Chapter 2

Canada-India’s English Language Affinity

One of the ways in which cultural and economic exchange takes place is language which is embedded with codes specific to a nation. English has indisputably emerged as the lingua franca of the world. Interestingly, it was the British colonists who brought English to both Canada and India. Of course, their colonial experiences have been very different but as far as the advent of the language into the countries is concerned, the origin is from a common spring, that of British. This chapter will examine the development of English in both the countries and how writers perceive the status of this language.

Indians using English has a historical reason. Use of language doesn’t happen overnight. In India, the growth and dissemination of English has its evident historical background. Obviously, it was in the imperial period that English was introduced in India. The insinuation is that an entire gamut of politics, history, literature and cultural philosophy let to the dispersion of English language in the country. In other words imperial domination and English language are clearly connected. Thomas Babington Macaulay was a writer and a politician belonging to the Whig party in Britain. In 1835, he gave his “Minute on Indian Education”:

It is impossible for us, with our limited means, to attempt to educate the body of the people. We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect. To that class we may leave it to refine the vernacular dialects of the country, to enrich
those dialects with terms of science borrowed from the Western nomenclature, and to render them by degrees fit vehicles for conveying knowledge to the great mass of the population. (Macaulay 729)

It is palpable from the above statement that for Macaulay, teaching English and reforming the education system in India was a clever strategy through which Indians could be ensnared forever. He considered the ‘native’ Indians culturally, educationally and linguistically inferior. He saw English as a compelling imperial technique to continue the British grasp as conquerors and he saw sagacity in acquainting Indians with the British culture. This was a shrewd trick because language is embedded with cultural codes and it is a key to decipher the cultural characteristics of a region. Macaulay knew this and one of his plans was the instruction of Indians in English language and their gradual familiarity with the English culture. This mission was pursued so zealously that it produced a class of Indians that looked like Indians but was ingrained with the ideologies and philosophy of the British. A look at the clothing trends of the 19th century India would reveal that there were changes in the existing fashion. For instance, several Bengali men, who were called the ‘bengalibabus’ wore ‘dhoti’ which is a long piece of cloth wrapped around the waist in a particular manner; and for the top, the ‘babus’ wore a coat. The British culture actually created a fusion that came to be termed ‘Indo-British’ suggesting a confluence of two cultures and nations. Interestingly, Indians who imitated the British culture were called ‘Macaulay’s Children’ in a depreciatory sense. What was expected out of this ingenious fabrication was a permanent servility on the part of the Indians.

Macaulay assumed Indian languages to be deficient and inadequate in terms of vocabulary. Certainly, this opinion is typically colonial and emphasizes that he didn’t have
the knowledge of either Indian culture or system of education or language. If he had he would have realized the vastness and richness of Indian tradition and wisdom. Since English and Indian cultures are completely different, both have specific vocabulary that cannot be found in each other. Cultural differences give rise to diverse vocabularies but to perceive this as deficiency is wrong. Of course, today, Indians try to coin words in English that can supposedly be seen as equivalents. If we try to look at Macaulay’s minute from today’s India’s perspective we realize that ‘refinement’ of Indian languages and dialects hasn’t occurred because they didn’t need it. However, certain words are used more commonly though there are equivalent words and meanings in the regional languages. It wouldn’t be wrong to say that Indian languages have become enriched in terms of vocabulary and have English words that are accepted by speakers as something natural. A very common example would be the word ‘sorry’ in English which has equivalent terms in all languages; but somehow the word ‘sorry’ is used more often by Indians even while they speak regional languages. In the same way, several English words are used in regional languages though there are equivalent words and meanings. That way, the languages that Indians speak are bilingual. The conjoining of the names of two languages like ‘Hinglish’, ‘Manglish’ etc. testify to the mixture of languages. This kind of speech is not contrived. It has happened naturally in India and the speakers are not really conscious of the language-blending. Ramachandra Guha in his article “Macaulay Revisited” analyses the role Macaulay played in India when he developed his minute on education. He makes several insightful observations and in fact tries to get to the reasons why Macaulay came to India. It was "in an attempt to help [him] pay off his creditors, Thomas Macaulay accepted a lucrative post on the Supreme Council of India" (qtd in Guha n.pag.). Guha takes a dig at
him when he states “Now that is a man Indians can appreciate — a son who takes on a difficult job to save the honour and reputation of his father” (n.pag.). The reason why Macaulay came to India is understandable but what is interesting is that his “Minute” actually resulted in far reaching consequences in the Indian subcontinent. His aim was to subdue the country and keep it under British dominance but it actually happened to change the course of thoughts of the Indians so that it became a tool to improve international connectivity. As mentioned in the earlier chapter, English has helped India politically, culturally and economically. In today’s circumstances, a country that can reach out to the world can expand and exert its influence. In the context of the spread of English in India and the manner in which it has taken the whole country in its fold, Guha acknowledges and states:

Something like this has indeed happened. Far from being destroyed, the vernacular languages have flourished and developed, in colonial times through the advent of the printing press, and since Independence through the creation of linguistic States. But English remains indispensable for technical education and as a means of inter-State communication. The software revolution in India might never have happened had it not been for Macaulay's Minute. (Guha n.pag.)

Today, the drift to globalization has altered the framing and setting of the use of English language. As Guha rightly points out the software technology explosion wouldn’t have happened without the advent of English. Since it is a language that is understood across the globe, for Indians this has turned out to be a huge blessing. A look at the number of novelists in Indian writing in English indicates that Indians have appropriated the language as to transmit and infuse their cultural ethos into their writings. To be able to
impart uniqueness to a language through literature has been a natural and inimitable process in Indian writing in English. The language is English that resonates the Indian ethos. Raja Rao’s *Kanthapura* became a trendsetter through encapsulating national circumstances—a work of fiction that was suffused with the cultural and colonial predicaments in a language that seemed Indian in its rendition. The narration is at once English but automatically natural. Kamala Markandaya’s *Some Inner Fury* portrays the dilemmas of Mira who is in love with an Englishman but chooses to follow her own people eventually. The language the author selects to articulate and convey aesthetically the personal mental struggle and the freedom fervor of the Independence era is English, although at that time it was a ‘foreign’ tongue. The list of Indian English writers is a long one with popular ones like R. K Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand, Amitav Ghosh, Shashi Tharoor, Anita Desai, Bharathi Mukherjee, Anita Rau Badami, Arun Joshi to name a few.

Gurcharan Das in the aptly titled “Ranting in English, Chanting in Sanskrit” essay that appears in *India Unbound* opines that the primary reason for this recognition and popularity of English post independence is because the language was a “window on the world” (Das 11). He was intrigued by the fact that his grandfather was attracted to English which was his “treasured possession” (Das 11) and this was chiefly because it provided a prospect of perceiving the world. The language opened up new doors of learning and progress. Most importantly it initiated Indians into appreciating new philosophical and political ideas of liberty, equality and democracy that had already secured the attention of the leaders in India. Das makes a noteworthy statement when he says “By introducing English in India, the British dug their own graves” (Das 12). The predilection to democratic ideals intensified the freedom movement in India. Reiterating and reasserting
the political concepts throughout the agitation helped oust the British. Comparative analysis of countries that are heading forward economically find that progress becomes easy with a universal medium of communication and English offers that means to the end.

Anand Giridhardas in his remarkable non-fiction work *India Calling: An Intimate Portrait of a Nation’s Remaking* gives an account of “a new breed of middle-class finishing schools” (60), which imparted diploma courses on foreign languages, fashion and interior design, hospitality, medical transcription and others because these were very popular as subjects that could help get good jobs and quick money. However, English was the most ‘trendy subject’ in every diploma. The primary reason for the popularity of English language in India is its economic value and its contribution to ‘upward social mobility’. One who speaks English is considered knowledgeable and qualified to get better jobs. Since, it happens to be the language of the workplace, it is an imperative skill. English is anyway learnt in schools either as a second language or as a principle one with all the subjects in English. If it is a second language then all the subjects are in the regional medium and there is one subject that is English. Such students generally have difficulties of fluency and vocabulary and are less equipped to speak it since their knowledge is restricted to only the rudimentary aspects of the language. Therefore, they look for options to enhance their language skills. Small institutes like the ones mentioned in Giridhardas’s book cater to this demand.

Here it would be necessary to realize that there are about twenty-two official languages in India and along with their regional language, Indians also study English as one of the subjects in their school curriculum. Again, there are regional medium (RM) and English medium (EM) schools. An RM school has all the subjects in the vernacular
language. For example, if the regional language is Kannada, all the subjects are in Kannada but besides that the students study English as one of the subjects. In EM schools, all the subjects are in English but there is the local regional language as one of the subjects. Now, sometimes this poses a difficulty to the regional medium students in terms of proficiency in English. So, they try to learn it up in various ways if the job they choose to take up necessitates the use of English. As Giridhardas mentions that in India, there are several institutes—small as well as big ones that teach spoken or functional English, that is, the language is taught in a short duration through a curriculum that has grammar, vocabulary and so on. Equipped with the basic rudiments, it becomes easy for students to pursue it further either through practice or on the job.

In an interesting account, Giridhardas mentions his encounter with Ravindra from Umred situated in North India, who taught spoken English, apart from other jobs, to make money. Ravindra represents the ambitious Indian who hails from a small village but is enthused by the fact that sweeping changes are occurring all over the country. He is also a motivational speaker and in the process of inspiring others he himself emerges strong both personally and financially. The kind of English that is becoming popular in India also needs some scrutiny. As Giridhardas succinctly puts it:

But the most common subject was English. It was not the archaic English curriculum of India’s schools and colleges, with Shakespearean sonnets memorized and not understood, the guru talking down to his disciples. It was spoken English that could be used in the workplace tomorrow language the quick and dirty way…. (61)
The consciousness of the existence of the corporate sector as dominant is evident. It is interesting to note that in India today, there are plenty of recognized and unrecognized organizations, many of them small ones that teach spoken and functional English skills to people. Those who study in regional medium schools, where one of the subjects is English, generally face problems of fluency, grammar and vocabulary and many of them make it a point to undergo training that can help them acquire at least a working knowledge of the English language; and of course, there are English medium schools where children study all the subjects in English. Teaching the language has mushroomed into a big business in India and many small organizations are imparting English language. One wouldn’t be surprised to find several advertisements appearing in the newspapers claiming to offer spoken English courses, the easy and quick way. Every advertisement is creatively and enticingly presented claiming to be better than the best, in equipping people with the much needed skill. Now, this is testimony to the fact that people are aware that, that is the language that has gained currency literally, in the corporate world. For Indians this has worked. Of course, they may not speak the native English but then, as a contrast, if we take a look at the BPO sector, we do find professionals speaking with the native accent. It is a gradual process—a skill that is acquired over time and on the job.

What Ravindra likes best was the language teaching business—“but the heart of his work was a spoken-English academy that became a port of embarkation for Umred’s restive young students. It offered ninety hours of classes over forty-five days for just 1,000 rupees, the cost of a fancy meal in Bombay” (65). The suggestion is that English is a very popular language in India. In fact, it is one of the official languages of the country, the other one being Hindi which is also the national language of India. Incidentally, it is an
observed tendency that people very often end up mixing up English with their regional language in their day-to-day speech. It is jokingly said that India has several different kind of Englishes—Hinglish, that is Hindi and English; Manglish, that is Malayalam and English; Bonglish, that is Bengali and English and so on. This indicates the extent to which the language has become a part of Indian language and culture. Even at homes, while conversing in the mother tongue the proclivity to using English words has become inescapable. Similarly, using words from the vernacular tongues, indigenous cultures and food while speaking English has become an outstanding and acceptable feature. The Oxford English dictionary for instance has several Indian words like juggernaut, vada, ghee, kebab, lathi, punkahs, baksheesh, sepoys, nabobs, curry, gymkhana and so on.

Francis Robinson in his essay “Looting the Raj” says that India has contributed so many words to English that have become a part of the language so inextricably that it is impossible to “suspect their oriental past” (Robinson 5). Hobson-Jobson, published in 1886—the glossary on words derived from India into English evidences atleast seven thousand words of Indian origin many of which were later included into the Oxford English Dictionary (Robinson 5). The interaction during trade, imperial domination and residence in India naturally led to the proliferation of the phenomena of reciprocal enrichment.

Several English writers like Rudyard Kipling, G. A Henty, William Thackeray and others have generously made use of Indian words in their literary creations. Raja Rao—eminent Indian English novelist, uses the language innovatively in his novels and we find the new Indian writers flavouring their works seeped in Indian language and culture and receiving worldwide approbation. The process of appropriation of the imperial language is
clearly done. It is to be noted that English was ‘special’ for Indians during the colonial period as prior to that they had no exposure to the language. Of course, today that is not the case since Indians have appropriated the colonial tongue in such a way as to supplement it with the vocabulary and style of their mother tongues. Because of this extraordinary appropriation, ‘English’ in India has actually become ‘Inglish’.

In Canada, English and French are the principal languages today besides the aboriginal and languages spoken by the immigrants. English and French are predominant. Quebec is primarily a French speaking region and there have been frictions with the rest of Canada in the context of the cultural and linguistic differences. Margaret Atwood in her essay “Travels Back” has a group of Europeans and Americans and Atwood recalls one of them saying about Canada “I think they should give it to the United States, then it would be good. All except Quebec, they should give that to France” (8). The political and cultural issues are apparent and what the comment underlines is the essential question of Canadian identity that writers and others are concerned with.

Canada, by virtue of settlers from various countries has people speaking different languages (just as India has different languages spoken in its different states). While there are 2 official languages in Canada, there are 22 official languages in India. The focus here is the use of English as a via media between Canada and India and how this common factor can serve as a bridge between the two countries. Transactions become easy when the medium of communication is the same and this similarity can be used effectively. According to the 2006 census, “78% of Canadians aged 15 years and older who had worked since January 1, 2005 reported using primarily English at work, compared to 22% who used primarily French” (Canadian Heritage 66 ). This number indicates the extent to
which English is used in the work places. In the context of bilateral relationship, it is crucial to be able to use a common medium for conversation. Eventually, it is communication and people-to-people interaction that can carry forward trade and cultural ties.

The chief reason for the popularity of English and the cause of its rise in both the countries is its value as a workplace language. In fact, education is seen as incomplete without atleast the working knowledge of English. The fact that most people use it as an official medium of correspondence compels the others who lack the skill to acquire it mandatorily. English therefore has immense economic value and has tremendous impact on labour markets. The vice-versa is also true. It is also true that the accents and manner of speaking English are very different in Canada and India but this difference is not a serious limitation because in the context of communication, the most vital requisite is a common medium of expression. This is possible between the two nations thanks to the linguistic likeness.

Cultural engagements are inescapable when business negotiations take place. How does this happen? The fundamental challenge before countries, institutions and people when establishing themselves is that of interaction, contact and commitment. The medium that has emerged as a “career tongue” (Nilekani 92) in India is English. Pandit Jawarharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India referred to English as “the glue of India” (Luce 33), perhaps suggesting the extent of its influence in the post colonial era. Edward Luce, a British journalist refers to the “the country’s growing English language market” (7) that has given the nation an edge over the other countries in the department of trade and commerce. I have given the views of these people to illustrate that this factor has been
considered vital in the success of the country in securing global attention. With the advent of BPO, the accent of the people which has been generally criticized for its heavy regional influence is changing to the so called ‘native accent’. On one hand, people do concede the fact that there are a variety of ‘Englishes’ but there is a section that is not averse to acquiring foreign accents if need be, as professional requirements. Jokingly, it is said that there are as many ‘Englishes’ as the number of states in India. For instance, there is ‘Manglish’ (Malayalam plus English); there is ‘Kanglish’ (Kannada plus English); there is ‘Hinglish’ (Hindi plus English); there is ‘Bonglish’ (Bengali and English) and so on.

In India, there are 22 official languages and several dialects but alongside their regional language, people also learn English. This is a significant aspect. In fact, it is an additional official language in India besides Hindi. The knowledge of English helps prevent the use of translation facilities in communication and so saves time and money. One just has to imagine the way two companies conversant in two different languages known only to them, function. Either the workers have to learn up each other’s language which is an arduous task. It is complicated to make all the personnel to learn up a new language. Not all of them would be good or even interested in learning a new medium of communication. Furthermore, it is not just about acquiring a new language skill. It is also about understanding a new set of cultural codes. The task itself looks improbable and unappealing. Consider this: Companies that have personnel knowing/talking the same language. Let us give into the fact, that there could be a few differences in terms of accent, for instance, but largely the knowledge of the same language seems to make the general job of communication and exchanging ideas easy.
The fact that English is a world speech is undeniable and its knowledge has become almost mandatory in the context of economic and cultural globalisation. Of course, it is a matter of fact that it has been left in India by the British. Such was the impact of English in India during the colonial period that it continued to exist and widened in its popularity; and consequently it is considered absolutely essential today.

In the context of migrants, their knowledge of English, their ability to work in Canada, William D. Gairdner sarcastically states “Many argue that because we have an aging society, a changing ratio of retirees to workers, and falling fertility rates, we need lots of immigrants or the economy will eventually go into a tailspin. This argument seems plausible at first because without sufficient bodies, who will buy the food, rent the offices and retail spaces, buy the diapers, and so on?” (412); and continuing his criticism on immigration, he mentions “too many immigrants arrive with no skills, no common language with which to engage with the host country…” (413). His tirade in his book is generally based on the amount of contribution that immigrants from all nations make and the number of people that enter Canada every year and whether there is any need for such immigration policies that allow a great number of people to migrate to Canada. First, the demographic factors, despite the intended sarcasm, that Gairdner mentions are statistically true (as mentioned in the previous chapter). Second, in the context of Indians, there is an exception since they are familiar with the English language and communicating in that medium is not an issue for them. In hindsight, Gairdner’s reference to language is certainly interesting, since in a comparative analysis, among the immigrants, particularly Asian immigrants, Indians happen to be speakers of English which is why they have been able to
pump in more money even in the Indian economic sectors. Here, it would be pertinent to refer to Stanley Lieberson who explains:

> When peoples with different languages are brought together under a common political entity, whether it be through voluntary migration or by means of conquest and invasion, generally one group is in a more favorable position than others, and likewise one language enjoys a stronger position in schools and the government, in the economy, and socially…. Conflict is often both longer and of greater severity in multilingual societies…. (4)

In both Canada and India, the societies are multilingual since people hail from various ethnicities. In India, post-independence, the fight over Hindi versus English language was predominant because Hindi is primarily spoken in North India; and most South Indians were at that time conversant with English, not Hindi. This was negotiated by officiating both Hindi and English as the official languages of India. In Canada, the English-French duality has led to acceptance of both as official languages.

In the corporate and IT sector that has taken the world by storm, the linguistic dimension is a decisive point. Nilekani mentions “It is estimated that India has over 300 million English users, which surpasses even the United States and makes us the country with the largest number of English speakers” (101). Elizabeth Beares indicates that “outsourcing to India is a big appeal” (21) and that India has the potential to provide Canada with “thriving markets” (21). Again, the indication is that there is workforce that has a certain expected level of competence in terms of technology and medium of communication. Shashi Tharoor sees this as a consequence of globalization in India. He mentions “Some 700, 000 Indians work in the BPO business, which contributes an
estimated $17 billion to the burgeoning Indian economy” (Tharoor 17). The number is of course, astounding; and it wouldn’t be wrong to conjecture at this point that if there is specialized training and attractive incentives for those who are interested in entering BPO, the number would only increase because of the huge population that is ready to be trained. Wendy Dobson states:

Canadians are only beginning to realize the benefits of accessing India’s IT software services, of which call centers are the best known. The benefits of importing knowledge-based services from highly specialized firms using India’s low-cost skilled labour include annual cost reductions of 20 percent to 30 percent. (qtd in Dobson 17)

The advantage of outsourcing specific services to India is evident through this data. Communicative possibilities simplify the process of business to a great extent because knowledge sharing becomes painless. As a means, it is instrumental in relating to the Canadian culture since the two countries possess a familiar language as a means of interface. Absence of barriers in terms of language reduces chasm between human capital and diverse cultures. It is necessary to point out that culture goes beyond business. Cultural exchanges take place face-to-face and through personal dealing. It is also important to understand that business doesn’t level or homogenize cultures. At the most there could be hybridization of certain cultural aspects but complete mixture is rather difficult to imagine. This can be evidenced with a historically true example. Colonial India intermingled and interacted with the British but then inspite of linguistic and cultural impressions, has managed to preserve its identity and individuality that resonates through Indian people’s interest in their heritage, clothing, music, festivals, art and theatre. The cause for the
economic success in India is the rising hopes and desires. Education has played a major role in changing the attitudes of the people. There is plenty to be done in the field of education in India but it is happening. A lot of effort is being directed to ensure improvement and updating in the quality of education being imparted at all levels. The number of universities is increasing and this is only contributing to a greater number of researchers and experts. The Indian government is spending enormous amounts on this area and on account of this; tremendous improvements have taken place in the country. It is true that education is a panacea for several problems and in the context of bilateral relations with Canada; it is a happy co-incidence that English is a common medium of communication. Language issue is a serious concern in Canada just as it has been in India. Of course, in India, it is a fact that despite the existence of several languages, it has been possible to maintain multiculturalism.

French and English are the major languages spoken in Canada and the effort to make them function as official languages has been enormous. Nevertheless, immigration resulted in the influx of new people, cultures and languages. Uma Parameshwaran when discussing the scenario in Manitoba points out that the Public Schools Act of 1897 allowed the proliferation of bilingual schools but then “by 1907 they found themselves training teachers in 13 different languages, there were long-drawn debates which ended in 1907 with the establishing of a “national” school system that insisted on English as an essential subject and medium” (Parameshwaran 67). The urgent need for a common language stems from the fact that language and progress go hand in hand. Like Canada, India has also had its share of struggles in sorting out the language question. After India’s independence from the imperial power, the newly formed government decided to establish Hindi as the
“Rashtra-Bhasha”, that is, the national language which was vehemently opposed from all parts of the country. In this context, Uma Parameshwaran notes that:

Then two things happened in the early 1960’s—the Hindi film industry had a boom and the radio became more accessible to the common man. This combination resulted in a mass culture of Hindi music and of movie that swept like forest fire across the whole country. What government persuasion and coercion could not do, came to pass naturally and harmoniously!” (6)

The Bollywood industry in India is massive not only in its size but also in its impact. The language that is used in the production of films in essentially Hindi with a small percentage of English. That way, bilingualism is a feature of most Bollywood movies. In India the abundance and more important, the maintenance and continuance of 16 official languages is possible because they have always been there and spoken for generations. Every state in India has its distinct spoken language taught in schools alongside English and Hindi—both of them being the official languages. So, most Indians speak three or more languages. In India, the government has endeavoured from time to time to accommodate two/three languages in the school curriculum and today, globalization has further cemented the importance to communicating in English that is known widely. The Indian diaspora in Canada has the challenge of adapting itself to the Canadian society and language is a major issue in this process of adjustment. The interesting fact is that “Indian immigrants speak English better than many other immigrant groups…” (Vohra and Adair 113). Familiarity with English is consequential since it is a key to comprehending the cultural nuances and of course, necessary for day to day life.
Canada has seen the predominance of two cultures—English and French. In an essay titled “The Evolution of Nationalism in French Canada”, Ramsay Cook points out that two political leaders have been prominent when it comes to the promotion of French-Canadian culture:

One, Pierre-Elliot Trudeau, the prime minister of Canada, (who) is uncompromising in his conviction that Canadian federalism provides the surest guarantee for the future of French-Canadian culture. The other, Rene Levesaue, premier of Quebec, holds with equal fervor the conclusion that only in a politically sovereign Quebec will French-Canadian—or as he would prefer, *Quebecois*—culture be assured of healthy growth. (Cook 31)

This duality in Canadian culture has been a persistent debate since the French see themselves as a minority in Canada and therefore see a need for protection of French language and minority rights. Isajiw points out that “The aftermath of the conquest of Quebec in 1759 left a structural void for the future generations of Quebec… the French elite who had formed and maintained the social, economic and political system of New France returned to France and those who stayed had to give a completely new direction to the French community in Canada” (226). Cultural differences can create and perpetuate risks permanently since the historical memories are also characterized by dangers of eruption from time to time. The French-English duality continues to exist since there has been a rejection of assimilationist tendency in the matter. Hugh Donald Forbes states “The politicians learned early to conduct their relations on the assumption that both “races” are permanent features of the universe like the sun and the moon. Had they not done so, there is little reason to believe that Canada, as a country uniting the English and the French
Territories, would exist today” (72). The existence of more number of cultures always poses challenges to the government and it becomes imperative to manage the problems that may be likely to erupt in future. Through acceptance of the existence of diverse cultures and languages, the Canadian government has made efforts to maintain peace.

Mordecai Richler’s *Oh Canada! Oh Quebec! Requiem For A Divided Country* discusses the issue of French and English languages issue in Canada. He refers to the obsessive tendencies in Quebec for French language that insisted on having sign boards only in French throughout the region, having French medium schools and making it mandatory for everybody to learn the language, translated version of the English language Canadian national anthem into French and “English was declared illegal by diktat for almost a million Anglophone Canadian citizens; immigrants to Quebec are forbidden to send their children to English schools (Section 81 of Bill 101 explicitly demands that immigrants sacrifice their personal well-being for the sake of the well-being of the French language)” (445). Such severe rules and regulations are bound to affect the immigrants as many of them prefer English education because if they travel back ‘home’ or to other English speaking countries; it would pose a problem if they don’t know English. Education is a crucial consideration for the diaspora. This is however, not to undermine the importance of the French language.

Richler refers to the “candy crisis” (7) when “A food inspector with the Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs ruled that jelly babies and fruit pastilles, manufactured by Rowntree PLC of Britain, had to be removed from the shelves of a British souvenir shop in Toronto—the Leicester Square WC2 store—because their names and ingredients were not printed in both official languages” (7). The friction between English and French
languages has been a national dilemma. Resolving this issue has been difficult. Donald Smith states “many influential voices in English Canada and Quebec are embracing the idea of a Canada based on three peoples or national groups. Perhaps, at long last, we are becoming mature enough to tell ourselves and the world who we really are” (141). The three groups that he refers to are the English, the French and the First peoples in Canada. The connection between Canada and the world that Smith refers to is particularly notable because there is the underlying idea that restricting oneself to merely nation is inhibiting. Instead relating to the world is liberating as well as progressive. Smith also mentions “Quebeckers and English Canadians have lived together too long not to choose a path of mutual respect and admiration” (76). So there is a desire to find a solution to the problem so that the emphasis is eventually to connect with the other nations while maintaining dual cultures.

Besides the French-English duality, historically, in Canada, emigration led to the coming together of people from various nationalities. When people migrate they bring their cultures and languages and this add up to the prevalent cultural and linguistic wealth of a country. It introduces new words, new varieties of food and so new names, new customs and traditions, new values and so on and continues to make additions and at times modifications in the cultures of the adopted land. This is a slow but sure process.

According to the census conducted in Canada in the year 2006:

71% of immigrants reported having a mother tongue other than English or French. This figure rose to 80% among immigrants who arrived in Canada between 2001 and 2006. Given that almost 150 different mother tongues were reported by immigrants… it is clear that this group contributes significantly to
Canada’s linguistic…. The report also shows the high propensity among immigrants residing outside Quebec to adopt English as their first—and often only—official language. (Lachapelle and Lepage i)

A major problem when there are several cultures is the choice of the medium of instruction in schools. In India, the government manages this through using the study of three languages in the schools namely English, Hindi and the regional language of the state. It is apparent that a common medium of communication is absolutely mandatory if transactions have to take place. In India too, while there is the existence of several languages, owing to the numerous states; English and Hindi happen to be languages that are understood by people all over the country. In the context of globalization though, we find that English becomes much more useful since, all said and done, it happens to be spoken across the globe. The situation in Canada too is similar where there is the existence of several languages due to the number of immigrants but the recognition of English and French “is essential to the promotion of national unity” (Thorson 82). M.G. Vassanji’s novel No New Land shows the prevalence of such a society in Canada when the author states “Here a dozen races mingle, conversant in at least as many tongues” (60). The implication is also the difficulty when a society has people from so many nationalities and who need to communicate in order to become one and also carry out their day to day activities.

So language/s prove to be binding forces in the unification of a nation. But as C.E.S Franks rightly states “The challenge that faces India, just as it faces Canada, is to translate that political and geographical fact into a cultural, social and economic reality. Neither India nor Canada in the foreseeable future is going to have linguistic unity” (168). In the
context of international relations though, English becomes necessary. People-to-people communication is the first thing that happens on the global ground. Culture, customs and traditions are inevitably different across Canada and India but these gaps can be overpassed if the language spoken is the same one. Happily, this happens to be the case in the Indo-Canadian relations. Therefore, we find that a common language has the subtext of economics to it in bilateral deals. This renders complex problems easy to resolve and enables the strengthening of bilateral relations in trade and culture.
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