CHAPTER 1

Contextual Presence of English in India

English: Vital Background/Backspace
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English is a West Germanic language that developed in England and south-eastern Scotland during the Anglo-Saxon era. Because of the military, economic, scientific, political, and cultural influence of the United Kingdom from the 18th century, and of the United States since the mid 20th century, it has become the *lingua franca* in many parts of the world, and the most prominent language in international business and science.

Just a few centuries ago, just five to seven million people on one, relatively small island spoke English, and the language consisted of dialects spoken by monolinguals. Today there are more non-native than native users of English, and English has become the linguistic key used for opening borders: it is a global medium with local identities and messages. English has become a world language; it is more widely spoken and written than any other language, even Latin, has ever been. It can be said that English is indeed the first truly global language. English is nowadays the dominant or official language in over 60 countries.

The use of English in India is overwhelming. India stands third largest country after The United States of America and The United Kingdom in the world for the usage of English. English has deeply penetrated
into the societal, cultural, educational and political platforms of the country.

India is a multilingual country, to the span of 18 major languages and up to 1634 authentic and registered dialects\(^2\). English is used by the native users and has developed several new Englishes. The new varieties of Englishes have developed because of historical and social factors and the in turn it has affected, to a large extent, the native English.

English in India is used by those whose native language is not English. English is considered to be a minority language and yet is one of the important languages in the political affairs of the country.

Before a couple of centuries English was used by five to seven million people on an island with monolinguals using a few dialects of English. Today English is more used by non-native users than native users. English has become a world language, spoken by at least 1.5 Billion people (approximately). It is more widely spoken and written than any other language has ever been. It can indeed be said to be the first truly global language. English is, now-a-days, the most dominant or official language in over 60 countries.

India is the third largest English using country after The United States of America and The United Kingdom. English is used as one of the legal languages of India. The use of English language has become
prominent and effective mode of communication in several cities, cultures and circles of the country.

With the wide spread of the usage of English in the country, it has developed several varieties of its own. These varieties have come into subsistence mainly because of the spoken English rather than the written English. The native language acts as a major pull over English because India has a substantial range of languages and dialects in geographical, social and professional circles.

The English language has penetrated deeply in the society, which has, in turn, resulted in several varieties of English. The development of these varieties of English is because of several historical and social factors.

The emergence of these new varieties of English has raised questions concerning the power of English and the standardization of English.

**The Phases of English in India: -**

According to Kachru, there have been three phases in the introduction of bilingualism in English in India. Christian missionaries initiated the first one of them, the missionary phase around 1614. As the pre-preparation of the establishment of the East India Company in India, the British established the missionaries\(^3\). This was the era when British East India Company was making its initial voyages to broaden the trade prospects in the East. As such to establish trade in an alien country it was important to know the men in the country primarily.
Thus, The East India Company sent Christian preachers and clergymen to Asia, especially in India to make Christianity a homely faith amongst the South Asians. These preachers introduced English to the Indians to introduce The Bible.

The second phase was the demand from the South Asian public in the eighteenth century. The anti-Hindi agitations were a series of agitations which happened in the state of Tamil Nadu. The agitations involved several mass protests, riots, student and political movements in the state of Tamil Nadu. The post Independence, anti-Hindi agitation in 1965 took a huge shape until the constitution of India was amended in 1967 to guarantee the indefinite use of Hindi and English as the official languages⁴. This effective ensured the current “virtual indefinite policy of bilingualism” of the Indian Republic.

The third phase of English being established as the second language in India had already begun in 1765 with the establishment of The East India Company and the firm establishment of their authorities. English was firmly established as the medium of instruction and administration. English opened several avenues for the Indians in terms of employment and influence. English, gradually became a wide spread tool of communication.

Apart from these phases identified by Kachru, there were several other reasons, which led to English becoming important for Indians. There
were prominent spokespersons for English, mentioning two of them were Raja Rammohan Roy and Rajunath Hari Navalkar. Roy and Navalkar, among others, were persuading the officials of the East India Company to give instruction in English, rather than in Sanskrit or Arabic.

“In the same manner the Sanskrit system of education would be the best calculated to keep this country in darkness, if such had been the policy of the British legislature. But as the improvement of the native population is the object of the government, it will consequently promote a more liberal and enlightened system of instruction, embracing mathematics, natural philosophy, chemistry, anatomy, with other useful sciences, which may be accomplished with the sums proposed by employing a few gentlemen of talent and learning educated in Europe and providing a college furnished with necessary books, instruments, and other apparatus.”

-Abstract from Raja Rammohan Roy’s letter to Lord Amherst

The English language became popular, because it opened paths to influence and employment. English, of the subject Indians, became gradually a widespread means of communication.

The British too had a special vision to empower English in India. To quote Charles Grant (Kachru)

“The Hindoos err, because they are ignorant and their errors have never fairly been laid before them. The communication of our light and knowledge to them would prove the best remedy for their disorders.”

In those years to follow English was established firmly as the medium of instruction and administration by the British Raj. The first
universities were established in India in 1857. English became accepted as the language of the elite, of the administration, and of the pan-Indian press. English newspapers had an influential reading public. Indian literature in English was also developing.

The usage of English in India, after the establishment of East India Company and the forceful implementation of the language, extended fundamentally for two specific reasons. Because the British was the Raj (Government) in India and was a super power, the Kings who wished to be in the good books of the Raj and enjoy several benefits from the Raj, started learning English to communicate effectively with them. As several kings learnt English, their ministers too started learning English to be in the good books of the king and the chain became longer from ministers to administrators to property owners to munims (Indian Clergy) and so on.

Along with all the spread of knowledge, a feeling of being a slave to the British Raj had rooted itself amongst the Indians and a strong desire was seen amongst the Indians to be free from the Raj. It was the Indians who wanted to fight out the British and so they had to learn their language to communicate this. English was eventually used against Englishmen, their roles and intentions as it became the language of resurgence of nationalism and political awakening: the medium, ironically, was the alien language. Mohandas K. Gandhi, for instance, expressed his message of freedom to the British in English.
English serves two purposes. First it provides a linguistic tool for the administrative cohesiveness of a country, and secondly, it serves as a language of wider communication. English functions in the Indian socio-cultural context to perform roles relevant and appropriate to the social, educational and administrative network of India. English is used both in public and personal domains, but at the same time it functions far more richly and effectively than any other foreign language would do.

English is not classified as one of the national languages of India. Although Hindi is the Official Language of India, a provision was made in the Constitution that English would be used in official work until 1965, after which it will be replaced by Hindi. But because of the opposition of the South Asians, towards the acceptance of Hindi, English is now recognized as an associate official language, with Hindi.

Fasold suggests that English lacks the symbolic power required to be chosen as the sole official language in India.

English plays a dominant role in the media; it has been used as a medium for interstate communication, the pan Indian press and broadcasting both before and since India's independence. The impact of English is not only continuing but also increasing.

The Anglicist group's views were expressed in the Minute of Macaulay, which is said to mark "the real beginnings of bilingualism in India".
According to the document, which had been prepared for the governor general William Bentinck, after listening to the argument of the two sides, a class should be formed in India, a group of people who would act as interpreters between the British and Indians, "a class of persons, Indians in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinion, in morals and in intellect". Macaulay’s proposal was a success; and the following year Lord Bentinck expressed his full support for the minute, declaring that the funds "administered on Public Instruction should be henceforth employed in imparting to the native population a knowledge of English literature and science through the medium of the English language".

Lord Macaulay was a central figure in the language debate over which language(s) should be used as the medium of education in India. The Orientalists were in the favour of use of classical languages of Indian tradition, such as Sanskrit, Persian and Arabic, which were not spoken as native languages. The Anglicists, on the other hand, supported English. Neither of these groups wanted to suppress the local vernaculars, mother tongues of the people. Both the groups agreed that education would be conducted in the vernacular during the first years of education.
English in Independent India

**English the expression of the elite, administration and news agencies**

English was established firmly as the medium of instruction and administration by the British Raj (1765-1947). Indian education was ever greater anglicized as the English language became rooted in an alien linguistic, cultural, administrative and educational setting. The first universities were established in India in 1857 (in Bombay (now Mumbai), Calcutta and Madras). English became accepted as the language of the elite, of the administration, and of the pan-Indian press. English newspapers had an influential reading public. Indian literature in English was also developing.

The usage of English in India, after the establishment of East India Company and the forceful implementation of the language, extended fundamentally for two specific reasons. Because the British was the Raj (Government) in India and was a super power, the Kings who wished to be in the good books of the Raj and enjoy several benefits from the Raj, started learning English to communicate effectively with them. As several kings learnt English, their ministers too started learning English to be in the good books of the king and the chain became longer from ministers to administrators to property owners to munims (Indian Clerk) and so on.
Along with all the spread of knowledge, a feeling of being a slave to the British Raj had rooted itself amongst the Indians and a strong desire was seen amongst the Indians to be free from the Raj. It was the Indians who wanted to fight out the British and so they had to learn their language to communicate this. English was eventually used against Englishmen, their roles and intentions as it became the language of resurgence of nationalism and political awakening: the medium, ironically, was the alien language. Mohandas K. Gandhi, for instance, expressed his message of freedom to the British in English.

English has been nativised. English in India has evolved characteristic features at the phonological, lexical, syntactic and even at discourse level. Initially these innovations were rejected by purists, but they are becoming increasingly accepted. English is not anymore treated as a foreign language; it is part of the cultural identity of India. English has now become inseparable from the culture identity. One would definitely find that even in the remotest villages there is a use of English.

In terms of numbers of English speakers the Indian subcontinent ranks third in the world after the USA and the UK. An Estimated 4% of the Indian population use English; although the number seems small, out of the total population, this is a huge number and this users form a segment of the society which controls domains of professional prestige.
In the present context it seems that English serves two purposes. First it provides a linguistic tool for the administrative cohesiveness of a country, which is largely divided in linguistic fibre, and secondly, it serves as a language of wider communication. English functions in the Indian socio-cultural context to perform roles relevant and appropriate to the social and administrative network of India. English is used both in public and personal domains, but at the same time it functions far more richly and effectively than any other foreign language would do.

English is used on both public and personal domains and its functions “extend far beyond those normally associated with an outside language, including the instrumental, the regulative, the interpersonal and the innovative, self expressive function”

English has also made its significant place as the language of administration, press and education.

During the time of British Raj, however Indian English has established itself as an audibly distinct dialect with its own quirks and specific phrases. The form of English that Indians are taught in schools is essentially British English. Indian spellings typically follow British conventions; however, American conventions are now increasingly being used.

However, because of the growing influence of American culture in recent decades, American English has begun challenging traditional British English as the model for English in India. The proliferations of
American programming, especially through television and movies and the increasing desire of Indians to attend colleges and universities in the United States, rather than in the United Kingdom, is leading to the spread of American English among Indian youth.

English, in the present context, is one of the languages which an Indian, in general, would prefer as the secondary language after the mother tongue.

English is not classified as one of the national languages of India. Although Hindi is the Official Language of India, a provision was made in the Constitution that English would be used in official work until 1965, after which it will be replaced by Hindi. But because of the opposition of the South Asians, towards the acceptance of Hindi, English is now recognized as an associate official language, with Hindi.

English plays a dominant role in the media, it has been used as a medium for inter state communication, the pan Indian press and broadcasting both before and since India’s independence. The impact of English is not only continuing but also increasing.

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**Indian English: -**

As English came up to India by the British, it was adopted by the Indians who had around 1600 languages comprising 22 main languages and the rest comprise the dialects, not forgetting the increase of the usage of English in all domains.

This gave English a fresh treatment and it recuperated to Indian English. Indian English comprises several dialects spoken primarily in India. English is the co-official language of India, with about 100 million speakers. With the exception of some families which communicate primarily in English as well as members of the relatively small.

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English is not classified as one of the 22 national languages of India. Although Hindi is the Official Language of the Union, provision was made in the Constitution that English would be used in official work until 1965, after which Hindi would replace it. Because of the opposition of the Dravidian South Indians against Hindi, the Indian Government decided to further extend the role of English as an additional language with Hindi to be used for purposes of the Union and in Parliament. (See the provisions made in the Official Languages Act of 1963, as amended in 1967) English is now recognized as an associate official language, with Hindi the official language. It is recognized as the official language in four states (Manipur, Meghalaya, Nagaland, and Tripura) and in eight Union territories.
Various political and nationalistic pressures continue to push for the choice of Hindi as a national language. However, it is hard to remove English from its place as a language of wider communication, lingua franca, especially among the educated elite, or to replace the regional languages in mass communication by Hindi.

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The impact of English is not only continuing but also increasing.

The English press in India initiated serious journalism in the country. The number of English newspapers, journals and magazines is on the increase.

English is the state language of two states in eastern India, Meghalaya and Nagaland. It is the main medium of instruction at the postgraduate level, and it is taught as a second language at every stage of education in all states of India.

South Asian English has developed to a more distinctive level than in other countries where English is used as a second language (Crystal 1988: 258). English in India has evolved characteristic features at the phonological, lexical, syntactic and even at discourse level. Initially, these innovations were rejected by purists, but they are becoming increasingly accepted: English is not anymore treated as a foreign
language; it is part of the cultural identity of India. These innovations have led to some problems related to pedagogical standards, national and international intelligibility and typology.

Entertainment industry, which would generally be termed as ‘Entertainment and Media Industry’, is one of the fastest emerging industries in India. Hindi Cinema in India is informally termed as Bollywood. There has been a growing presence of Indian English in dialogue and songs as well. It is common to see films that feature dialogue with English words, also known as Hinglish, phrases, or even whole sentences.

English has now become inseparable from the lingua cultural identity. One would definitely find that even in the remotest villages there is a use of English. English in India operates far beyond the confines of the practical implications only. This is to a great extent a function of the unifying role it plays as a neutral language of communication across a people of diverse mother tongues and as a result with Indian national consciousness and identity. Today Indian English performs a wide range of public and personal functions in a variety which is evolved it own phonological, syntactic, lexical and discourse features rather than continuing to defer to those of its British past.

Endnotes

i. The West Germanic languages constitute the largest of the three traditional branches of the Germanic family of languages and include languages such as English, Dutch and Afrikaans, German, the Frisian languages, and Yiddish. The other two of
these three traditional branches of the Germanic languages are the North and East Germanic languages.

ii. Anglo-Saxon is a general term that refers to tribes of German origin who came to Britain, including Angles, Saxons, Frisians and Jues.

iii. A common language used by speakers of different languages

iv. Hinglish, a blending of the words "Hindi" and "English", means to combine both languages in one sentence. This is more commonly seen in urban and semi-urban centers of the Hindi-speaking states of India, but is slowly spreading into rural and remote areas of these states via television, mobile phones and word of mouth, slowly achieving vernacular status. Many speakers do not realize that they are incorporating English words into Hindi sentences or Hindi words into English sentences.

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