



ISSN: 2395-7852



# International Journal of Advanced Research in Arts, Science, Engineering & Management

Volume 10, Issue 5, September 2023



INTERNATIONAL  
STANDARD  
SERIAL  
NUMBER  
INDIA

**Impact Factor: 6.551**

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# Emergence, Evolution and Future of English Language in India

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**ABSTRACT:** English is a widely spoken language today. It has often been referred to as ‘global language’, the lingua franca of the modern era and currently the language most often taught as a second language around the world. English in India is used not only for communicating with the outside world, but also for inter-state and intrastate communication. Because of the great ethnic and linguistic diversity found within our nation, English acts as an indispensable ‘link’ language. With the Information Technology revolution and most software and operating systems being developed in the English language, a new utility for written and oral communication in the English language has emerged. As English is playing most prominent role in communication in India in today's era. This alien language was new for Indian during 18th and 19th Century but as time passed it became highly used language after their mother tongue or the regional language.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Language which has been considered man’s most remarkable achievement, is so much a part of our lives, like the air we breathe, that very often we take it for granted and as often are not aware of its characteristic features. Language is a system. English has a status of associate language, but in fact it is the most important language of India. After Hindi it is the most commonly spoken language in India and probably the most read and written language in India. English in India is used not only for communicating with the outside world, but also for inter-state and intrastate communication. English symbolizes in Indians’ minds, better education, better culture and higher intellect. Indians who know English often mingle it with Indian languages in their conversation. Encoding and decoding of messages start right from birth. The spark of discernment kindles even an infant. An infant communicates through his cries and as he grows up, he catches the language spoken around him. The language of his surrounding becomes his mother tongue which he is able to encode or decode without any difficulty.

## II. OBJECTIVE

- To study the innovative ways to learn English Language.
- To Study the birth, evolution and future of English language in India.

## III. HISTORY OF ENGLISH

### *Old English / Anglo Saxon*

The history of the English language can be divided into three broad periods. In spite of the fact that there are no exact boundaries between these periods it was agreed that old English covers from the first Anglo-Saxon settlements in England, from about 450 to about 1100, Middle English from about 1100 to about 1500, and Modern English from 1500 to the present day.

At this stage it is worth to mention that English was not the first language spoken in England, as some people may say. In prehistory England was inhabited by races referred to as Palaeolithic Man, but there language(s) is not known. Other races followed, they were referred to as Neolithic Man. They inhabited England around 5000.B.C. Their language is also dead but it is believed that the Basques who live in Spain still represent the last remnant of the race. The first Indo-European language spoken in England and about which there is a definite knowledge is Celtic.

### *Middle Age English*

As mentioned before, French dominated everything in England from the Norman Conquest to the thirteenth century. Then the balance tipped away from French to English. One of the events that contributed to the triumph of English was



King John's loss of Normandy to the French crown at the beginning of the thirteenth century. In addition, nationalism began to arise in England, which must have promoted the prestige of English. Literature was written in English, and Chaucer was one of its major figures. Administration was also dominated by English rather than French, and so was education. All these gave birth to a new standard language in England, it was descended from the dialect in which Chaucer was writing.

### ***Early modern English (16th and 17th centuries)***

London city was located in the East Midland district, the origin of East Midland dialect from which the Middle English standard language raised. As the latter became more influential London as well became more important as the capital of England in all fields. It can be said that "the history of standard English is almost a history of London English" (Baugh: 194). In the course of the fifteenth century London English was recognized as the standard language of speech and writing. At this stage many factors contributed to the triumph of English in the modern period. These are the printing press, the spread of popular education, the increased communication and its means, as well as the social consciousness.

### ***English in India***

Officially English has a status of assistant language, but in fact it is the most important language of India. After Hindi it is the most commonly spoken language in India and probably the most read and written language in India. Indians who know English will always try to show that they know English. English symbolizes in Indians minds, better education, better culture and higher intellect. Indians who know English often mingle it with Indian languages in their conversations. It is also usual among Indians to abruptly move to speak fluent English in the middle of their conversations. English also serves as the communicator among Indians who speak different language. English is very important in some systems – legal, financial, educational, business – in India. Until the beginning of 1990s, foreign movies in India weren't translated or dubbed in Indian languages, but were broadcast in English and were meant for English speakers only. The reason Indians give such importance to English is related to the fact that India was a British colony. When the British started ruling India, they searched for Indian mediators who could help them to administer India. The British turned to high caste Indians to work for them. Many high caste Indians, especially the Brahmans worked for them. The British policy was to create an Indian class who should think like the British, or as it was said then in Britain "Indians in blood and colour but English in taste, in opinions and morals and intellect". The British also established in India universities based on British models with emphasis on English. These Indians also got their education in British universities.

### ***Pre-Colonial Period***

The English language came to India in the 17th century with the East India Company. It was formed to conduct trade with India and other countries in the east. Initially the Britishers tried to learn Indian languages to communicate with Indians. They started special colleges for this purpose. They also took the help of the translators. But when their political powers increased, they created the British Indian provinces like Bengal, Madras and Bombay. So the English traders gave more importance to English rather than to Indian languages. Some missionary institutions taught English to Indians.

The East India Company took the responsibility of the educations of the Indians. The Indians were also realizing the importance of the English language. As A.P.R. Howatt notes: By the 1830s the Indian middle classes were becoming very demanding. They realized that English was the language required for a secure future in a government job, so why was English not taught in the secondary school? Private schools offering this service were already doing good business, particularly in Calcutta. The state was set for the first 'big moment' in the imperial history of English language teaching. Meanwhile some movements were started by Raja Ram Mohan Roy to introduce western scientific education through English. He wanted to replace traditional Sanskrit and Persian teaching. To take a decision on the issue, a committee was formed. Lord Macaulay was the chairman of this committee. He advocated English as the medium of instruction in the place of Sanskrit and Persian.

### ***Colonial Period***

India got the independence and the Indian government had to decide its policy towards English. They decided to make Hindi the official language. Regional languages were given the status of national languages. Certain states insisted to



make English the associate official language. Universities and schools were increasing rapidly in India. Some of the people from the neglected society also came forward to learn English. English was not limited to a few elite schools and colleges. But there were complains about the standards of English. The government appointed many commissions to improve the standard of English in schools and colleges. All these would cut us off from the living stream of our growing knowledge. The Secondary Education Commission emphasized the same in a similar tone: Commissions reaffirmed the importance of English. For instance, University Education Commission says: English, however, must continue to be studied. It is a language which is rich in literature – humanistic, scientific and technical. If under sentimental urges we should give up English, it

The present position of India in the international sphere is partly due to the command that educated Indians have acquired over English. Many eminent educationists and scientists have therefore, expressed the opinion that under no circumstances should we sacrifice the many advantages that we have gained by the study of English.

#### **IV. ENGLISH IN TEACHING**

##### *English in Education*

English is the state language of two states in Eastern India, Meghalaya and Nagaland. It is the main medium of instruction at the post graduate level, and it is taught as a second language at every stage of education in all states of India. In India, as in other linguistically and culturally pluralistic societies, the position of English is determined by various political, cultural and social considerations (Kachru, 1986b p.15: 11-30) sees primarily three questions which continue to be discussed. The first question concerns the position of English in early and in higher education. The second question is concerned with the roles of the regional language Hindi and English. The third question deals with the model of English presented to Indian learners, and how that presentation can be made uniformly and effectively. The government of India has primarily been concerned with the first two questions, which are directly related to language planning at both the national and state levels. There are, as yet, no acceptable answers to any of those questions (Kachru, 1986b p. 15:11-30.)

*Importance of English for higher studies:* For proper mental development it is essential that we study the best literature. If we want to shed the feeling of false superiority and to broaden our minds, we must be ever-ready to take the best from others. Now, the literatures of other countries and of our own different languages can be easily obtained in English. In our own languages, modern up-to-date literature is not available. This makes it essential that our young men continue to learn English. Moreover, many a young men go to foreign countries for advanced studies. They need good knowledge of English. Its importance for such scholars is indeed very great.

*India's Status on English Language:* It was Lord Macaulay in 1835, who was the first to emphasis English language teaching in India through his "Minute of Education". He imported English on Indians way back in 1835, and had little the how deeply entrenched its roots would become in a country that prided itself in Tamil and Sanskrit, the classical languages of the world (2). In 1854, Sir Charles Wood Stated that English could be a suitable medium of higher levels of education, because a sound knowledge of English was a prerequisite to seek admission into any established university. But on contrary, grass root land response to English language was very pitiable as no one turned their heads towards learning English. English language was adopted as the medium of instruction for fundamental sciences and mathematic science, which resulted in the phenomenal development of secondary and higher education, especially in urban areas. Since from our Independence, the need for English was greatly realised in the field of higher education and research.

#### **V. PROBLEMS / CHALLENGES FOR LEARNING ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN INDIA**

##### *Translation Difficulties*

Most students learn English as a second language in India. They might be coming from a Hindi medium background or speaking any other regional language for communication. Translation difficulties refer to the challenges that Indian students face when translating words and phrases from their mother tongue to English. When learning new English words, students directly translate them into their native language. And this often results in confusion. Also, since the students are accustomed to thinking in their mother tongue, they struggle to express their thoughts in English. This





leads to errors in grammar, syntax, and pronunciation. For example, a student may try to say, "*I am feeling unwell today,*" but instead say, "*I am not feeling good today.*"

Solution: To overcome these translation difficulties

- Encourage students to practice using English in real-life situations.
- Use context-based teaching materials instead of direct translation.
- Explain difficult words and phrases with examples.
- Encourage questions and provide constructive feedback on language use.

#### *No English-speaking environment*

The second problem of teaching English in India is the lack of an English-speaking environment. Many students come from households where English is not spoken regularly, which limits their exposure to the language. Students learn through interaction, and the lack of an English-speaking environment becomes a significant issue. They do not develop speaking and listening skills in English, which are crucial for effective communication. And since they don't have many opportunities to practice and make mistakes, Indian student lack confidence while speaking in English.

Solution: To overcome these No English-speaking difficulties

- Teachers must create opportunities or students to practice speaking English
- Encourage group discussions, debates, and role-playing activities
- Use technology to connect students with native English speakers.
- Watching English documentary

#### *Limited Vocabulary*

India has over 19,500 languages and dialects, out of which 121 are recognized as major languages. While this linguistic diversity is a strength of India's cultural heritage, it also poses challenges for English learning students. The regional languages in India are very different from English, with different grammar rules, syntax, and vocabulary. These languages may not have a direct translation for certain English words or phrases. So, due to a lack of commonalities between their mother tongue and English, Indian students face limited vocabulary. They keep switching between two languages in their communication. And that's a major reason Indian students cannot develop fluency and proficiency in English.

Solution: To overcome these Limited Vocabulary difficulties

- Seeking out opportunities to learn new words
- Practice English words
- Read books and dictionary
- Read newspaper

#### *Grammar Issue*

English grammar is complex, and its rules and structures are different from those of Indian languages. The Indian education system often emphasizes memorization and rote learning. So, students tend to focus on grammar rules rather than the practical use of language. Students often struggle with proper word order, subject-verb agreement, tense usage, and the correct use of prepositions and articles. English is a constantly evolving language, and the rules of grammar can vary depending on context. So, simply learning the rules of grammar from a textbook is never enough.



Solution: To overcome these Grammar Issues difficulties

- Regular use of natural English language
- Read a lot
- Practice English exercise
- Memorise rules of Grammar

#### *Peer Pressure*

In India, there is often a strong emphasis on the importance of learning English. Students feel pressured to learn English due to societal expectations and the competitive nature of the job market. So, students see English learning as a means to an end rather than something to be enjoyed or appreciated for its own sake. This mind-set makes the learning process feel tedious. If a student is surrounded by peers who do not enjoy learning English, they feel embarrassed to express their own interest in the language.

Solution: To overcome these Peer Pressure difficulties

- Making the lecture and leaning fun and meaningful
- Should engage them in interactive sessions
- Make safe atmosphere to communicate with friends or siblings without any pressure and friendly behaviour.

#### *Impact of Mother Tongue*

Mother Tongue Influence (MTI) is a major challenge when teaching English to Indian students. This is because Indian languages and English have different phonetic structures. In India, there are many different dialects and languages spoken, each with its own unique set of sounds and pronunciation patterns. So, students have a hard time adapting to standard English pronunciation. You must have heard some individuals say,

“Eskool” instead of “School”

“Phail” instead of “Fail”

“tation” instead of “Station”

“List” instead of “Lista”

Students feel self-conscious about their accents or dialect, especially if they have been criticized for their pronunciation in the past. This impacts their confidence, and they feel discouraged. Students believe that they will never be able to speak English well, which can lead to a lack of engagement in the classroom.

Solution: To overcome Impact of Mother Tongue difficulties

- Should learn the correct pronunciation from the grammar book
- Take help of internet and online audio mode for better / Standard pronunciation
- Practice of Vowel and Consonants (Phonetics)
- Try to remove or not to use Vernacular accent in English pronunciation.

## **VI. FUTURE OF ENGLISH IN INDIA**

English language as a medium of instruction was introduced in India in the nineteenth century by Lord William Bentick, the then GOVERNOR general of India, for imparting western education system. Even English played a great role in our freedom movement. It served as a lingua franca among the Indians belonging to different religions and provinces. Again, it was through this language that India became aware of great strides made by the western civilisation, science and culture.



English is no longer the language of the British. The journey which started with the Anglo – Saxons gradually spread over the world. Needless to say that use of English in all functional domains has become inevitable. India being a colony of the Britishers is still carrying forward the language legacy. In India the English language has earned the status of the official language as well. The today’s population of India specifically the young generation are more inclined towards English language.

English has become a part and parcel of an educated Indian, be it academics, be it business English has become a need. Well, some social scientists even claim that rapid growth of English in India is somehow causing vernacular or indigenous languages lose its own communicative domain. However, considering the hasty escalation of the use of English in India it will not be an exaggeration to say that the future prospect of English in India is really high and the speaker strength of English language can reach the pinnacle point in the upcoming years.

Language is an exclusive human property and humans are social animals. It is quite obvious that society influence language use which works the other way as well. The study of language in relation to the society is termed as socio-linguistics. Studying language from historical perspective is termed as historical linguistics. The domain of applied linguistics comprises computational linguistics, stylistic, lexicography, psycholinguistics, clinical linguistics, forensic linguistics etc.

The future of English in India seems promising. As India continues to integrate with the global economy, the demand for English proficiency is likely to grow. The language is seen as a means to enhance employability and social mobility, particularly among the youth.

However, this does not undermine the importance of regional languages. The coexistence of English with regional languages is a unique feature of India’s linguistic landscape. In the future, a balanced approach, leveraging English proficiency while preserving regional languages, will be pivotal.

#### *The Influence of Digitalization*

The digital revolution has further entrenched English in Indian society. With the internet largely dominated by English content, digital literacy often implies English literacy. The rise of digital platforms and social media has also boosted the use of English, particularly among the youth. As India progresses towards a digital future, English will likely become even more widespread.

#### *The Linguistic Diversity Challenge*

Despite the growing prominence of English, India’s linguistic diversity poses a challenge. With over 21 officially recognized languages and hundreds of dialects, English is often a second or third language for many Indians. This raises concerns about linguistic inclusivity and the potential marginalization of non-English speakers. Future policies need to address this issue, ensuring that English becomes a bridge rather than a barrier.

### **VII. CONCLUSION**

In the conclusion, English has been considered as a major foreign language in India since independence. As the world is getting globalized, there has also been a sense of English as a global language, not just a language of the USA or the UK. The lexicon of English language is a blend of Germanic (Old English and Scandinavian), Greek, Latin and French where major chunk is from Latin, Germanic, Greek, and French with few words from other languages owing to its very receptive nature. The future of English in India is likely to be shaped by factors such as educational policies, economic globalization, and digitalization. While English is set to grow in importance, it is essential to ensure that this growth is inclusive and does not come at the expense of India’s rich linguistic diversity. The future of English in India thus lies in its ability to coexist and evolve alongside India’s multitude of languages, reflecting the country’s unique blend of tradition and modernity. At end, it says that English will become a major speaking language in India and as well as in the world.



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