English Language and Indian Culture

Sunita J. Velhal,
Assistant.Professor in English,
Dattajirao Kadam Arts,Science and Commerce College, Ichalkaranji.
Email: velhalsj@gmail.com

Abstract:

India is multi-cultural, multi-religious, and multi-linguistic country. Language plays a very important role in the society which has unity in diversity. English is lingua franca for India to communicate to the world. Now, English has become an official language in our country where more than 122 languages spoken by the people according to 2011 census of India. The Constitution of India has recognised 22 languages as the official languages of India. These are known as Scheduled Languages and constitute the major languages of the country. Language and culture are closely related to each other like two sides of one coin. Language is a prime factor that gives an expression to culture. The paper intends to focus on the relation of English language and Indian culture.

Keywords: Language, culture, Languages in India, Indian Culture, Status of English in India, Cultural Influences.

Language is a system of signs that is intended mainly for communication. On the other hand, culture has been defined in Concise Oxford Dictionary as "customs, civilization, and achievements of a particular time or people." Culture is revealed with the help of people's way of life, their eating habits, the way of thinking, their customs, their beliefs and also their language. So, when for a long time, two cultures are exposed to each other, their languages influence each other. Language allows expression and helps in formulating values and norms. Language expresses what should or should not be done. The taboos are encoded in language. Our minds and our behaviours are greatly influenced by language.According to Edward Sapir and his student Benjamin Whorf, 'Language predetermines what we see in the world around us. In other words, language acts as a polarizing lens on a camera in filtering reality--we see the real world only in the categories of ourlanguage'. When bilingual people switch from one language to another, they start thinking differently, too. Such a phenomenon can be seen in Indian subcontinent.

With the existence of British rule for a considerable period in India, the influence of western culture had become a matter of worry that had been termed as the 'cultural colonization' of India.Macaulay pointed out to the British government the strength of India is in her spiritual and cultural heritage. He suggested replacing the old and ancient education system; culture. He thought that if Indians accept English as the good and greater than their own language, they will forget their own culture and then they can easily rule over India.Accordingly, the native languages which had been the medium of instruction were replaced by English in 1835 when British started new education system. Since then Indian languages and English started to influence each other. With the spread of education, this influence increased and gave birth to a new variety of English i.e. Indian English. In the words of an Indian critic Iyengar three decades ago there seems to be an acceptance of Indian English literature as "one of the voices in which India speaks...it is a new voice, no doubt,

Email id's:- **aiirjpramod@gmail.com**, **aayushijournal@gmail.com** | **Mob.09922455749**
website :- **www.aiirjournal.com**

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but it is as much Indian as the others" (Kachru 1994:528-529). We must thank Indianwriters for writing in English who assimilated Indian culture in their creative writing in English for the wider spread andvice versa the impact of western culture on educated Indians through the English language was unavoidable. Sanyal(1987:7). points out that Indian writing represents a new form of Indian culture. It has become assimilated and is today a dynamic element of the culture.There have been various experiments by Indian writers. So, English has not remained the language of western representation. It has got glocal quality. So, new varieties of English have emerged.The local is being known to the global through language and literature. The changes in the culture bring the changes in language. English is a link language playing the role of international language. It helps to provide access various cross-cultural domains of knowledge and interaction. According to Kachru (1986), it provides intra-national accessibility in the outer circle and international mobility across regions.It is English with which we can communicate to the world. In the era of globalization, no culture can remain uninfluenced by another culture.

The most global of all languagesis English, and it has assimilated in it various languages from all over the world. In India also, several Indian languages have made their impact on English since colonialism. The contact with English for a long time resulted into accepting it as an official language. Indian culture has also influenced western culture. The globalisation has made the line between two cultures very thin. Multiculturalism i.e. the state of co-existence of diverse cultures has now become aprominent feature of themodern world. In amulticultural society, different cultures attempt to preserve their identities. Language helps to maintain unity in multicultural society. So, the learning in multicultural society needsto develops pluralistic thought among the learners. Here Cheng's (1998) idea of three C'sseems very relevant. The three C's are Concepts, Competence, and Connections. These three C's have implication for language professionals. He says that developing concepts that are global in view and practical in use requires thelatest knowledge about folk and cultural practices. Secondly, competence should be developed with the knowledge of the social and political contexts. The third C is connections i.e. communication and developing the working relationship with the other people of different culture.

Linguistic diversity in India is seen at all linguistic levels i.e. phonological, morphological, lexical and semantic levels. India has been called as 'Museum of languages.' After independence, India was reorganized on the linguistic basis where a particular state speaking a particular language got a separate identity. It is as further:-

Sr.No.	Linguistic Region	Political State / UTs
1.	Gujarati	Gujarat
2.	Marathi	Maharashtra, Goa
3.	Kannada	Karnataka
4.	Malayalam	Kerala& Lakshadweep
5.	Telegu	Andhra Pradesh
6.	Oriya	Odisha
7.	Bengali	WestBengal/ Andaman and Nichobar Island
8.	Hindi/ Urdu	U.P.Harayana, Himachal Pradesh, M.P. Chandugarh and Delhi

Email id's:- **aiirjpramod@gmail.com**, **aayushijournal@gmail.com** I **Mob.09922455749**
website :- **www.aiirjournal.com**

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9.	Kashmiri	Jammu and Kashmir
10.	Punjabi	Punjab
11.	Tamil	Tamil Nadu
12.	Assamese	Assam

These linguistic differences created tension on the borders of two states. For example, at Belgaum between Karnataka and Maharashtra, there is a tension between Marathi and Kannada speaking people. Assam faced the problems between Bengali and Assamese. Hindi, even though a national language was not welcomed in the south.There are four main groups of language. They are Austric, Sino Tibetan, Dravidian, and Indo-Aryan. One with roots in Sanskrit e.g. Hindi, Marathi, Urdu, Gujarati, Punjabi, Assamese, Odia, etc. and the other Dravidian languages (Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, and Kannada).In 1983, the Sarkaria Commission was appointed to find the solution for the language problem in India.The Commission recommendedEnglish to be studied with other regional languages. So, further, the three language formula such as regional language, Hindi as thenational language and English as an International language has been accepted.

There are cross-cultural influences on both English and Indian languages. English is so flexible that it accepts new words from other languages and these words are inserted in the corpus of language e.g. the words like *Pooja, Yoga, Karma, Bunglow, Sahib* or the words from Indian culinary like *Chutney, Samosa, Masala* are used in English. Code-mixing and code-switching are commonly employed in day-to-day life as well as in literature. Translation of regional literary texts also helps this process. It is difficult to find an equivalent word / idea in the target language or it is difficult to find the exact substitute for the word in the target language i. e. in Marathi.

Considering the implications of language being completely entwined in culture, we need to decide the language teaching and language policy. Language teachers have to consider their students'cultural background of language usage, use culturally appropriate teaching styles, and find out culturally based linguistic differences to motivate understanding instead of misconceptions. The teachers must help them to create awareness and understandings of cultural differences, and inculcate the cultural values.

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