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INDIAN NEWSPAPER CORPUS TO STUDY EVOLUTION OF INDIAN ENGLISH

CHITRA RAGHAVAN

Ph.D. Research Scholar, Department of English, Madurai Kamaraj University, Madurai

E-mail: chitraraghavan10@gmail.com



CHITRA RAGHAVAN

ABSTRACT

The research paper studies the merits of using Indian Newspaper as a corpus to study the evolution of English language. The two interlinked concept – one of language change and the best way to study such phenomenon, is elucidated here. While it is universally accepted that language changes, the challenge always lay in tracing the change and to measure the pace. While the former has been discussed briefly in the paper, the latter still remains to be a linguistic / statistician's horror. Language change is a social individual phenomenon and is reflected as a behavior. The paper expounds that to study language change the best source can be none other than newspapers. Indian newspapers successfully represent some major source of linguistic change. This paper treats journalism as a popular literature and attempts to justify the corpus selected to study language change. Some relevant interesting examples have been discussed which proves how Indian newspapers are an effective body where new words and formation have been found, which enriches the language and indicates the versatile nature of the language. The most noticeable change that is seen in newspapers and in media language, is due to its dynamic features – the contents that are constantly changing and developing, the creative features of advertisements, fashion and the competition to be bestselling paper which feeds the economic aspect. The research paper studies some headlines, reports and traces the change in the morphology, the syntax, the semantics, the innovative use of words, the creation of new words and word formations that has occurred in Indian English, through the corpus of Indian English Newspapers.

KEY WORDS: Indian English, Evolution, corpus, newspaper, innovation

The emergence of language was a defining moment in the evolution of humans. Especially the evolution of the English language, which has always been considered, a very important historical event in the history of our planet. It has always been riddled with aspects of good story-telling, speculation, hypothesis, some truth, some fiction and some data. The origin and the development of English language has been a remarkable journey from the murky, undistinguished beginnings, to become one of the widespread language in the world. English, when it

reached the Indian shores, had its quota of struggle and successes. Starting with unacceptability to its status as Indian English, a variety, the odyssey has been interesting.

INTRODUCTION: INDIAN ENGLISH

Indian English is a unique variety, more than a deviant and is clearly very evolving and rich variety of the original. The fact that in a country where there are more than 80 languages and dialects spoken, English becomes a true binder, linking many regions. It is not an uncommon

observable fact that many individuals speak more than 2 languages (the mother tongue and the state language). This count is without adding English as one of the language. It is indeed a very remarkable phenomenon that, communication within a region, or between people from different regions remains unhindered because of the linking language – English. Studies have been made to understand the distinctive quality of the Indian English, the focus mostly being creative writing - poems, novels or essays written by Indian writers. All attempts try to classify, coalesce and explain the features that condition the language that is so typically Indian through domestic scenes, characters and the various voices of the Indian cities. While they have all served as researches or pathfinders, it is definite that the focus has been limited and restricted to creative writings dominated only by the literati.

THE LACUNA

Few attempts have been made to study Indian English in its 'real' context, through day-to-day communication. This lacuna supports the impression that, the features of Indian English is typified in its novels, poems and essays, which is not tenable. Real English is found in the real world of communication where language is in action - predominantly through the media. The study of the English Language should be linked with the function it performs and the levels in which it operates. It also becomes important to find out if the features of the language are generally conditioned and controlled by certain types of language use (Dubey). In this context it is important to know the language and how they aid in the transmission and comprehension of social meanings of a particular culture and better its social awareness. What best way to see how this transmission happens, other than to study a dynamic system like the newspapers.

THE NEWSPAPER

By focusing the domain of enquiry to the daily newspapers which caters to maximum readership, which remain the most effective media of our times, an attempt is made here to understand the special features of newspaper, the linguistic property of the language in action and communication patterns. What inspires this study is not to merely distinguish the variety of English

used in our newspapers, but to show that newspapers are great resources to study language change. Newspapers have been for long, a very important media that provides for very exhaustive linguistic research. Some great works have been done – 'Newspaper Headlines by Straumann (1935), 'Newspaper style – by Todd (1969), to name a few but comparatively less than literary sources.

Indian media is no doubt an important source to learn about the evolution of language. The advantages of studying Indian newspaper will be multifold. It is possible to get to know the lexical structures of Indian English in newspapers. The evolution or change can be easily traced, measured and the data will be dynamic, because of its live and constantly changing nature, based on social situations, if relevant. The syntactical structures and the semantics of language can be studied and the pedagogic implications of the study cannot be undermined.

JOURNALISM AS A POPULAR LITERATURE

In terms of readership and popularity, it can very comfortably be said that journalism belongs to the genre of popular literature. In comparison to the classics, it forsakes rigidity, and there is little stress on style and form, catering to all sections of society with the need to inform and entertain, thus making it possible to study the newspapers as a unique genre of writing, which possess a variety of sections, content and scope. The development of journalistic writing to a serious literature is debatable, given that the purpose of the work is different, the need for meeting deadlines as compared to leisure, to be factual as compared to manipulations, to be driven by data or limited by an author's imagination.

As Hartley says "Journalism will be seen not as a marginal literary pursuit, but as a central cultural field which writers exploit for a variety of reason.." (qtd in Keeble 3) Hazlitt's essays which is considered superior literary work, amount to a defense of the craft of literary journalism as a valid form of creative writing. Journalism's position as a sub-literary genre is reinforced even though literature is often seen as the fruit of 'scholarship' while journalistic writing is viewed as distorted by the constraints of the market, tight deadlines or

word limits. It was by the 1930's a victory of sorts was scored by journalism over literature. Cyril Connolly bewailed that journalism had thrust aside the 'Mandarin style' characterized by long sentences with many dependent clauses,...allusions, metaphors, subtlety and conceits (qtd in Keeble 5). Prose had started to imitate journalism. Thus, like any other form of rhetoric, journalism is an artifice with its own palette pointing to the concrete and the experiential. (11) Journalism could be considered as a genre, but having its unique quality, style and voice. In Indian journalism, we get roughly 250 years of journalistic studies, starting from the colonial period till date. Hence the corpus is unbelievably huge.

JOURNALISM TODAY

It is a very progressive world and the progress of civilization transforms into more complexities and wider issues. Hence, newspapers tend to adapt to these multidimensional objectives. They require to be multifarious and more analytic, which they persevere to be. One of the new trends in journalistic writing that has cropped up to cater to one of such objectives is the inception of 'magazines'. News magazines have come to stay and they have become very specific in their designs, taking up a variety of topics like technology, management and economics etc. Over a period of several years, there has been an increase in many newspapers. A study of these newspapers indicate a reflection of a very liberal society and sometimes a very open outlook as absorbed from the society, which unfortunately creates rifts in values and traditional systems. While newspapers remain to be a very important form of popular literature and a news source, the modern era has seen a mushrooming of several papers at a local and regional level. To name a few are *The Sun Times*, *Arunachal Times* etc., catering to the local community and the circulation is restricted to the particular locale. This mushrooming of local papers or local dailies can be attributed to two reasons – the first that, the newspaper today being a profitable business, with the commercial aspect of having several advertisements, it is a revenue generating machine. Thus local businesses benefited by advertisements and this encouraged local

publication. The second reason was that the coverage of leading newspapers tend to focus mostly at a national level news. The news published is generally the news of top priority, focus was on happenings in the metropolitan cities and foreign news frames, while unfortunately the local news was not given much attention. The mushrooming local dailies in English was able to fill in that gap that was occurring which has now come to stay. An interesting article in *knowledge@warton* elucidates on the burgeoning local papers in India

In fact, at a time when newspapers are folding in other countries, India's media scene is admirably buoyant, thanks to the country's burgeoning rural, local-language newspapers. According to the New Delhi-based Indian Newspaper Society, India has 62,000 newspapers, with a staggering 90% of them in local languages. ("Medium for the masses")

The above information is of course about the local vernacular newspapers. The Registrar of Newspaper, a Government of India Organization shows a record of 19292 English newspapers /magazines registered. (Ministry of Information). This number does not include some local unregistered publications like *Ambattur Times*, *Anna Nagar Times* or *Chembur News*, newspapers which are circulated weekly within the local community.

A very interesting aspect about the local papers is in the linguistic make up. The theme is based on the local culture, caters to people of that region and the language is typically connected to the language of the region and used without the benefit of translations in the same manner as the local pronunciation. An apt example of the same is the use of the word 'Odissa' instead of Orissa or Dina Malar (name of a Tamil Daily for its English Edition).

Journalism in India has come a long way. Earlier during the pre-independence period, its role was typical and specified - which was in motivating people to fight against the British rule. In the modern times, however, as the society has transformed, there has been a change in the method, format and the linguistic make up of newspapers. Surprisingly one can find more and deliberate changes often made – a deviation made

deliberately to create a more meaningful experience to the readers. The presentation in the newspapers, especially the language used differed from person to person, RamMohan Roy, Tilak, Gandhiji all expressed their views in simple English, which was very effective and which stressed on clarity. Nehru who had greater command and expression of the language, was more poetic and expressive. However these examples are typical and do not speak for all the writers. The motivation of the writers remained in instruction and change.

Since then the language and intention of journalistic writing has gone through a lot of changes. Now with globalization, the approach is much more diplomatic and standard. With increased consumerization of societies there was more liberal flow of thought and the contents do not focus on instruction modes only. Manipulations of language which was not possible earlier took a turn towards creative and explicitly Indian in spirit. This change is seen very clearly in the newspapers.

Leading business papers like *Economic times* and *Business Standards* along with the National dailies like *The Times of India*, *The Hindu*, *The Indian Express* etc. had started becoming a major influence amongst the public and the corporate sector. Information was for a global audience. The English language used was standard. Using the word 'standard' has been accepted by many as a controversial term. The Oxford champion to the English Language, Tom McArthur observes that this "widely used term ... resists easy definition but is used as if most educated people nonetheless know precisely what it refers to" Many think Standard English is correct English or good English usage though some linguists argue that there is no single standard of language. An article titled "What is Standard English?" in Thoughtco. expounds that

If Standard English is not a language, an accent, a style or a register, then of course we are obliged to say what it actually is. The answer is, as at least most British sociolinguists are agreed, that Standard English is a dialectStandard English is simply one variety of English among many. It is a sub-variety of English. (Richard Nordquist)

A controversial article in The Guardian states that "those who make authoritative pronouncements about a Standard English are simply those who, irrespective of accidents of birth, have elevated themselves, or been elevated, to positions of authority in academe or publishing or in other public areas. Whether or not their pronouncements will continue to be accepted is another matter" (Roberts)

These comments reinforces the fact that while there are certain norms of Standard English, our national dailies tried to abide by these standards of language. Even as some Indian newspapers claimed to use Standard English, it can be seen that there were some manipulations of the language that was visible. Rudyard Kipling also claims that the Western education was like an exotic plant which we planted in India and now it has grown as monstrous as a banyan. In *Something of Myself*, as a writer who worked with the *Pioneer*, Kipling comments that "I made my own experiments in the weight, colours, perfumes and attributes of words.." (72). This is typically an indicator of language evolution in our newspapers.

LANGUAGE AND CHANGE

Language is an important norm of society followed by the people who live together in a cultural community. Changing norms generally face opposition, because of its innate conservative nature. It is common to associate change in language with deterioration. The first learning of the language remains to be the standard form in most cases. If any change occurs that threatens our nascent learning, it becomes unacceptable and unwelcome. The most noticeable change is seen in newspapers and in media language, due to its dynamic features – the contents that are constantly changing and developing, the creative features of advertisements, fashion and the competition to be bestselling paper which feeds the economic aspect. The stimuli for any linguistic change is complex and can be based on some internal and external conditions.

According to Raymond Hickey, internal and external considerations of language change is of importance to sociolinguists. Hickey considers,

...any change which can be traced to structural considerations in a language and which is independent of sociolinguistic factors can be classified as internally motivated. Any variation and change in a language which can be connected with the community or society using this language can be labelled 'externally-motivated'. (402,403)

When language change occurs, it may or may not be a recognizable. This would be owing to the period in which it occurs, where the new introduction blends with the context. The change sometimes could be so subtle that it may not even be recognized as a change. If some change involves a particular class or community, it may or may not be recognized by the same community; however the change may be visible to speakers outside the community. Best examples of the same are the lexical changes. The use of the word 'hartal' in an Indian newspaper can be easily recognized by the English native speakers, for its unfamiliarity and newness, but it is a common Indian word in an Indian newspaper.

Language change is also a direct influence on the attitude. Traditionalist disapproval for change is rooted in conservative attitude or for the comfort of conformity. However, changes occur in spite of disapproval of a particular social group, adults vis à vis teenagers. The most common example would be the use of abbreviations in instant messaging apps like 'u' instead of 'you', short forms like 'btw' for 'by the way' etc. Hence the question arises whether language change is intended or just a byproduct of the age. One should treat the change in language as an epiphenomenon (Chomsky) - change as a byproduct and not intended. This will be done without being judgmental, without taking sides, without qualifying it as acceptable or not acceptable.

To determine some standards (where we are) and to qualify them as norms of a newspaper, a survey questionnaire was floated. 733 respondents belonging to three different groups – students, teachers, other professionals were invited to opiate about the quality of a newspaper language, their preferences in language style, creativity etc.

The questionnaire enabled multiple choice questions with some questions having more options to enable exact choices and to give respondents appropriate choices to pick from. The questions elicited response on some of the following

- the preference of style of language,
- quality of a good paper,
- appreciation for creativity,
- ability to spot mistakes or deviations etc.

The data was collated as given below:

Table 1: Respondents to the questionnaire

Profession	Preference of language		Should newspaper be Engaging		Should newspaper be creative		
	Simple	Complex	Yes	some	somewhat	Yes	No
Student	542	88	465	165	204	376	41
Teacher	56	5	46	15	22	39	9
Others	41	2	32	11	13	27	3

The responses determined that following:

A newspaper should have integrity, accuracy and must be responsible

Almost 90 % of respondents preferred simple, understandable language

- Respondents felt that the news must be engaging
- Many expected creativity in the newspaper
- Most readers thought that they tend to spot grammatical errors in the newspapers
- The readers preferred precision to presentation though some preferred both.
- The newspaper has been used as a source of research by 73 % of the respondents.
- The readers are not sure if the papers today are better than the newspapers five years back.

The analysis and interpretation of the data indicates the following: people preferred true and responsible information and reports which needs to be engaging and creative. This analysis sheds light on the acceptability of creativity in the newspaper, which is a key indicator to any kind of transformation seen in the newspapers.

Some very interesting innovations / changes in English language that have been seen in the Indian newspapers are given below:

1. Gangapur train dacoity case (The Indian Express - Feb 1, 1949)

The term 'dacoity' is a manipulation of the word dacoit + y. Here dacoit is a free morpheme and y, a bound morpheme. The process of derivation has been used to form the word dacoity. The meaning of the word also changes from being a noun to a verb. Incidentally the word dacoity is also a Hindi language derivation of the same meaning 'dakaith`i' which means 'rip off' or robbery.

2. 'Outlawing war'(The Indian Express – Feb 1, 1949)

The report for the above headline was about the announcement made by Gen Stalin, who in his statement indicated that the Soviet Union was ready to make a joint declaration with the United States 'outlawing' war, and said that he was prepared to meet President Truman to draft a world peace pact. Here the word 'outlawing' has a free morpheme 'outlaw' (which can be considered, a combination of two morpheme 'out' and 'law') and a bound morpheme 'ing' which forms a new word through the process of derivation. Thus, the noun 'outlaw' forms the verb 'outlawing'.

3. Guptagate: India defends plane landing at SA air base ...(The Times of India, May 23, 2013)

The Guptagate refers to the scandal involving the South African President Jacob Zuma and an Indian business man, on the illegal landing of a plane load of guest in a secure Air Force Base in South Africa. The word coalgate, railgate, guptagate is a mutatis mutandis (Due alteration, or changing whatever is required to be changed.) a clonish replica of Watergate.

4. Nehru's call to Kisans....(The Indian Express, Jan1, 1950)

Here, Kisan is a Hindi word for farmer. While there is a direct borrowing of the regional word, the letter 's' at the end of kisan gives it a plural association. The rule of English language of plural, is deliberately applied to the Indian word. Just as the plural of farmer is farmers (with the addition of s), the rule is very innovatively used for kisan, kisan + s making it kisans.

5. It is reported that when some 'gowalas' were washing a number of buffaloes in the river a section of bathers objected to it saying that it would spoil the water. This resulted in a clash

brickbats and lathis being freely used. (The Indian Express, Feb 1, 1949)

The word Gowalas meaning cowherds is of Indian origin from the Sanskrit / Hindi word 'go' meaning cow and 'wala' meaning 'people'. The plurality of the Indian word based on the English grammatical rules is once again an interesting choice of words used. In the same report, the word lathis which means sticks, has been used and once again the plural of the word lathis expresses an overlap of English grammar and Indian word. In an article titled Relatively Speaking, writer Indu Balachandran uses the brand name LG, which is synonymous with the word LG Asafoetida. (The Hindu, 31 August 2009). In south India, especially Tamil Nadu, 'LG' is used instead of the word asafoetida which is derived from name of the company. This is similar to the use of the word 'Xerox' for 'photocopy' where the name of the organization replaces the function of the word. This is a very unique functional shift called 'antonomasia' or commonly called communization has contributed to the generation of new words

The syntactical change that is found in the various headlines of the newspapers indicates a move towards creativity, original expression and convenience. Omission of function words are common in this aspect.

6. DMK, allies plan road, rail roko(The Indian Express –sep 3, 1992)

The headline is derived from the sentence – DMK and its allies plan road and rail roko – a strike of both road and rail transport (Conjunction omitted). Also in the above headline, there is the aspect of code-switching (use of 'roko')

7. Vizag shipyard strike ends .(The Indian Express – April 13, 1950)

Vizag's shipyard should have been the expression, indicating the shipyard in Vizag (loss of possessive and anglicizing Vishakapattinum to Vizag).

8. Mowed but did not move (The Indian Express – Oct 1, 1960)

9. The Election Eve Embarrassments (The Indian Express – Mar 18, 1960)

The headlines have, over the period of time, have become deliberately alliterative, using patterns and rhymes, violating the syntactical structure, as seen in the above two examples.

10. Congratulations to the fairest Cinthol queen
(The Indian Express –march 29, 1970)

The reference is obvious, alluding to the famous fairy tale – Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs. Here it refers especially the wicked queen who wanted to be the 'fairest of all'

11. Juma prayer can be offered in any mosque,
rules HC (The Indian Express –Sep 3, 1992)

'Juma' means 'Friday' in both Hindi and Urdu. Juma Prayers are performed by all Muslims. The use of local language and code-switching indicative of change.

12. Officers gheraoed for non-payment of salary
(The Indian Express –Aug 5, 1992)

'gheraoed' here mean 'trapped' or a 'round-up'. A Hindi word, 'gherao', is given a past form using English principles of grammar with an addition of 'ed'. As in the word : Work + ed = worked (Present + ed = Past form). Similar principle has been used for the Hindi word: Gherao + ed = gheraoed. The report for the above headline has also uses unique formations like the word 'gheraoing'.

13. "Employees have been gheraoing officers of the company since Monday demanding immediate payment of salary...."

The word 'gheraoing' a continuous form, applied to a Hindi word is very innovatively used in the paper. A Hindi reader might be able to comprehend the word easily as against a non – Hindi person who may arrive to a contextual meaning.

The semantic variation in headlines also contributes to the creativity and hence evolution of language. Use of certain words to mean more than they are, or to mean something completely different is definitely indications of language change.

14. Some Tigers may have sneaked into
Jaffna.....(The Hindu, May 17, 2000)

Here the 'Tigers' refer to the members of the LTTE group (The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam) who might have stealthily entered Jaffna (a city in Sri Lanka). 'Tigers' is an extension of sorts, also a metonymy, owing to the fact that the word tiger is closely associated with the LTTE group.

Euphemism is a common semantic innovation. As in the following example, where euphemism is used.

15. Don's merry men have 2 many wives (The times of India, 4 Dec, 2005)

The Don's (here the terrorist) aides are called 'merry men'. This is with reference to the tale of Robin Hood, the outlaw and his merry men who were also outlaws. The Don's (referring to Abu Salem) men had many wives (actually 2) which led to their downfall. This is euphemistically expressed as '2' many wives, in place of 'too many wives'.

Newspapers thus have been adopting strategies that can be identified as specific linguistic features of grammar, certain word formations and variations in lexeme and meaning. Words similar to 'Manmohanomics' used in the newspapers offer a newness to language and also adds on the avant-garde factor to the language. Unlikely combinations of words and its grammatical compositions like the phrase– kidnapping – murder (Adjective, noun) in the sentence –

16.the hearing of the kidnapping-murder of

17. ...Terrorist- for-hostage....

used in newspapers give rise to combinations which are unique. Words are liberally borrowed from the local, indigenous language and are integrated into the repertoire of words. These words have become something more than loan words or borrowings. Dacaoity, Yadhavisation, Canbank, Coalgate etc. are words that are familiar usages in the newspapers and hence familiar to the reader. This indicates how the language has moved beyond the stage of mere 'borrowings'. The syntactic manipulation of the English lexicon undergoes interesting processes and transforms it into a hybrid language. There is no random process, but in actual a deliberate shift through creation and addition of words. It is interesting that the Indianised words have even adopted plural forms, thus assuming the English grammar for Indian words. The use of plural suffix, like 'kisans' plural of kisan (farmer in Hindi) indicates that even the Indian word has been molded according to the rules of conjugation in English. The word Gheraoed written as the past form of Gherao (meaning round up) also uses the English past tense rule '+ed' to an Indian word. Several words exist, which follow such rules and these convey a new movement towards the evolution of language in the Sub-continent. The semantics of the Indian English

also addresses the questions of intelligibility and variation, which contributes to the evolution and change.

Thus keeping in view that there is definitely development / evolution in language, one can connect it to evolution in all fields – morphology, syntax and semantics, in all linguistic expressions. If we consider that language can be acquired by observation, by use and by practice, then it is true that language not only transmits semantic information, but also information about its own construction. This has some implication on the evolutionary approach of language. With newspaper being the most dynamic media of communication, study of the newspaper to trace the evolution of the language has been proved to be extremely pertinent and relevant.

According to an article in the *New Indian Express* the oxford dictionary has added several Indian words such as 'ArreYaar', chudidhar, bhelpuri and dhaba etc. Some other words are bhandana, loot, pandal etc. These words, having gained space in the dictionary is no doubt an achievement and speaks of the dynamic quality of the language. However acknowledgment from external sources to validate the commonly used Indian words, while may be important, but definitely is not mandatory and crucial. It is to be understood that lot of words are entered into the system. While these words may or may not have a space in the Oxford English Dictionary, they definitely are an addition to the Indian English, which constitutes to the evolution of language. The way words are used in the newspapers, it requires no validation for external authority but instead have acceptability in Indian English context. Thus newspapers represent the major source of linguistic change. The contents of the newspapers reflects changes that is mirrored in our society.

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