

English Language in India: A Post-colonial quest

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English language is widespread in India as it was the dominant language of governance during the Precolonial and colonial rule of British. The education policies, the writers of English, English newspapers can be extensively seen all through the colonial and the Postcolonial era. The emergence of Indian English can be analyzed through the detailed study of History of English Language in India. This paper speaks about the history of English language during the precolonial, colonial and Postcolonial period. There are many support and opposition during these years. The scope of the research is to find the background history in the growth of English language in India. A special attempt is also made by tracing the history of English Newspaper and the reflection of English language from it.

To trace the evolution of English language in India, one must know the state of linguistics and English during Precolonial period, Colonial period and Postcolonial Period. The English language history can be seen during 1600 itself, but only in 1857, universities are established in Madras, Calcutta, and Bombay. The period of 1786-1946 was the time of Precolonial and colonial period of India. The spread of English is not something that happened over night; rather it is the imposing of the language and literature by the colonists for the purpose of politics, social, and religion. Language is a central issue in postcolonial studies. It is a common perception that colonists imposed their language and literature on the colonized for socio-political and religion-ethical purposes. (Viswanathan, 2009)

The Precolonial and Colonial periods in India are from 1786 to 1946 that is before independence. William Jones made his speech in Asiatic Society in Calcutta in "Third Annual Discourse" where he made a clear attempt that the fate of English would be conceptually linked to the languages of India. Macaulay's 'Minute on Education' is one such significant document for the development of English in India in 1853. He pointed out as, "a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and in intellect".

The impact of Macaulay's Minute on the post-colonial colonial educational policies in India is that English became the possession of not only the educated Indians but also millions of uneducated Indians who are ready to buy this precious possession for their

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children. Policy makers in independent India forget the dictum that a country's education must be native in character and rooted in its own culture and tradition. (Sekar, 4)

Later, great universities were established in Madras, Calcutta, Lahore, Bombay, and Allahabad after the establishment of Indian Universities act in 1857. "The main language of instruction at the universities was to be English- and remains so to this day in these and almost all other prestigious Indian institutions and universities of higher learning." (Nair, 106) In 1903, Mahatma Gandhi started a journal named 'Indian Opinion' which helped the local Gujaratis to convey their opinion to imperial South Africans in English Language. In 1908, Rudyard Kipling got the noble prize for *Kim*. Gandhi spoke about English language in 1908 in his book *Hind Swaraj* also known as *Indian Home Rule*. He stated that, "To give millions knowledge of English is to enslave them. The foundation that Macaulay laid of education has enslaved us. I do not suggest that he had any such intention, but that has been the result." (Gandhi, 84) He also pointed that,

I must employ the English language as a medium; that, when I became a Barrister, I may not speak my mother tongue, and that someone else should have to translate to me from my own language? Is not this absolutely absurd? Is it not a sign of slavery? Am I to blame the English for it or myself? It is we, the English knowing men that have enslaved India. The curse of the nation will rest not upon the English but upon us. (Gandhi, 85)

In 1913, Rabindranath Tagore got Noble Prize for his translated work *Gitanjali*. In 1928, Motilal Nehru Commission Policy on language policy which was important during the colonial period made a great impact on the development of English language. So, to note there are so many leaders, scholars, writers during the Precolonial and the colonial period who made a greater change in the teaching of English? "The missionaries were the pioneers of English education in India. The standard they set for English was sufficiently high even then. English Literature found place in curriculum." (Kudchedkar, 42) Thus, there were landmarks explained above which laid the path for the development of English language teaching. The freedom fighters also used English as the medium of instruction which had made an enlightened society, for the struggle of independence.

English in India has acquired the status of the most preferred language, though it began its life as a mere tool in the hands of some traders and their agents. The English ruled India for less than two hundred years, but their language has ruled here for much longer and it appears as if it is here to stay. Bengali-English, Urdu-English and other glossaries first appeared in the seventeenth century itself. (Kudchedkar, 39)

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The language is the biggest debate after independence. The people of India were almost asked to learn three languages after the conclusion made in the parliament, i.e., the person's mother tongue, the second one is 'Hindi' the official language and one universal language which is ultimately meant to be English. In 2004, Prime Minister of India, Atal Bihari Vajpayee stated that it is a bitter truth that even after 56 years of independence, Hindi could not achieve the desired position as a national language. In 2005, Manmohan Singh, Prime Minister of India addressed in the Oxford Union. He made a point that English in India is seen as just another Indian Language. Many Indian English writers like Raja Rao, Mulk Raj Anand, R.K.Narayan, Arundhati Roy, Kiran Desai, Rohinton Mistry, Amitav Ghosh and Anita Desai had written about their postcolonial experiences in their works.

The continuance of English in India after independence takes support and opposition for many reasons. This is the report of Secondary Education Commission of 1952-1953. Following are the reasons for the support:

One, English is the most widely known language among the educated. Two, national unity in the political sphere has been brought about through the study of English language and literature. Three, the image and position of India at the international level is very bright and conducive because of its command over English. (Sekar, 6)

Following are the reasons for the opposition:

One, it is unnatural and inconsistency with the ideals of India being a sovereign nation to prescribe the foreign language—English as a compulsory subject. Two, importance given to English in the past led to a situation where Indian languages have been neglected. Three, it is ideal for children to begin their education in their own mother tongue for better comprehension and development of original thinking. (Sekar, 6)

Later there comes the Kothari Commission report in 1964-1966, which gave a major role for English language. The institutions were asked to use English as medium and they must be taught from the school stage itself. In 2007, Knowledge commission stated that the students shall be facilitated by English and it must be taught to improve their knowledge. They also strongly recommended English as a subject from the grade I itself. Most probably, English has become a mandatory language at many places in the 21st century. English is not only the language in the field of linguistics and literature, it takes important responsibility in many administrations and law. The language used in many colleges, universities and school are in English, rather it is also mentioned that the mother tongue can also be a medium by which the knowledge of English could be acquired side by side.

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Common People are aware of the positive role of English in India. They realize that English is an important vehicle for gaining knowledge, national unity and promotion of international trade and commerce. English is the only language accepted in south, understood in the East and West and connects the whole of India. (Anandhi, 2018, 44)

Bengal Gazette is the first newspaper launched by James Augustus Hicky in 1780. In 1785, *Madras Courier* is the first newspaper published in Madras by Richard Johnston. Later comes the *Bombay Herald* in 1789 and *Bombay Gazette* in 1791. In 1861, Robert Knight published the first edition of *Times of India*. In 1878, The Hindu newspaper was published in English language. According to the Indian Readership Survey (IRS) of 2014, The Times of India, Hindustan Times, The Hindu tops the readers' list in English Dailies. A Universalized and a Individualistic variety of Newspaper English is stated as, "It has been marked that, through broadly the English Newspapers reflect the Global English Language, the usage remains embedded in Indian soil in terms of the diversity of race, culture which take it towards a separate evolution of the language of our own." (Parhi, 34)

English is meant to be Lingua Franca where the communication is made between speakers who don't have a common native language. India is also claimed to be the second largest English speaking country in the world. The demand for English Language at present is high. From colonial times to the present day, English has reached all parts of the country, to all sorts of people. It also acts as a link language among the people of different dialects. English newspapers are also the part of colonial and Postcolonial era, by which much information was shared during independence and it has shown a way that the language is a market. English Newspapers are much focused as "The writer and the reader in course of their journalistic interaction lead towards fast change and growth in the field of English Language in India." (Parhi, 35)

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