936-37 and 1946-47 several changes took place: the number of University students doubled, though in the secondary education expansion was neither so extensive nor so rapid. It was as a matter of fact slower than in the earlier periods. However, in the matter of medium of instruction and text-book production there was a change towards the adoption of mother-tongue as the medium of instruction. It came to be realized that English could not continue to hold the dominant position in the Secondary course. The regionalization of the medium at the Secondary stage was implemented. The hours of English study and its use were reduced though instruction in the Universities largely continued to be in English. By and large this situation remained unchanged till 1947.

4.5 POST - INDEPENDENCE LANGUAGE POLICY

The language policy followed in the post-independence era was expected to be pro-vernacular rather than pro-English. Mahatma Gandhi, as early as 1937, had commented on the deleterious effect of early education through English:

English having been made the medium of instruction in all the higher branches of learning, has created a permanent bar between the highly educated few and the uneducated many. It has prevented knowledge from percolating to the masses. The excessive importance given to English has cast upon the educated class a burden which has maimed them mentally for life and made them strangers in their own land.

Thus, the Indian Education Commission did not make any recommendations to help the study of modern Indian languages or decrease the dominance of English. Hence, English brought about a more drastic change in the Indian linguistic situation than it may appear. It took on the role and functions of several languages. Its introduction was even more radical a step than that of Persian. Its position can be likened to that of French in England following the Norman Conquest. In India, English was spoken by the elite classes, and the vernaculars by the common folk, just as the elite classes after the Norman Conquest in England spoke French and the common people spoke Anglo-Saxon. Macaulay could not have been more successful.

The object of the secondary course of study in 1882 was to spread a 'knowledge of English' and 'not European knowledge of a less high order' through English as well as through the mother-tongue as laid down in the Dispatch of 1854. The effect of this was that Indian languages came to be neglected. Also, the dominance of English in the secondary course grew unabated so much so that its study was begun even before the pupil had obtained a good knowledge of his/her mother-tongue, and often students felt burdened by the difficulties caused by the medium of instruction and examination.

A significant change in this policy was first mooted between 1902 and 1920, that is, between the appointment of the Indian Universities Commission and the transfer of education under Indian control. Lord Curzon, the Viceroy of India (1898-1905), a pervasive and powerful influence during those years and a protagonist of the development of modern Indian languages, summoned, during this phase, in 1901 to be exact, the first All-India Conference of Directors of Public Instruction. The deliberations of the Conference were a great help to him in planning his educational reforms. Whereas in higher education he was for the improvement of the quality of education, in Primary education he was for its expansion together with its improvement, and at High School he supported the extensive use of English. Regarding Primary Education, particularly education of the children in the vernaculars, he noted among other things, how wrong it was to teach young children a foreign language when they were not given an opportunity to extend and deepen the knowledge of their own mother tongues.

Lord Curzon also attached great importance to the task of University reforms and consequently appointed on 27th January 1902 the Indian Universities Commission (1902). The Commission submitted its report in the same year adopting the model of London University as modified by the Act of 1898. The Indian Universities Commission did not commend the Madras University example where a modern Indian language was allowed as an alternative to a classical language. The Commission instead emphasized the need for the better teaching of English at school. In higher education it recognized the extension of European knowledge through the medium of English. It is interesting that very subtly a case was made for beginning the study of English even earlier than was the case. The objective evidently being to introduce the study of English early. Even for the teaching of English, Indians were not considered to be well qualified.

The question of determining the stage at which English study must begin and the adoption of modern Indian languages at the middle school stage assumed great importance a little later. The 'Government Resolution on Education Policy', 1904, emphasized the importance of mastering the vernacular before the study of English was begun. Thus English was not recommended for study at the primary level except for large cities like Madras, where, like Urdu, it served the purpose of a lingua franca to some extent. Furthermore, premature introduction of English as the medium of instruction before achieving comprehension in it was criticized. The Resolution reminded of the principle affirmed in the Dispatch of 1854 that Indian vernaculars

were to bring European knowledge within the reach of all classes of people. It was thus thought necessary to correct the practice of learning English for its commercial value and relegate the study of the vernaculars to the background.

Taken as a whole, the period 1854 to 1921 saw a large expansion of the modern system of education at the expense of the traditional system. In spite of the efforts for teaching of modern Indian languages, the medium of instruction still remained English especially at the higher levels of education and the craze for English education continued to spread and dominate the Indian education scene.

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It is certain that certain efforts were made to break with the existing system for obvious political reasons. However, as Jawaharlal Nehru observed at the All India Educational Conference in 1948, any plan for education in India tended to maintain the existing system with slight modifications. He cautioned against this tendency and said the changes in the country must be reflected in the education system. He was for revolutionizing the entire basis of education. With the British leaving India in 1947, the problem of English education attained new dimensions. The Government of India Act, 1935 was replaced by the Constitution of India. Article 343 of the Indian Constitution declared Hindi in Devanagri script as the official language of the Union and this officially rendered the bilingual situation in the country trilingual. An integrated language policy became all the more necessary for educational, cultural and political reasons. The specific problem was the need to introduce the vernacular, and yet retain English for a variety of needs—as a library language, as a medium at the higher levels of education, as a link language and as the official language. This required excellence in English, but the weightage given to the study of English had to be reduced. The language issue gave rise to diverse controversies and various education commissions, language commissions and study groups appointed by the Government of India devoted their deliberations to find a solution. The Constitution of 1950 recognized fourteen Indian Languages of which Hindi was to be the first national language. English was to be a transitional language until 1965.

This ambivalence towards English is perhaps, the result of not only the language policies followed in the post independence era, but also the inherent position of English vis-à-vis the Indian languages. Thus, while most of the commissions recommended the switching over to Indian languages as mediums of instruction in the post-British period, all of them favoured the retaining of English as a 'library language'. For example, the University Education Commission, 1948-49, under the Chairmanship of Dr. S. Radhakrishnan argued for the replacement of English with an Indian language, but at the same time proposed the retention of English with a view 'to keep ourselves in touch with the living stream of ever-growing knowledge'.

Hence, the present position of English in India is as follows: it is recognized constitutionally as the Associate National Official Language and as inter-regional link language; educationally it is recognized as an essential component of formal education, and as the preferred medium of learning, with specialized education in science and technology available through the medium of English only. Socially it is recognized and upheld as a mark of education, culture and prestige. The polity and society confers great value on the learning of English, gives it enormous potential, thus creating a great demand for English-knowing Indian bi- or multi-linguals. In the process of globalization, the value for English has grown even more internationally. English is evidently here to stay for a long time.

4.6 CLINE OF BILINGUALISM

Since the establishment and development of English in India, the language has always been used as a second language (L₂) rather than as the mother-tongue (L₁). It has essentially created bilinguals, and sometimes, multilinguals responding to an Indian context. At the outset, it should be mentioned here that English in India functions in the following sociolinguistic setting: i) it is a second language; ii) it is used as a link language both intra-nationally and internationally; iii) it is used in Indian English writings (fiction, newspapers, etc.). In fact, it has burgeoned in this sphere winning international accolades.

It may be said that Indians are bilingual in the sense that they are using English as a *complementary language* in typically Indian contexts. In the use of the written medium of Indian English a distinction is possible along the lines of writer/reader relationship. An Indian bilingual use of English may be conditioned by the reading public of his/her work. This is clear in the creative work of Indian English writers, especially the novelists and short-story writers. Thus, on the basis of writer/reader relationship we have two forms of Indian English: one written in India, the reading public of which is exclusively Indian, another which is written either in or outside India, for Indians or non-Indians.

English in India inevitably is 'in contact' situation with other Indian languages. In linguistic terms a study of a language contact situation involves a study of transfer at different levels. In such a situation there are at least two language (L_1 and L_2) and in certain cases, two cultures (C_1 and C_2) involved. In Indian English, the process of transfer may result in the following: i) transfer of context; ii) transfer of formal items; iii) transfer of form/context components. 'Transfer of Context' refers to the transfer of 'elements' of certain contexts from C_1 and L_1 to L_2 . If the participants, however, belong to different cultural and language backgrounds (e.g., Hindi-English, Tamil-English, French-Russian), this may involve the transfer of certain contextual units which may be non-belonging elements of the culture of L_2 , such as the caste system of India, social and religious taboos, notions of superiority and inferiority, and the like. For example, the use of such words and phrases in the form of a complete nominal unit- 'Cherisher of the poor', 'king of pearls', 'government', 'huzoor', 'ma-bap', 'policewala' or 'pandit'. All these are not only contextually transferred to L_2 , but also the meaning of these Indian English words take the form of L_1 when used in L_2 .

Transfer of formal items refers to structural features of L_1 being transferred to L_2 . 'Transfer of formal items' may be of two types :

- a) Formal items from different ranks may be transferred from L_1 , e.g., sentences, clauses, phrases, fixed collocations, compounds, etc. For example, 'salt giver', 'spoiler of my salt', 'sister-sleeper', 'bow my forehead', 'turmeric ceremony' etc.
- b) L_1 meanings may be transferred to L_2 items. For instance, the term 'brother-in-law' has one restricted meaning in British English as a kinship term; in Indian English it has acquired three distinct meanings as a term of i) abuse, ii) affection or intimacy, and iii) kinship. In the use of the items 'flower-bed', 'government', etc. there is a change of register in Indian English with the result that a native speaker of English will not understand these items without understanding the defining-context. Examples are: "On this, her flower-bed, her seven children were born", or "Government, she knows nothing about drinks". The word 'government' is used here as a mode of address for a person who represents the state, and hence authority.

'Transfer of form/context components' involve the transfer of fixed formal exponents of a context to L_2 where these contextual units are absent. So socially-determined speech-functions such as modes of addresses/reference, greetings, blessings/prayers etc. are related to the C_1 in the Indian context of culture.

Let us now shift our attention to the cline of bilingualism that exists in India. But, first and foremost, who can be called an Indian English bilingual? A standard (or educated) Indian English bilingual may be defined as one who is intelligible not only to other Indians in different parts of the subcontinent, but ideally speaking, to the educated native speakers of English, too. But, intelligibility does not necessarily

imply that the user's command of English equals that of the native speaker. The term *intelligibility* may be used in a wider sense to imply an Indian bilingual's capacity to use English effectively for social control in all those social activities in which English is used in India. In Indian English, we may then imagine a scale of bilingualism running from almost monolinguals at one end, through varying degrees of bilingualism, to absolute ambilingualism at the other end.

In India an idiom of English has developed which is Indian in the sense that there are formal and contextual exponents of Indianness in such 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 we may be able to make a crucial distinction between those formations which are deviations from other L₁ varieties of English, and those formations which are termed 'mistakes' or sub-standard formations. One might then ask: In what sense is Indian English 'distinctive' and has a distinctive form of Indian English really evolved in such a multi-lingual situation as prevalent in India? That is the topic of discussion in our next section.

4.7 THE 'INDIANNES' IN INDIAN ENGLISH

We have already discussed some of the features of context-oriented Indianisms while discussing bilingualism in India. We shall in this section consider mainly the formal features of some of the transferred Indianisms.

It is useful to describe Indianisms in more than one way. In terms of lexical structure and grammatical structure the transfer may result in collocational and/or grammatical deviations. The transfer of Indianisms in Indian English may involve equivalence of formal items of L₁ and L₂ in two ways:

- (a) It may be a translation of an Indian item, or
- (b) It may be a shift based on an underlying Indian source item.

1. **Translation** : Translation may be defined as establishing equivalent or partially equivalent formations in Indian English from the formation in Indian languages. In translation, there is not necessarily a one-to-one correspondence between the items of L₁ and L₂. For instance, 'namak haram' has been translated by Mulk Raj Anand as the 'spoiler of salt'. Here, an item of word rank L₁ is transferred at group rank into L₂. Yet another compound, 'Isvar-prem' has been translated by the same author as 'god-love'. Various other examples are available - 'twice-born', 'waist-thread', 'cow-worship', etc. Moreover, there can be translations in which the nearest equivalent of English is attempted following the same patterns of L₁. For example, 'car-festival', 'caste-mark', 'caste-dinner', 'cow-worship', 'cousin-sister', 'cousin-brother', etc.

2. **Shift** : A shift is different from translation in the sense that in a shift no attempt is made to establish formal equivalence. An Indianism classified as a shift is usually an adaptation of an underlying formal item of an Indian language which provides its source. Shifts are better explained and understood if considered with their appropriate contextual units from Indian culture. The following types of Indianisms may be treated as shifts: 'may the vessel of your life never float in the sea of existence'; 'may the fire of ovens consume you'; 'a crocodile in a loin-cloth'. Generally, the underlying source item for a shift is a fixed collocation of an Indian language.

An Indian English collocation includes those formations which have Indian characteristics in the following three senses. First, they may deviate grammatically from American and British English formations. Second, they may involve loan shifts from Indian languages. Third, they may be formally non-deviant but contextually deviant, that is, if they have those contextual units which are part of Indian culture but are absent in those cultures where English is spoken as the L₁. The collocational deviation of Indianisms, then, may be of two types: formal and contextual. By formal deviation is meant the deviation in terms of the lexical items which operate in the structure of a collocation. Thus we get lexical and contextually Indian collocations, e.g., 'sister-sleeper' 'dining-leaf', 'rape-sister', 'flower-bed'. It is to be noted that collocations like 'sister-sleeper' or 'flower bed' are not grammatically deviant, but only lexically deviant because in Indian English 'sleeper' is used in a particular sense in which it is not used in English.

It is interesting to note that there is on the whole an underlying regular syntactic process involved in forming Indian English collocations. In a large number of Indianisms a syntactic unit of a higher rank in English is reduced to a lower rank in Indian English. In any such Indianisms, the reduction first involves the process of deletion and then permutation of the lexical items. Consider, for example, the following nominal groups of English: (1) 'an address of welcome', (2) 'a bunch of keys', and (3) 'love of god'. In Indian English, these are reduced to: (1) 'welcome address', (2) 'key-bunch', and (3) 'God-love'. We have even-formations like 'America - returned' or 'England-returned'.

Those Indianisms which have specific meaning (and function) in Indian culture may be termed contextually determined or contextually loaded Indianisms. Contextually determined Indianisms may be 'deviant' in the sense that they are unintelligible to the user of other varieties of English because they are not acquainted with those typically Indian contexts in which such formations are used by Indians.

Contextually determined Indianisms involve the transfer of meaning from the native culture of Indian English writers/speakers, in addition to the transfer of collocations from Indian languages: e.g., the use of 'flower-bed' in the sense of 'nuptial-bed'. We have a considerable list of such formations that occur in almost all the spheres of life: 'alms-bowl', 'bamboo-stretcher', 'bath-fire', 'betel-bag', 'black-money', 'bride-showing', 'car-festival', 'cow-dung cakes', 'eating leaves', 'leaf-plate', 'rice eating ceremony', 'sacred ash', 'saucer-lamp', 'reed mat', 'upper-cloth', 'village-elders', 'wedding-house', 'wrist-band', etc.

In addition to these, we can have hybrid or mixed formations which comprise two or more elements, and in which at least one element is from an Indian language and one from English. For example, 'attar-bottle', 'Congress-pandal', 'kumkum-mark', 'nazul-land', 'police-jamadar', etc.

It is true that the use of varieties of a language in different cultures raises interesting issues. The term 'English language' may be used as a cover-term for L₁ varieties of English and also for the 'other Englishes' which have slowly developed in West Africa, India, Malaysia, and so forth because of political, commercial and educational contacts of these countries with the English-speaking countries.

In India, the English language has blended itself with the cultural and social life of the country and has become, as Raja Rao says, the language of the 'intellectual make-up' of Indians. It is the only language, which has been retained and used by Indian intellectuals in spite of political pressures and regional language loyalty. In certain ways the use of English as a link language has for the first time created a pan-Indian literature (except, of course, the earlier use of Sanskrit) which symbolizes

cultural and socio-political aspirations of Indians. Thus, a foreign language has become culture bound in India more deeply than Persian and Arabic were in the times of the Muslim rulers.

4.8. INDIAN WRITING IN ENGLISH

We would end our discussion on Indian English with a brief note on Indian English literature. Indian English writing, broadly speaking, can be traced back to as early as 1830, five years before Macaulay's famous Minute, when the first book of poems in English by an Indian - *Shair and Other Poems* by Kashiprasad Ghose was published. The history of Indian English literature is thus, a long and variegated one. Indian English poetry, the first of the genres to emerge in Indian English writing, was once described as "Matthew Arnold in a sari", and later as "Shakuntala in skirts", with a third critic noting "the stamp 'Made in India' on the fabric". It may now safely be said that Indian English poetry, and for that matter, Indian English literature, has emerged in its own right within the literary fabric of the world. Like in English literature, Indian literature in English developed three distinct genres in the earlier stages—poetry, drama and the novel. While the first two were already available to Indian writers due to the Sanskrit tradition, the last genre was perhaps a direct import from the British. We will deal with each of the three genres very briefly, trying to locate the origins and their subsequent development.

It is often remarked that almost always the early Indian English poets turned to the past, to history and to legends and myths, in their attempts to come to terms with the present. It would be a simplification to argue that they fell into the orientalist trap. However, actually they were trying to come to terms with their Indian selves in a foreign idiom. Their attempts may strike us as naive but they were genuine. It would be untrue to say that in their attempts to incorporate Indian myths and symbols in their poetry, in their retelling the legends, or in their historical poetry, the Indian poets took the easy way out. They were not taking the easy way out; they were taking what they perceived to be the only way. It was their awareness of colonial subjugation and their distancing from their cultural tradition that impelled them to explore and use the past with poetic resources at their command and within the poetical conventions available to them.

It must be remembered here that the Indian English writer from the early years has suffered from, what Upamanyu Chatterjee has termed, "an intrinsic schizophrenia". The pull of a foreign language coupled with the inherent traditions of an Indian English writer have helped in the emergence of a distinct voice that can be safely called indigenous. This push and pull between a foreign language and native tradition has not only made Indian English writing more *accommodative* but also created a space for divergent voices to emerge in a language that till today, is considered by many as non-native.

The range of typically Indian experience are corroborated in English to give a panoramic view of India, not only in poetry, but in drama and novel as well. For example, the play *Nil Darpan* (1860) by Dinabandhu Mitra was translated into English by Michael Madhusudan Dutt as *Indigo Planting Mirror*, its theme being the brutal oppression of the Bengali villagers by the English indigo planters. It is interesting to note that though India had a long tradition of dramatic writings, this play as translated by Dutt followed the English dramatic conventions to a greater extent, thereby producing a play that was set in a distinct Indian context but followed the patterns of a Shakespearean play. This tension is perhaps, the most conspicuous in the Indian English novel.

Regarding the development of the genre of novel, Meenakshi Mukherjee, author of *Twice-born Fiction*, has an interesting point to make. She shifts the focus of attention from the writer to the reader and then back to the writer again. In other words, what were the writers reading that influenced their intellectual make-up, and set the literary conventions for an indigenous novel form to come up. She identifies four possible sources about the range of reading of the nineteenth century Indian: (a) **Curricula:** Texts that were actually transmitted through formal education. (b) **References:** Occasional references made in Indian language texts of the Nineteenth century about autobiography, intellectual discourses of western thinkers, novels that enjoyed popularity at that point of time, etc. (c) **Translation:** The books actually translated from English into the Indian languages, and she uses the term 'translation' to include the entire spectrum-adaptation, imitation, parody, pastiche and plagiarism. (d) **Influences:** Literary influences and intellectual borrowings that were used and assimilated. These four categories, if methodically studied, can not only explain the emergence of the Indian English novel but the entire gamut of Indian English literature.

The Indian English novel owes its existence to the English novel. Since the publication of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's *Rajmohan's Wife* (1885), purportedly the first Indian English novel, we have a galaxy of other Indian English writers that have tried to portray in their texts a decidedly Indian context resulting in the formation of a distinctly Indian idiom as well as new words that have been subsequently assimilated in the English language. Writers like R.K. Narayan, Raja Rao, Mulk Raj Anand, Bhabani Bhattacharya, Anita Desai, Ruskin Bond, etc. need no introduction. With the publication of Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1980), Indian English writing has received a new lease of life. Following in the wake of Rushdie's highly successful novel, writers like Upamanyu Chatterjee, Amitav Ghosh, I.Allan Sealy, Vikaram Seth and Arundhati Roy, have followed the tradition of Indian English writing in an exciting manner, opening up new possibilities in the English language. It has also given rise to what is termed as the literary 'diaspora' a class of writers estranged from the land and writing about it in an 'alien' language, through a 'fragmented mirror' (Rushdie). Whether Indian diasporic writing is an evanescent phenomenon or a new window on the world is open to the test of time.

It is however, true that Indian English writing now demands its own place in the galaxy of English writings. A language that was established and developed after acrimonious debates has finally emerged into a vibrant medium that has successfully created a literary niche for itself. Indian English today demands its own place of recognition and ranks along with all the 'other English writings' - African, Australian, Canadian - that the British had left as a legacy.

4.9 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we discussed in detail, the arrival of English in India, its gradual establishment and development. In its long sojourn on Indian soil, English has Indianized itself considerably. We discussed some of the features of this Indianization. In recent years a vast body of literature has been written in English which has been internationally acclaimed. We have given you a brief overview of this literature. We have also discuss the role of English, vis-à-vis the 'Indian' languages in the post-Independence era.

4.10 KEY WORDS

semantic	pertaining to meaning
lexical	pertaining to words
morphology	pertaining to study of rules of word-formation
pan-Indian	pertaining to the whole of India
vernacular	a language used by most of the population, but which is not the official language of the state or country
library language	passive knowledge of a language through which you can get information
multilinguals/ bilinguals	a person who knows and uses three or more languages
language contact	contact between languages, especially when at least one of the languages is influenced by the contact. This influence takes place typically when the languages are spoken in the same or adjoining regions and when there is a high degree of communication between the people speaking them. This influence may be at the level of sound system, syntax, semantics or communicative strategies such as address forms and greetings
language transfer	features of one language influencing features of another language
L₁	first language
L₂	second language
cline of bilingualism	a scale of bilingualism running from least control in one language (Incipient bilingualism) to full control in two languages
monolingual	a person who has an active knowledge of only one language, though perhaps a passive knowledge of others
ambilinguals	persons having native-like proficiency in two or more languages.

4.11 READING LIST

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4.12 QUESTIONS

1. What role did religion play in the establishment of English in India?
2. What were the similarities and differences in the Anglicist-Orientalist controversy?
3. What do you think is the role of English vis-à-vis the Indian languages in modern India?
4. What do you understand by the terms "cline of bilingualism"?