UNIT 3 THE SPREAD AND RISE OF ENGLISHES

Structure

3.0 OBJECTIVES

In the previous units we discussed the origin of English from a sociolinguistic perspective. We briefly touched on its spread to other parts of the world (unit 1). We also discussed the process of standardization of English through the centuries (unit 2). In this unit, we will concentrate on the spread of English both within England and overseas. We will look at its role where it is a native language, and when it is a second language. We will also discuss the historical and socio-political reasons for its enormous growth and popularity.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The spread and rise of English presupposes and entails the existence and subsequent dissemination of a language that not only took firm roots in its own country but also through various manoeuvres could and did establish itself in other parts of the world as well. English today is spoken by several hundred million people spanning five continents. It functions in different kinds of societies as a mother tongue, a second language, a vehicle of officialdom, a medium of education, and as a language for science, business, and commerce. It is also used as a *lingua franca*—a language used among people who have no other tongue in common—and in some places it has provided the base for pidgins and creoles. It is also spoken by people who use more than two or three languages in the course of their daily lives, and it has come to symbolise many different and often sensitive issues and institutions in different areas: education, literacy, social mobility, economic advancement, Christianity, and colonial dominance. So great has been the variation in English that it is often difficult to say whether a certain variety in one place or another could be properly termed as 'English', especially the kind of English that is generally associated with the parent country. The language has been so indigenized at certain places that the traditional associations of English as British has been almost forgotten giving rise to local varieties and laying claims to novel formations within the language itself. A vital characteristic of language itself is that it is amenable to change and can adapt itself to changing situations. Perhaps another feature of all languages is that it can never be owned, for the moment it is spoken by another speaker it becomes another language. The language of all powerful cultures always get disseminated by various

means—contact, trade and commerce, borrowings, discovery (as happened to Greek literature and language after years of isolation during the Renaissance), and domination. English, it must be remembered at the outset, was probably first and foremost the language of trade and domination when the British spread their empire and subsequently the language of the colonized through policies of aggression and expansion. This was true of the spread of English even in the British Isles.

3.2 THE SPREAD OF ENGLISH IN SCOTLAND

In the course of the last four centuries, the minority languages of the British Isles have been undermined by English political and economic power, the policies of English governments, and English attitudes, both official and unofficial. The dominance of English on the regional dialects of England has been visited, on a grander scale, and with far-reaching consequences, on the speech of regions diverse in language and culture, and situated far away from the metropolitan south-east. The languages that English came in contact with and later coerced into the backstage of the linguistic scene were Celtic, and therefore structurally distant from English. They represent two branches of the Celtic language family. The Gaelic of Ireland, and its implantations in the Scottish Highlands and the Isle of Man, forms one branch. Welsh and Cornish, together with the Breton of north-west France, are more closely related to the British Celtic that was displaced during the Anglo-Saxon settlement, as described in unit one. While the two branches had diverged considerably, rather as, say, Swedish, Norwegian, and Danish have done, there was contact between the languages of each branch, at least until English domination severed the links. Such contacts ensured a degree of mutual intelligibility between Gaelic-speaking Irish and Scottish Highlander, and between Welsh and Cornish; but since the arrival (and perhaps, imposition) of English, the absence of a centre in either branch of Celtic has precluded the cultivation of standard varieties and hastened the proliferation of regional ones. We cannot therefore speak of a standard Welsh, or a standard Scottish Gaelic, in the same way as we can of a standard English.

We can easily speak of three factors that readily contributed to the spread and dominance of English in the British Isles as well as other dominions: 1) military conquests 2) the establishment of English as a language of social aspiration 3) industrialisation and the subsequent disruption of life in rural areas. Two broad generalisations about the process of imposition may perhaps be made. First, we shall see the significance of the Tudors—who were, ironically enough, of Welsh descent—in implementing what we might call today a language policy towards the rest of the British Isles. Secondly, the educational system everywhere was instrumental in the spread of Standard English. In addition, after the introduction in 1870 of universal primary education, no other language was even recognised in the schools. Significantly enough, in the twentieth century it is in education that campaigns to promote the minority languages have found both a focus, and some notable success.

Let us look at the development and spread of English in Scotland and the Celtic territories. The language that was prevalent in Scotland split as early as seventh century AD. In Northumbria, an Anglo-Saxon variety developed, while in the Highlands, Gaelic prevailed. After Bannockburn in 1314 in which the Scottish kings repulsed the English, the Scottish court developed its own educational institutions, parliament, law and literature. Latin which was the language of the church and thus of the elite was gradually replaced by Scots. It must however be remembered that Scots was developed not with any apparent national consciousness as was in the case of English which had a tangible language to fight against, namely French. The replacement of Latin with Scots was seen as a kind of vernacularisation rather than

explicit promotion of a national language. By the end of the sixteenth century, Scots was fairly standardised.

By the end of the sixteenth century, Scots may be seen as a national language in embryo, whose subsequent development was dominated by the imposition of English.

The undermining of Scots was not the result of decrees and proscriptions, but of the gradual weakening of independent Scottish institutions. The Reformation, which played such a key part in Tudor policy, had its strong adherents among sections of the Scottish bourgeoisie. So there was no need for the English to impose it. Sections of the Scottish bourgeoisie probably also preferred greater contact with England for economic reasons. Moreover, elsewhere in the British Isles, the language of religion has often proved an important factor in language maintenance; but in southern Scotland, it does not seem to have been an issue. Scots, accordingly, never became the language of prayer books and The Bible in Scotland, and this seems to have been vital in exposing Scottish people to the standard language of England. The Union of Crowns in 1603 ensured that a Scottish king was on the throne of England, but it was in London that he held his court. Finally, the Act of Union in 1707 guaranteed that Scotland's laws and administrative arrangements were determined in London, and therefore in English. By the eighteenth century, Scots had become the 'low' language and Standard English was now the medium of law, administration, education and religion. The Scottish gentry, from the eighteenth century onwards, tended to receive an English education since by then English had become the language of social prestige. After the Education Act of 1872, the use of Scots in schools was punished as it lost all social status.

Unlike the dialects of England, however, Scots was never reduced to a **patois**. A literary tradition was maintained by poets such as Burns; and in the nineteenth century Scots was used to record versions of ballads and folk songs as they were found by assiduous Scottish collectors. In the twentieth century, attempts have been made by poets like Hugh Macdiarmid to promote Scots as the medium for a 'serious and tough minded poetry'. Instruments of coercion are still, however, progressively used by the English to relegate Scots to the status of a dialect. With no census returns to remind them of the number of speakers of Scots, no classical texts to give them a sense of historicity, many Scottish people, like some speakers of English based Creoles, may feel that their tongue is not different enough from English to call it a separate language. From eighteenth century onwards, we also find an incessant repetition of Scottish stereotypes in English literature, where the former are shown as speaking a Creole English as opposed to a 'high' English, spoken by the chief protagonists. In other words, it is linguistic criteria that are uppermost in their minds: Scots sounds, grammar, and vocabulary are close to those of English in a way that those of Gaelic, say, are not. But purely linguistic criteria are not enough in settling demarcation disputes of this kind. To call Scots a dialect of English is to ignore its development during Scottish independence, and to reduce its status to that of the regional dialect of England, unless we use the term 'dialect' in a more specialised sense, to refer to regional varieties with their traditions of writings.

Opponents of the view that Scots and English are separate languages are likely to argue that many Scots usages can be found in the northern dialects of English. Though it can be shown that certain usages alleged to be Scots, like 'gaed' (went) and 'sair' (sore), used to be heard either in Northumberland or Cumbria, geographical patterns of usage are often complex. Sometimes, areas on each side of the border share a form unknown in Standard English. Differences between Scots and English are often, therefore, not absolute but we can still point to some items that seem characteristic Scots usages. Let us look at the loan words: 'gar' (make), 'gowk' (cuckoo) from Scandinavian, 'dote' (endow), 'vivers' (victuals), 'howtowdie' (young hen) from French, some Gaelic words such as 'tocher' (dowry), and 'clarsach' (harp). Modal verbs are sometimes used differently: '*Will* I push it?' instead of the usual English 'shall'. Differences in pronunciation are striking. Not only is there a different

system of vowels /r/ — *fern, fir,* and *fur* often have /e/, /I/ and /ʌ/ — but there is a significant point of divergence from all varieties of English in that vowel length is a contrastive feature of much less importance. For example, Scots vowels are to be regarded as short except in certain positions: finally as in 'see', before /r/ as in 'seer' and before voiced fricatives as in 'seethe'. Elsewhere, in 'seat' and 'seed' for instance, the vowel would be short.

Whatever linguistic changes are under way in Scotland, commitment to Scots has increased in recent years. Many young middle class Scots resent what they see as the Anglicisation of their culture and their loyalty to Scots may be an assertion of their ethnicity. But since it has in general been the lower class that has maintained the minority languages, commitment to those languages is also a commitment to the values of the class. Many Scottish people feel justifiably bitter at finding their linguistic inheritance relegated to a paragraph or two in histories of English. Nationalistic feelings are often apt to adopt strategies that are clearly manipulative. What one does need to respect is the Scots literary tradition is markedly different in language from the standard English one; and one needs to accept the view that if English is an international language then Scots is the first national variety of English outside England just as American English is a later one.

3.3 THE SPREAD OF ENGLISH IN THE CELTIC TERRITORIES

The Tudors formulated a policy of expansion and imposition of English throughout the British Isles. Religious uniformity was one instrument of hegemony, and this meant carrying the Reformation to the linguistic minorities. The Tudors encountered great difficulties in extending Reformation to Ireland. Since England was at war with Catholic Spain, it could not afford to have an unreformed church at its doorsteps. Therefore, the Irish were treated with brutality and paranoia. Its ancient local culture was suppressed and overlaid by a Protestant English-speaking one. Spuriously benign arguments were often advanced to justify the process of suppression. For example in Wales it was suggested that the use of Welsh was a cause of poverty: if people would only learn the right language, they could better themselves. Settlers from England and Scotland were planted on land confiscated from the Irish, and merchant companies in London were given a free reign to establish themselves. Throughout the Celtic British Isles, the education system played an important part in the imposition of English. An education system that was essentially English in nature not only became an obstacle in the standardisation of local languages but also played a vital role in the breaking of links between the languages of the Celtic family. Even before the Education Act of the 1870s, schools in Ireland had been used to coerce children to speak English, although Wales had maintained traditions of Welsh teaching in the Circulating Schools of the eighteenth century. The education system is not only to be construed as a mechanism for the imposition of a language but also as a means for subverting history. The Irish now had to read their history as studied and interpreted by the British along with English history. The Celtic languages were also threatened by economic factors. The Celtic communities were more or less dependent on an agrarian economy. The industrialisation in England weaned away a sizeable number of rural populace from the traditional industries and consequently left those industries high and dry. In the Scottish Highlands, massive depopulation followed the unsuccessful Rising of 1745. In Ireland the potato famines of 1840s hit hardest the Gaelic speakers of the west: death or immigration reduced Ireland's population by one-quarter. The English also followed a policy of industrialisation that eroded the base of agro-based economies. In the religious domain, the Reformation in Ireland was achieved not only by conversion but by plantation—an English speaking community was progressively settled on Irish farms and this language contact between English and Gaelic was bound to result in the loss of Gaelic since English

new lands were alien territories that had to be carefully studied, comprehended and then exploited. They had different languages, cultures, religions and value systems. Moreover, the English for the first time were encountering a society that used languages radically different from the one they spoke. Communication could have been possible only through the imposition of the dominant language. The immediate aim of the English was not however to create an English-speaking society (this came later with the firm establishment of the British Empire and the necessity to rule), but how to sufficiently exploit the newfound resources. Thus, the languages that came in contact with English in this early period were shaped in such a fashion that they could facilitate the trading interests of the British and help them to communicate with the ruled. Contact with people in West Africa, for instance, gave rise to English-based pidgins through intermittent and unsystematic contact. These were originally used for marginal purposes such as trade. But by the eighteenth century, it seems that such pidginised varieties of English were the dominant trade languages on Africa's west coast, having displaced pidgins based on the languages of other European colonial nations. West African pidgins could therefore function as a kind of lingua franca in an area of immense multilingualism; and even today substantial numbers of speakers in West African nations, such as Cameroon and Sierra Leone, speak them. Pidgins were the only languages available to the African people during the slave trade while they were shipped off to work in colonies elsewhere. To operate as first languages, the functions of pidgins had to be elaborated, their structures amplified: they became Creoles. Creoles of various origins are still spoken in many islands of the West Indies.

3.5 THE CARIBBEAN ENGLISH

The Caribs were first ruled by the Spanish who brought along with them a sizeable population of West African slaves to work for their mines. Gradually the English acquired their own possessions, usually by dismembering the empires of others. From Spain were gained St Kitts and Barbados in the 1620s, and, more important, Jamaica in 1660. Later the African slaves were brought to work at the tobacco and sugar plantation facilitating the way for a Creole speech to be established on those islands. An account of the Jamaica speech in the middle of the eighteenth century shows a continuum between the African speech of newly imported slaves and the Standard English speech of trading company officials. There was the Creole of those Blacks who had been settled on the island for sometime, the less strongly creolised speech of freed slaves, the speech of poor whites, the English dialect speech of newly-arrived servants from the British Isles, and the 'Jamaican accent' of some planters and merchants. Since the abolition of slavery in the 1830s, this continuum has been preserved, in that Standard English has been taught in the education system. Jamaicans have been taught to see themselves as speakers of English, and their Creole has been dismissed as dialectal, or at worst, inadequate. Thus, many Jamaicans have turned away from what they call their 'patois'. We can therefore describe the linguistic situation in contemporary Jamaica as a post-creole continuum, in which several varieties of local speeches have emerged, as speakers have oriented themselves towards Standard English.

Jamaica speech shows its hybrid history: English dialect words such as 'maliflaking' (beating), borrowed from either convicts or servants; Hindi ones like 'roti' (bread), from contact with traders from the East; words from African languages, like 'jook' (pierce), and common English words with new meanings, such as 'look for' (visit). Plural inflections are often absent, as are distinctive past tense forms; the latter because consonant clusters, such as /st/, are often reduced, so that 'pass' and 'passed' sound alike. Such features—which are also found in the Black speech of the United States—are often adopted by British-born children of West Indian background as a means of identifying themselves with the Caribbean culture. Whether this kind of

was the dominant language. Gaelic gradually became the marker of rural, Catholic poverty: English was associated with ownership, Protestantism and the towns.

The psychological effects of centuries of cultural and linguistic imperialism on speakers of the minority languages have been severe. The processes of government and law, enshrined in an alien language, have often been disorientating, if not totally mystifying, to the community. A sense of powerlessness undermined the feeling of local identity. This has often been magnified by the education system, where success at first was equated with proficiency in English, and later with working far away; discouraged and demoralised, those who remained in the local community awaited and expected initiative and leadership from the rulers. At the more personal level, speakers of all the minority languages have been made to feel ashamed of their native speech. Linguistically insecure, and therefore nervous, if not sullenly defiant in their use of English, children in the schools of Scotland and Wales were often judged inarticulate like their Black counterparts in the USA. A movement to promote the minority language did not emerge until 1893. **The Gaelic League** set up classes to teach it, and the language became a symbol for the cause of independence, though not a vehicle of it. In 1921, however, Gaelic was declared the national language of the new Free State, and it has since been promoted in the educational system. Several varieties of Hiberno-English have emerged from the long and complex involvement of the English with Ireland. Hiberno-English often preserves features that were once common in England. Gaelic influence on Hiberno-English can be seen at all levels of structure. Consonant-clusters unknown in Gaelic, such as 'lm', as in 'film', are pronounced in accordance with Gaelic patterns of vowels and consonant combination. The grammar of tense and aspect has also been re-structured. A habitual present is realised as 'I do be', and the perfect is modelled on Gaelic: the present tense of 'be' is linked to the '–ing' form of the following verb by 'after', as in 'he is after writing' (instead of 'he has written'). The verb group 'have been' is therefore rare: 'how long are you here' refers to past, not future time. And Gaelic – influenced structures are also found in written usage. Literal translations of idioms, such as 'we are going to put the fight upon the rebels' are found in the work of writers such as Synge, Lady Gregory, and Douglas Hyde, at a time when the nationalist movement was urging the cultivation of the English of Ireland as a literary medium.

It is really difficult at the present moment to categorise Irish English as a different language than English despite the fact that Irish Gaelic had more than eight centuries of contact with English. English has so thoroughly seeped into the Irish society that it would take a Herculean effort to trace the cross influences that affected both the languages due to exposure to each other. However as it often happens, there has been a conscious effort on the part of the Irish after independence to revert to Gaelic after centuries of cultural and linguistic domination. This has resulted in a kind of diglossia in the Celtic areas where English today occupies the first language status while the local languages are learnt to feed a resurgent national consciousness. Moreover, communities that still are dependent upon the traditional industries as their means of livelihood have retained the Celtic language as their first one.

3.4 THE SPREAD OF ENGLISH OVERSEAS

By 1600, England had made trading contacts in three continents. Fishing expeditions off Newfoundland were to open up a trade in fur; the quest for ivory and gold established contact with parts of the west coast of Africa, which led to the trade in African slaves; and the East India Company had gained a foothold in India. The activities of these companies lasted throughout the colonial period, and their importance for the history of English is that they brought speakers of English into contact with people throughout the world. Unlike Scotland or Ireland, which were considered by the English as their own territory and thus readily exploitable, these

new lands were alien territories that had to be carefully studied, comprehended and then exploited. They had different languages, cultures, religions and value systems. Moreover, the English for the first time were encountering a society that used languages radically different from the one they spoke. Communication could have been possible only through the imposition of the dominant language. The immediate aim of the English was not however to create an English-speaking society (this came later with the firm establishment of the British Empire and the necessity to rule), but how to sufficiently exploit the newfound resources. Thus, the languages that came in contact with English in this early period were shaped in such a fashion that they could facilitate the trading interests of the British and help them to communicate with the ruled. Contact with people in West Africa, for instance, gave rise to English-based pidgins through intermittent and unsystematic contact. These were originally used for marginal purposes such as trade. But by the eighteenth century, it seems that such pidginised varieties of English were the dominant trade languages on Africa's west coast, having displaced pidgins based on the languages of other European colonial nations. West African pidgins could therefore function as a kind of lingua franca in an area of immense multilingualism; and even today substantial numbers of speakers in West African nations, such as Cameroon and Sierra Leone, speak them. Pidgins were the only languages available to the African people during the slave trade while they were shipped off to work in colonies elsewhere. To operate as first languages, the functions of pidgins had to be elaborated, their structures amplified: they became Creoles. Creoles of various origins are still spoken in many islands of the West Indies.

3.5 THE CARIBBEAN ENGLISH

The Caribs were first ruled by the Spanish who brought along with them a sizeable population of West African slaves to work for their mines. Gradually the English acquired their own possessions, usually by dismembering the empires of others. From Spain were gained St Kitts and Barbados in the 1620s, and, more important, Jamaica in 1660. Later the African slaves were brought to work at the tobacco and sugar plantation facilitating the way for a Creole speech to be established on those islands. An account of the Jamaica speech in the middle of the eighteenth century shows a continuum between the African speech of newly imported slaves and the Standard English speech of trading company officials. There was the Creole of those Blacks who had been settled on the island for sometime, the less strongly creolised speech of freed slaves, the speech of poor whites, the English dialect speech of newly-arrived servants from the British Isles, and the 'Jamaican accent' of some planters and merchants. Since the abolition of slavery in the 1830s, this continuum has been preserved, in that Standard English has been taught in the education system. Jamaicans have been taught to see themselves as speakers of English, and their Creole has been dismissed as dialectal, or at worst, inadequate. Thus, many Jamaicans have turned away from what they call their 'patois'. We can therefore describe the linguistic situation in contemporary Jamaica as a post-creole continuum, in which several varieties of local speeches have emerged, as speakers have oriented themselves towards Standard English.

Jamaica speech shows its hybrid history: English dialect words such as 'maliflaking' (beating), borrowed from either convicts or servants; Hindi ones like 'roti' (bread), from contact with traders from the East; words from African languages, like 'jook' (pierce), and common English words with new meanings, such as 'look for' (visit). Plural inflections are often absent, as are distinctive past tense forms; the latter because consonant clusters, such as /st/, are often reduced, so that 'pass' and 'passed' sound alike. Such features—which are also found in the Black speech of the United States—are often adopted by British-born children of West Indian background as a means of identifying themselves with the Caribbean culture. Whether this kind of

English is to be corrected with a view to approximate the Standard form is a question that has lost relevance in today's English-speaking world as different varieties of Englishes compete with each other, and there is no single standard by which to judge the 'rightness' or 'wrongness' of a usage.

3.6 THE RISE OF NEW STANDARDS

The written standard of English is international. Differences at the level of spelling, grammar and vocabulary are very minor and hardly noticeable. For example, 'honor', 'gotten', 'fall' for 'autumn' are used in American English. The divergence that is most noticeable is at the level of pronunciation. Each area has its own norms of pronunciation, at times formulated with an ear to the standard in England, at other times responding to local circumstances. When people settle in a new area, the second generation often tries to identify with the new-found norms and culture. However, it is also true that immigrants cling to the vestiges of their past. Thus, early colonial settlers in America, for example, clung to the accent of south- east England since it was considered to be the ' correct' pronunciation. It may be said with reasonable generality that the speech of the colonial settlers was relatively more uniform than that of England. Various reasons could be attributed to this relative uniformity. The colonial settlements were more urban or semi-urban in nature than England where dialectal variations occurred mostly in the rural areas. There was more mobility involved after the introduction of railways in the nineteenth century, thus facilitating the colonial settler with a means of transport that not only allowed him/her to travel to places faster but also denying him/her to settle down at a place for a long time—a prerequisite for a local variant to develop and flourish. Education system in the colonies took root early and this became one of the most powerful instruments for standardization.

In modern times, no conscious attempt has been made by these erstwhile colonies to standardise their English vis-à-vis that spoken in England. In fact, a norm to promote one's own standards is fast gaining ground as in the cases of Afrikaans English and American English. The absence of marked dialectal variation has meant that there were few of the social problems associated with the selection of a standard variety that we have seen in England and other European societies. In a sense, the standards selected themselves. This is not to say that the early colonial societies were egalitarian; but there was less social stratification, in general, among the settler population, than in Europe and at times these societies were strongly anti-elitist. It has been suggested that in the early Australian society, the elite were actually the ex-convicts who had completed their sentence, and subsequently had become experts in sheep shearing and cattle-herding. And in newly independent America, some argued that questions of a standard in the language would be settled by the nature of the American society—for instance its mobility—rather than any kind of academy of intellectuals: many Americans wanted to get away from the identification of correctness, or standardisation, with a wealthy, powerful elite. Instead, they concerned themselves with elaborating the functions of American English, by encouraging the writing of scientific and imaginative prose; and they also concentrated, to the point of obsession, on the process of codification. However, day to day new norms are evolved to standardise what is seen as one's own language. In Australia today, there is a strong sense of a local standard in matters of vocabulary and pronunciation, a development hastened perhaps by the growing dominance of the USA and its variety of English. The American influence can be most powerfully felt in the English used in Canada and it is likely that Canadian English will be more Americanised if new norms are not evolved soon. In South Africa, the development of a local standard has corresponded, very roughly, with the gradual rise of Afrikaaner political power in the course of the twentieth century. Declared the only official language in 1822, English was widely learned by an often resentful

Afrikaans- speaking community; and the RP norms of the Victorian age were reinforced when English entrepreneurs came to dominate economic life after the discovery of minerals in the 1870s led to industrialisation. Now that the power of the English in both political and economic life has been challenged, a variant of South African English, often showing traces of Afrikaans influence, has acquired the status of a local standard of pronunciation.

As American English is perhaps the most widely accessible English in the world today (thanks to Hollywood), we would broadly discuss the main features of American English, its history and development, the linguistic features that make it distinct from British English and the implications that such a development have.

3.7 AMERICAN ENGLISH

The publication of Webster's *Dictionary* with its changes in spellings in 1806 perhaps marks the first attempt to codify the perceived differences between American and British English. But much before that, the English language was brought to America by colonists from England who settled along the Atlantic seaboard in the seventeenth century. It was therefore the language spoken in England at that time. In the peopling of America, three great periods of European immigration are to be distinguished. The first extends from the settlement of Jamestown in 1607 to the end of colonial times. This may be put conveniently at 1787, when Congress finally approved the Federal Constitution. The second period covers the expansion of the original thirteen colonies west of the Appalachians, at first into the South and then into the Old Northwest Territory, ending finally in the Pacific. This era may be said to close with the Civil War, about 1860, and was marked by the arrival of fresh immigrants from two great sources, Ireland and Germany. The third period, the period since the Civil War, is marked by an important change in the source from which the immigrants have been derived. In the two preceding periods, and indeed upto 1890, the British Isles and the Teutonic countries of Northern Europe furnished from 75 to 90 percent of all who came to America. But since about 1890, great numbers from southern Europe and the Slavic countries have poured in. It is, however the first and the second period that perhaps make the most fascinating study. Those who came later were largely assimilated in a generation or two, and though their influence may have been felt, it is difficult to define and seems not to have been great. There are, however certain usages that seem to rivet our attention to American English. In spite of the diversity of the populace, American English seems to have certain typical characteristics that cuts across geographical boundaries, or for that matter, across class, race or nationality. There may have been various reasons for the apparent uniformity that the American variety of English evinces: the tendency to stay together in an alien land, the spirit of congregationalism to brave the New World, the religious uniformity that characterized all early settlements, the urge to explore and dominate the new land resulting in mass movement of communities, a natural proclivity to cling to the Old World, and after independence, a belligerent attitude to preserve one's own language and culture. Like all transplanted languages, American English too has its history of development and subsequent spread. We will have a brief look at the most prominent features of this language as it developed through the ages, trying to fathom why certain forms came into existence and what were the reasons for their retention or subsequent disappearance.

American English, as has already been observed, shows a high degree of uniformity. This is, perhaps, largely due to the high degree of mobility that the Americans enjoyed. It has been remarked that it would be rare to find an American living in the place in which s/he was born, and while this is an obvious exaggeration, it is nevertheless true that change of abode is distinctly common. After the introduction of railways in America, there has been a mushrooming of settlements in the frontier

towns, and this increased mobility worked against the evolving of a local standard. It also encouraged the mixing of population resulting in no fixed standards for a particular region. The introduction of early education in the colonies also forbade the introduction of an alien standard on to the American people. Thus, the British were denied to use one of their prime strategies in the American Colonies. The system of public education that was developed in America had a standardising influence on the English spoken in America.

A second quality that is often attributed to American English is its archaism, the preservation of old features of the language which have been long discarded in the parent country. The preservation of 'r' in General American and the flat 'a' in 'fast', 'path', etc. are two such that were abandoned in England at the end of the eighteenth century. The pronunciation of 'either' or 'neither' is done with the vowel sound of 'teeth' or 'beneath' which, in turn, has been long replaced in England by the dipthongised sound /ai/. The use of 'gotten' instead of 'got' is another such example of archaism. Certain old semantic forms are still retained. For example, the word 'mad' is still used in the Shakespearean sense of 'angry'; or the use of the adjective 'rare' for meat has still not replaced the more commonly used British 'underdone'. The American 'I guess', so often ridiculed in England, is as old as Chaucer and was still current in English speech in the seventeenth century. It has been perhaps the characteristic of all transplanted languages that they result in a sort of arrested development, and it is a well- recognised fact in cultural history that isolated communities tend to preserve old customs and beliefs. Nevertheless, it would be extremely difficult to contend which language is the more conservative one – English in America or English in England. In general, it is true that American English has preserved certain grammatical features of English that has long gone out of vogue in the Standard English of England. But it has also introduced innovations equally important.

It has been the basic feature of all colonial settlements that they have to contend with a world that heavily taxes the existent resources of their language. They not only lack words for the many new objects that they come across, but also have a dearth of vocabulary for the succession of new experiences that they undergo. Accordingly, in a colonial language, changes of vocabulary take place almost from the moment the first settlers arrive. The change in language, with a view to accommodate the new world-experience, is generally done in two ways: random borrowings from a language that has ready-made words for the experiences, or coining of new terms with the help of one's own existent vocabulary. In America, we see both the processes at work. When the colonial settlers came from England to America, they had to come to terms with a completely new topography, and thus had to coin new words to categorise it. Thus, came into use words like 'bluff', 'foothill', 'notch', 'gap', 'divide', 'watershed', 'clearing', etc. It is to be noted that all these words were English in origin, but when applied to a different world, changed their semantic value. Then there were the many living and growing things that were peculiar to the New World. The names of some of these, the colonists learned from the Indians: words like 'moose', 'racoon', 'skunk', 'opossum', 'chipmunk', etc.; others they formed by a descriptive process long familiar in the language – 'mud hen', 'garter snake', 'bullfrog', 'potato bug', etc. Contact with the Indians resulted in the influx of many Indian words pertaining to their way of life: 'wigwam', 'tomahawk', 'canoe', 'toboggan', 'moccasin', etc. The Americans had also devised a new form of government, which was distinct from the monarchical system in England. This new form of administration and government required the introduction of new words like 'congressional', 'presidential', 'gubernatorial', 'congressman', etc. The expansion of the American frontier, finding of new lands and the subsequent confrontation with the French colonists also resulted in the enriching of the American language. Words like 'portage', 'chowder', 'cache', 'bureau', started being used in the American language due to their contact with the French. Similarly, from the Dutch they borrowed words like 'cookie', 'stoop', etc., and from the Germans, 'noodle', 'smearcase', 'sauerkraut', etc.

Southern speakers, for example, tend to be socially stereotyped, and their speech in, say, the mid-West gives rise to comment and even hilarity. But throughout USA, certain pronunciations and morphological items are widely stigmatised. The pronunciation of 'pen' to sound like 'pin', the insertion of an 'r' in 'wash' (so that it sounds like 'worsh'), and the past tense form 'drownded' tend to be regarded as markers of 'low' status.

Since the publication of the *Dictionary*, however, the British and the American are engaged in a virtual war of words. It has given rise to a great deal of acrimony, the mute point of debate being the 'correct' use of English. The British for a long time could not accept the introduction of words like 'crass' in the American lexicography; nor did they recognise morphemic changes like '–ise' (used with words like 'utility' to form 'utilise'); nor could they accept functional shifts in which a word was used both as a noun as well as a verb ('spade'). It is perhaps, natural for any native speaker to guard his/her language with a great amount of zeal, but it too should be realised that once a language is transplanted in another region, it tends to develop its own system of growth and development. Like all other Englishes that we have discussed so far, American English too grew from the same root but branched into a different form. And like all other Englishes, it would be futile to argue that American English is better or worse than British English. A language that was brought along by the British settlers has taken root and is bound to develop in its own fashion.

We have already mentioned in passing how the development of Canadian and Australian English also followed the same pattern of that of other colonial settlements. While Canadian English was largely influenced by the growth of American English, Australian English has a different history. It must, however be remembered that Canada was at the same time both a British as well as a French colony. Thus, the possibility of interaction between the two languages was greater than in most of the colonies. The Canadian English speaker would thus, tend to use more French words in his/her English than a native speaker. Moreover, due to the equal amount of patronage extended to both the languages, a Canadian speaker is generally bilingual and there is a greater amount of code mixing. But in general, the trends in Canadian English follow that of the American and it seems that it would continue doing so until indigenous standards of evaluation are evolved. In recent times, there is a mood in Canada to develop its own standards and a strong national consciousness is emerging with regards to one's own language. We may here pause and briefly reflect on the nature of Canadian English before we embark on a journey towards more familiar shores of South-East Asia.

Every revolution has its casualties. The Loyalists, those who backed the British during the American Revolution, were driven into exile partly by mob violence and partly by a desire to protect their investments. Some went back to England, some to the West Indies, but the majority fled north to Canada, and settled in the part that is now Ontario. This was the beginning of Canadian English. The Ontario Loyalists were late arrivals but, west of Quebec, they dominated the making of modern Canada, and their speech has become the basis for what is called **General Canadian**, a definition based on the urban middle-class speech, not rural variants. From this point of view, Canadian English is another regional variant of North American English, but one which spans the entire continent instead of occupying just one region. Canadian English is usually defined by the ways in which it differs from what American or British observers consider their norm. American visitors at first think how British the Canadian Vocabulary is—'tap', 'braces', and 'porridge', instead of 'faucet', 'suspenders', and 'oatmeal'. The British think how Americanised the Canadians have become for they hear 'gas', 'truck', and 'wrench' for 'petrol', 'lorry' and 'spanner'. Considering the bombardment by American English from everywhere, it is remarkable that Canada's twenty-five million people should have preserved national characteristics as distinct as they are, and perhaps even more remarkable that the regional differences in Canadian English have not yet been snuffed out by the influence of American English. The differences are mainly of vocabulary and

The American Revolution and the subsequent ratification of the Bill of Rights created a certain kind of resurgent national consciousness among the Americans and many of them thought that the language that they were using was not only distinctive but would also enjoy the same glorious future as the country itself. There were arguments in favour of developing a distinctive brand of American English that would be easily identifiable from British English. Accustomed for generations to dependence upon the mother country, the people settled in America imported most of their books and many of their ideas from Europe. But with political independence achieved, many of the colonists began to manifest distaste for anything that seemed to perpetuate the former's dependence. An ardent, sometimes belligerent patriotism sprang up, and among many people, it became the order of the day to demand an American civilisation as distinct from that of Europe as were the political and social ideals that were being established in the New World. And it is in this context, that Webster's *Dictionary* holds a prominent place.

The subsequent publication of the *American Dictionary* (1828) cannot be underestimated in the subsequent development of American English. But even before that some Americans wanted to regulate their own language. Accordingly, The **American Academy of Language and Belles Lettres** was founded in 1821. The main aim of the Academy was to preserve the 'Americanness' of the language in such a fashion that a Standard American language emerges out of it. However, a sizeable section of the population (Webster himself being one of them) protested against an academy that would guide the usage of a particular clique and thus form an elite group, and gradually interest in the Academy waned. Coming back to the *Dictionary*, it not only highlighted orthographic differences, but also pronunciation differences. The changes in the Dictionary were so wide-ranging and various, that its effects in the American language can be felt even today. Thus, words with the customary 'u' in the middle position were written without it, e.g., 'honor', 'color' instead of 'honour', 'colour'. While the English used two consonants in some words, the Americans employ only one: 'traveler' for 'traveller', 'wagon' for 'waggon' etc. The changing of 're' to 'er' in many words is also typically American: 'fiber', 'center', 'theater', etc.

At the pronunciation level, the introduction of the flat 'a' in words like 'fast', 'path', 'grass', 'dance', 'half', etc. is common. Differences can be seen in the pronunciation of the 'o' in such words as 'not', 'lot', 'hot', 'top', etc. In England, this is still an open 'o' pronounced with the lips rounded, but in America, except in parts of New England, it has commonly lost its rounding and in most words has become a sound identical in quality with the 'a' in 'father', only shorter. A more important difference is the greater clarity with which unaccented syllables are pronounced. Thus, 'secret'ry' or 'necess'ry', as it is pronounced in England, is pronounced with a secondary stress on one of the unaccented syllables of a long word. This is, perhaps, due to the American disposition to pronounce all the syllables in a long word. There are other differences of less moment between English and American pronunciation. Thus, in England 'been' has the same sound as 'bean', but in America it is like 'bin'. 'Leisure' often has in America what is popularly called a long vowel, but in England it usually rhymes with 'pleasure'.

Though it has been established that there are marked dialectal variations in American English (AC Baugh recognises seven of them), it is more or less the mid-west variety of English, otherwise known as the General American, that is actively promoted and patronised in the search for a standard American English. Though in early years of America, English was not imposed upon the émigré population, gradually it acquired the status of power and prestige. The immigrants with a different language had to learn English with a view to climb the social ladder. In modern times, Mexican-Americans in California and the south-west suffer discrimination in jobs, and are generally of low status. However, despite the prestige of General American, different regions of the USA still preserve to a large extent their own norms of language.

Southern speakers, for example, tend to be socially stereotyped, and their speech in, say, the mid-West gives rise to comment and even hilarity. But throughout USA, certain pronunciations and morphological items are widely stigmatised. The pronunciation of 'pen' to sound like 'pin', the insertion of an 'r' in 'wash' (so that it sounds like 'worsh'), and the past tense form 'drownded' tend to be regarded as markers of 'low' status.

Since the publication of the *Dictionary*, however, the British and the American are engaged in a virtual war of words. It has given rise to a great deal of acrimony, the mute point of debate being the 'correct' use of English. The British for a long time could not accept the introduction of words like 'crass' in the American lexicography; nor did they recognise morphemic changes like '–ise' (used with words like 'utility' to form 'utilise'); nor could they accept functional shifts in which a word was used both as a noun as well as a verb ('spade'). It is perhaps, natural for any native speaker to guard his/her language with a great amount of zeal, but it too should be realised that once a language is transplanted in another region, it tends to develop its own system of growth and development. Like all other Englishes that we have discussed so far, American English too grew from the same root but branched into a different form. And like all other Englishes, it would be futile to argue that American English is better or worse than British English. A language that was brought along by the British settlers has taken root and is bound to develop in its own fashion.

We have already mentioned in passing how the development of Canadian and Australian English also followed the same pattern of that of other colonial settlements. While Canadian English was largely influenced by the growth of American English, Australian English has a different history. It must, however be remembered that Canada was at the same time both a British as well as a French colony. Thus, the possibility of interaction between the two languages was greater than in most of the colonies. The Canadian English speaker would thus, tend to use more French words in his/her English than a native speaker. Moreover, due to the equal amount of patronage extended to both the languages, a Canadian speaker is generally bilingual and there is a greater amount of code mixing. But in general, the trends in Canadian English follow that of the American and it seems that it would continue doing so until indigenous standards of evaluation are evolved. In recent times, there is a mood in Canada to develop its own standards and a strong national consciousness is emerging with regards to one's own language. We may here pause and briefly reflect on the nature of Canadian English before we embark on a journey towards more familiar shores of South-East Asia.

Every revolution has its casualties. The Loyalists, those who backed the British during the American Revolution, were driven into exile partly by mob violence and partly by a desire to protect their investments. Some went back to England, some to the West Indies, but the majority fled north to Canada, and settled in the part that is now Ontario. This was the beginning of Canadian English. The Ontario Loyalists were [illegible] but west of Quebec, they dominated the making of modern [illegible] which has become the basis for what is called **General Canadian**, a [illegible] the urban middle-class speech, not rural variants. From this point of view, Canadian English is another regional variant of North American English, [illegible] which spans the entire continent instead of occupying just one region. Canadian English is usually defined by the ways in which it differs from what American or British observers consider their norm. American visitors at first think how British the Canadian Vocabulary is—'tap', 'braces', and 'porridge', instead of 'faucet', 'suspenders', and 'oatmeal'. The British think how Americanised the Canadians have become for they hear 'gas', 'truck', and 'wrench' for 'petrol', 'lorry' and 'spanner'. Considering the bombardment by American English from everywhere, it is remarkable that Canada's twenty-five million people should have preserved national characteristics as distinct as they are, and perhaps even more remarkable that the regional differences in Canadian English have not yet been snuffed out by the influence of American English. The differences are mainly of vocabulary and

pronunciation. There is no distinctive Canadian grammar. Until recently, most of the books that the Canadians read were mostly British or American, and their grammar reflects that. Canadian English uses elements of both, retaining more of the formality of the Standard British English. Canadian spelling retains some of the British forms, but not all. Among the original Canadian idioms, perhaps the most famous is the almost universal use of 'eh?'. It has been primarily in pronunciation that Canadian English asserts its distinctiveness. Canadian pronunciation also reflects the continuing schizophrenia of a people struggling for national identity against two strong influences. There is a constant tussle in Canadian English over the British and American usages. The most obvious and distinctive feature of Canadian speech is probably its vowel sound, the diphthong 'ou'. Thus, 'out' rhymes with 'boat', so that a phrase like "out and about in a boat" emerges as "oat and aboat in a boat". There is also a tendency to merge the two vowels in words like 'cot' and 'caught', 'don' and 'dawn', 'offal' and 'awful'. When Canadians pronounce these word-pairs they sound identical. There is also a marked tendency in Canadian English recently to adopt American pronunciations, thus marking a gradual shift from the traditional British accent.

In the nineteenth century, American English, bursting at the seams with new energy and new experiences, left Canadian English far behind. Wave upon wave of new Americans were now flooding in from Ireland, Germany, Italy and, in due course Central Europe. If Canadian English lacks the robust adventurousness of American English, it is because its character owes so much to the people who settled there after the American Revolution, called 'Loyalists' by the British, but 'Tories' by the Americans. Like other aspects of Canadian culture, it is torn between the push-pull of the British and American models.

3.8 THE LANGUAGE OF IMPERIAL RULE

In the ten years between Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee in 1887 and the Diamond Jubilee of 1897, all eyes were on London as the capital of the empire and the source of English speaking culture throughout the world. The emotions felt towards 'home' by the new settlers in New Zealand, Canada, South Africa and especially Australia were, one imagines, a confusion of bitterness, affection, cynicism and longing, but in the harsh, unfamiliar environment of the *veldt* or the prairie or the bush, the things that bind are stronger than the things that divide. Even American English, the oldest of the overseas variants, was, as many of its writers complained, still overawed by its British parent. London boomed, growing from three million people in the early 1860s to four and a half million by 1901. London had become an international city, in which there were more Scotsmen than in Aberdeen, more Irishmen than in Dublin, more Roman Catholics than in the Eternal City. Bernard Shaw, who loved to mock Anglo-Saxon self-importance, summarised the state of the English world rule in *The Man of Destiny*:

> There is nothing so bad or so good that you will not find an Englishman doing it; but you will never find an Englishman in the wrong. He does everything on principle. He fights you on patriotic principles; he robs you on business principles; he enslaves you on imperial principles.

In the coming twenty-first century the legacy of those 'imperial principles' would mean that for the first time speakers of the mother tongue will be outnumbered by non-native English speakers: Africans, Indians, Chinese and Malays. English, the legacy of the empire, is the *de facto* international language of the so-called Third World. In four continents, Asia, America, Africa and the vast ocean basin of the

Pacific, it is the official language in some thirty-four countries, from islands as far apart as Jamaica and Singapore, to states ranging from Sierra Leone to the vast subcontinent of India. The emergence of these new Englishes is an interesting historical fact. However, since we have already discussed the emergence and development of Caribbean English, we would turn our attention to the other end of the world and try to understand the development of English in south-east Asia, especially in the Indian subcontinent.

By some estimates, there are now more speakers of English in India than in Britain, about seventy million, and their sounds range from the most *pucca* Oxbridge enunciations to the obscure pidgins of the street. A country with many languages has remade English with many voices. Part of the fascination of English in India to the standard English-speaking visitor is the richness and completeness of its appropriation of the Indian people. English is the *de facto* language of official life in virtually every sphere. The speakers of English—overwhelmingly form the educated ruling elite—number more than the speakers of some official languages, like Assamese and Punjabi. The continuing power and influence of the language is remarkable. It is the state language of two states—Meghalaya and Nagaland—and it is taught as a second language in almost every stage of education in all the states of the country. Out of nearly 16000 newspapers registered in India in 1978, about 3000 were in English, a figure surpassed only by Hindi newspapers. More important is the fact that English newspapers are published in almost every state, more than Hindi-Urdu or Bengali. The marriage of English and the languages of India has made what Anthony Burgess has called a 'whole language, complete with the colloquialisms of Calcutta and London, Shakespearean archaisms, bazaar whinings, references to the Hindu pantheon, the jargon of Indian litigation, and shrill Babu irritability altogether. It's not pure English, but it's like the English of Shakespeare, Joyce and Kipling—gloriously impure.'

The English have had a toehold in the Indian subcontinent since 1600, when the newly formed East India Company established settlements in Madras, Calcutta and later Bombay. By the end of the eighteenth century, the Company controlled virtually all aspects of the Indian administration, reinforced culturally by the work of Christian missionaries. In 1813, the East India Company was dissolved and India became the keystone of an English speaking empire stretching throughout Southeast Asia. A flood of English-speaking administrators, army officers, educators and missionaries scattered English throughout the subcontinent, and the English of the subject Indians ('Babu' or 'Cheechee' English) became a widespread means of communication between master and servant. Almost from the first, many prominent Indian leaders began to demand that the East India Company give instruction in English and not Sanskrit or Arabic, so that young Indians could have access to the science and technology of the West. We may skip over the history of acrimony caused between the Orientalists (those who wanted Sanskrit or Arabic) and the Anglicists (those who wanted English) over the introduction of English in India. The real beginnings of bilingualism in India can be traced to the year 1835, when the historian Thomas Macaulay, as president of the Indian Committee of Public Instruction, proposed the creation of 'a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions of whom they govern—a class of persons, Indians in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinion, in morals and in intellect.' Macaulay's plan was adopted. At a stroke, English became the language of government, education and advancement, at once a symbol of imperial rule and of self-improvement.

The results of this policy were dramatic. English-speaking universities were set up in Calcutta, Bombay and Madras in 1857, the year of the mutiny. By the end of the century, with many more colleges and universities established, English had become the prestige language of India. When the nationalist movement began to gather momentum during and after the First World War the medium of nationalist opposition was not Hindi, or one of the many other Indian languages, but English. The imperialists' fascination with India was expressed in a substantial adoption of

Indian words and phrases. Words of Indian origin have insinuated themselves into English since the days of Elizabeth I, words like 'brahmin', 'calico', 'curry' and 'rajah'. By the end of the seventeenth century, they had been joined by 'coolie', 'juggernaut', 'bungalow', 'cheroot', 'pundit' and 'chintz'; and at the end of the eighteenth century, 'bandanna', 'jungle', 'jute', 'toddy' and 'verandah'. Throughout the nineteenth century, the English administrators added more and more local words to their basic vocabularies, words like 'chutney', 'guru', 'cummerbund' and 'purdah'.

The scale of English borrowing from Indian speech has had various estimates. *The Oxford English Dictionary* lists about nine hundred words; a mid-nineteenth century glossary runs to twenty six thousand. One volume above all, *Hobson-Jobson: A Glossary of Anglo-Indian Words*, compiled and published in 1886, is the classic summary of the mingling of the two cultures before the age of independence. The Raj created an essentially bilingual society, Indian English and one or more native languages. There were infinite gradations of Indian English ranging from the less-educated varieties (variously referred to by 'Hobson-Jobson', as 'Babu' English, 'Butler' English, 'Bearer' English and 'Kitchen' English), to educated or standard Indian English. Yule and Burnell, the publishers of *Hobson Jobson*, identifying speech patterns, described the most pidginized Indian English as follows:

> The broken English spoken by native servants in the Madras Presidency; which is not very much better than the pidgeon- English of China. It is a singular dialect...thus "I telling" = "I will tell"; " I done tell"= "I have told"; "done come"= "actually arrived"...The oddest characteristic about this jargon is (or was) that masters used it in speaking to their servants as well as servants to their masters.

At the other end of the scale, college graduates might occasionally embellish the language of the Raj with an exotic native flourish. The author of *Onoocool Chunder Mookerjee,* a memoir published in 1873, writes that, "The house became a second Babel, or a pretty kettle of fish. His elevation created a catholic ravishment throughout the domain under the benign and fostering sceptre of great Albion." As in the English of some Irish writers, one can almost hear the writer translating into English from his mother tongue. Much more common was the bureaucratic use of Indian English. Below the level of the most highly educated, whose English was invariably modelled on old fashioned teaching, were the English-using clerks of the Imperial administration. They tended to introduce some characteristic Indian usage into their speech. They would say "I am doing" instead of "I constantly do"; "I am doing it" for "I have been doing it"; "when I will come" for "when I come".

Another characteristic of Indian English is the literal translation of idioms, echoing the earlier medieval tradition of translation of French into English. Today there are several such Indian English translations that may become part of a shared vocabulary: "May the fire ovens consume you", "a crocodile in a loin cloth", and comparisons like "as good as kitchen ashes", "as helpless as a calf". In addition to these kind of translations, Indian English possesses a number of distinctive stylistic features, some of which are inspired by local languages and some by the influence of English educational traditions. For example, there is a drift away from the Anglo-Saxon words towards a Latinised vocabulary. An Indian speaker would prefer to say 'demise' than 'death'. There is a great range of polite forms in Indian English: writing "I bow at his foot", "long live the gods", "we only pray for your kindness". The speakers of Indian English influenced by their own languages, like to create phrases like 'nation building', 'change of heart' and 'dumb millions'. They also abbreviate and rearrange English phrases. 'An address of welcome' can become 'a welcome address', and 'a bunch of keys' will be 'a key bunch'.

The Indian writer Raja Rao made a famous summary of the problems of the bilingual community:

> The telling has not been easy. One has to convey in a language that is not one's own the spirit that is one's own. One has to convey various shades and omissions of a certain thought-movement that looks maltreated in an alien language. I use the word "alien", yet English is not really an alien language to us. It is the language of our intellectual makeup—like Sanskrit or Persian was before—but not of our emotional makeup. We are instinctively bilingual, many of us writing in our own language and in English. *We cannot write like the English. We should not.* We cannot write only as Indians. We have grown to look at the large world as part of us. *Our method of expression therefore has to be a dialect which will some day prove to be as distinctive and colourful as the Irish or the American.* Time alone will justify it. (Italics ours)

Raja Rao also addressed the question of style in Indian English. He wrote: "The tempo of Indian life must be infused into our English expression, even as the tempo of American or Irish life has gone into the making of theirs." After independence, the question of language and style became crucial. The Constitution of 1950 recognised fourteen Indian languages of which Hindi was to be the first national language. The government policy was to shake India free of English "within a generation". English was to be a transitional language until 1965. In reality, it is still the language that examines the students in the universities, conducts foreign affairs and opens the way to a business career. Now, with globalization and computerization, English is here to stay.

Indian English has begun to develop its own literary credibility. Before independence, there were English writers who wrote about India as outsiders, but after the publication of Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1980), there has been a sudden boom in Indian English writing. This however does not mean that there has been no writing in English before Rushdie. A galaxy of Indian English novelists like R K Narayanan, Raja Rao, Mulk Raj Anand, Bhabani Bhattacharya, and even earlier, poets like Derozio, Michael Madhusudan Dutt, Manmohan Ghosh, Aurobindo, etc. have written in English and earned accolades all over the world. *Rajmohan's Wife* (1885), the first novel by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, who is usually hailed as the father of modern Indian literature, was also in English.

A detailed discussion of Indian English, the strategies that were employed for the spread of education, the often acrimonious debates that they gave rise to, the language politics that they evoked in the pre-independence and the post-independence era, the grammatical peculiarities of Indian English, the methods adopted by the Indians to subvert and finally appropriate an alien language, and the literary implications of such a language is an engrossing study in itself.

Now let us take a brief look at the use of English in Singapore as a representative variety of other South-East Asian countries. The growth and development of English in Singapore follows almost the same pattern as in Japan, Hong Kong and Korea. Singapore is the gateway to the Far East, offering in a small space the quintessence of Chinese, Malay, and Tamil culture. A population of about two and a half million people — Chinese, Malay, Indian—is officially encouraged to speak and write English. The English favoured by the government is, of course, the Standard English of international finance, trade and technology. But the English emerging in the multi-racial, multi-cultural society of Singapore is rather different. The mother tongue of the Singaporeans may be any one of the several varieties of Chinese, Malay or Tamil available in the island. For them, English is a learned language, profoundly influenced by the grammatical structure of Mandarin, or Cantonese, or Malay. Outside the home, the peer pressure of the schools and the necessity of English in

any work situation reinforces the non-standard nature of Singaporean English. After more than a generation of language planning, the Singaporeans have developed their own kind of English. They have also developed a distinct accent which the outsider may at first mistake for Japlish (Japanese English). The most celebrated Singlish characteristic is the use of 'lah' at the end of the sentence: 'He is big sized, lah'. The emergence of distinctive Singaporean English—both in accent, vocabulary and idiom—has provoked some interesting and contradictory reactions within the Singaporean society. At one level, there is a distinct pride, mixed with the snob reaction that Singlish is the language of hawkers and taxi drivers. There is also a fear that this 'new English' will deprive Singapore of the very thing it most wants—membership of the international community of English-speaking nations. In 1978, Lee Kuan Yew, the then Prime Minister, remarked: "The English we are beginning to see or hear our people speak is a very strange Singapore pidgin, a Singapore dialect English which is not ideal but which is best for the time being, and which we can improve upon if we concentrate our effort and considerable resources". By 1981, the prime minister's campaign against Singlish had escalated. First-language English speakers were hired from abroad to improve the standard of English education. In government, Singapore's bureaucrats were sent on special courses to improve their writing skills. Singapore Broadcasting, modelled on the BBC, began to clamp down on Singlish broadcasts. The government's concern however, does not suggest the emergence of a divergent standard of *written* English in Singapore. At the spoken, idiomatic level, the situation is much more complex, and it is certain that much more attention will be focused on Singlish as a medium of dissent, a rejection of the formal standards of the past and the voice of the new and distinctive nationalism. The champions of Singlish argue that it is a new, unique and vital branch of the great tree of English. They point to an active slang as a sure sign that the language is alive. Defenders of Singlish point out that Standard English has a wide range of spoken varieties, and Singlish is the latest member of a many-accented club. Like Jamaican creole, Singlish is also finding its voice among writers, valued for a vividness of expression that cannot be equalled by Standard English. Is this the beginning of a new language or is it an example of the kind of local variety we have seen from the first landing of the Angles and the Saxons in Britain? It is certainly true that this kind of local 'corruption' can be found throughout the English-speaking countries of Asia. And it is also true that in each country where bi- or multilingualism exists there are two standards of English that are followed—one is the standard of international communication, and the other the local standard that may have infinite varieties, and we have already seen that the branding of these local standards as 'dialectal' or 'deviational' or 'corrupt' do not hold much ground, as language once spoken by the "other" can never be the same again.

3.9 LET US SUM UP

English is perhaps the only language that can be called a world language. The language scattered across continents and spoken by more than three hundred million people, alone deserves that title. The story of English is a fascinating study and no single standard theory can be applied to a language that has undergone innumerable transformations, within the country as well as outside it. The spread and rise of Englishes that compete with each other as well as the Standard form, were sometimes the result of the British policy of domination and at others the cumulative effect of the subversive tendencies within the language itself, that redefined the relations between the dominant language and the subject languages. The intermingling of different languages with English not only gave rise to new Englishes but also new identities, new nations, new literatures and an innovative window to look upon the world. The influence of English cannot be denied in any sphere of our life: it is the prestige language, the language of global access, the language that conducts the affairs of the world. We, however, must be aware of the fact that the English that we

use is our own English and not the language that the once-rulers imposed upon us. It is reworked English and not the English of our colonial masters. English now, has not two (America and Britain) homelands but several, and there is absolutely no reason to compare one's own English with the norms that are followed in these countries. The Englishes are constantly developing their own norms and their own standards of evaluation. Our journey through the English-speaking world confirms the view that the English language cannot be controlled by legislation or remade by committees. Towards the end of his life, Walt Whitman, reflecting on language, defined it as "something arising out of the work, needs, ties, joys, affections, tastes, of long generations of humanity" and having "its basis broad and low, close to the ground". English has its own momentum and its own laws. Tourism, satellite televisions and word processors spread English faster and farther than ever before, and if a particular usage or a particular pronunciation finds favour there will be no controlling it.

Language has always served as a mirror to society. English today is no exception. In its present state, it reflects very accurately the crises and contradictions of which it is a part. In Britain, its first home, it has become standardised and centralised in the South, apparently cautious of change. The English of the United States has become the voice of the developed nations in finance, trade and technology. Within the United States, the huge socio-economic significance of the South and West has given the voice and accents of the South-West a new and preponderant influence. In the British Commonwealth, the independent traditions of Australia, Canada and New Zealand have breathed a new life into the English that was exported from Britain more that two hundred years ago. In the Caribbean, it is the focus of an emergent nationalism. In Africa, it is a continent-wide form of communication. In South Africa, it is the medium of Black consciousness. In India and South-East Asia, it is associated with the aspirations of the developing nations, and, reflecting the confidence of these Asian countries, it is making its own distinctive forms. In the words of Emerson, "Language is a city, to the building of which every human being brought a stone".

3.10 KEY WORDS

Lingua franca — a language that is used for communication between different groups of people, each speaking a different language.

Pidgin — a language which develops as a **contact language** when groups of people who speak different languages come into contact and communicate with one another, as when foreign traders communicate with the local population or workers on plantations or in factories communicate with one another or with their bosses. A pidgin usually has a limited vocabulary and a very reduced grammatical structure which may expand when a pidgin is used over a long period of time or for many purposes. For example. Tok Pisin (New Guinea Pidgin):

Yu ken kisim long olgeta bik pela stua.
You can get (it) all big (noun marker) stores.

Creole — a PIDGIN language which has become the native language of a group of speakers, being used for all or many of their daily communicative needs. Usually, the sentence structures and vocabulary range of a creole are far more complex than those of a pidgin language. Creoles are usually classified according to the language from which most of their

vocabulary comes, eg. English-based, French-based. Portuguese-based, and Swahili-based creoles. Examples of English-based creoles are Jamaican Creole, Hawaiian Creole and Krio in Sierra Leone, West Africa.

Variation — differences in pronunciation, grammar, or word choice within a language which may be related to region, social, class or degree of formality.

Vernacular — the ordinary, every day spoken language of the people in a community as opposed to a different variety of the same language, or to a different language, which is used in the same community for official purposes, for education, or high culture.

Patois — a regional speach-form of low prestige.

Hiberno-English — the English of Ireland

Post-Creole continuum — the range of language varieties, from acrolect to basilect, which results when a Creole undergoes some degree of **decreolization** i.e a process in which a creole changes so that it becomes more similar to a natural language.

3.11 READING LIST

Crystal, D. 1988. **The English Language.** London: Penguin

Crystal, D. 1995. The **Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language.** Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Graddol, David, et al. 1996. **English: History, Diversity and Change**. London: Open University.

Trudgill, P&J. Hannah. 1994. **International English.** 3rd edn. London. Edward Arnold.

3.12 QUESTIONS

1. Describe the historical and sociolinguistic reasons for the dissemination of English in the British Isle.
2. What are the reasons which led to the spread of English overseas? How is American English different from Carribean English?
3. Australian English and Indian English are both transplanted varieties, yet there is a basic difference between both the varieties. Discuss.
4. What are the similarities and difference between Canadian and American English? Why?