

Running Head: THE EVOLUTION OF ENGLISH IN INDIA

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### ABSTRACT

Introduced by the British colonization and today the official language of the Indian Nation in association with Hindi, English is spoken as a second language by a minority of the educated population of 8 to 11% according to current estimations. English as a language in India has an archive of about three hundred years. It existed in India with the entrance of the British on the Indian coasts. English as a language from that time until now has a substantial journey in the Indian subcontinent. People from different religions, communities, and cultures have attempted to adopt English for many reasons. Consequently, in the present context, we cannot think our life is comfortable in India without English. English in India is a symbol of people's aspirations for quality in education and fuller participation in national and international life. Therefore it is the need of the hour to understand the history and evolution of English in India as well as to review how we are progressing with the English language and the same is being highlighted in this research paper.

**KEYWORDS:** colonial period, despotism, baboos, lingua franca,transplantation, cohesiveness.

## INTRODUCTION

Language which has been considered man's most remarkable achievement, is so much a part of our lives, that very often we take it for granted and as often are not aware of its characteristic features. Language is a system. Indian English (originated from and therefore related to British English) is the dialect of the English language spoken in the Republic of India and among the Indian diaspora elsewhere in the world. 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. English is very important in some systems – legal, financial, educational, and business in India.

## ENGLISH IN INDIA

The English language set foot in India with the granting of the East India Company charter by Queen Elizabeth I in 1600 and the subsequent establishment of trading ports in coastal cities such as Surat, Bombay, Madras, and Calcutta.

English language public instruction began in India in the 1830s during the rule of the East India Company. In 1835, English replaced Persian as the official language of the Company. Thomas Babington better known as Lord Macaulay played a major role in introducing English and western concepts of education in India. He supported the replacement of Persian by English as the official language, the use of English as the medium of instruction in all schools, and the training of

English-speaking Indians as teachers. Throughout the 1840s and 1850s, primary, middle, and high-schools were opened in many districts of British India, with most high-schools offering English language instruction in some subjects. In 1857, just before the end of Company rule, universities modeled on the University of London and using English as the medium of instruction were established in Bombay, Calcutta, and Madras. During the British Raj, lasting from 1858 to 1947, English language penetration increased throughout India. This was driven in part by the gradually increasing hiring of Indians in the civil services. At the time of India's independence in 1947, English was the only functional lingua franca in the country. The view of the English language among many Indians has gone from associating it with colonialism to associating it with economic progress, and English continues to be an official language of India.

### **PRE-COLONIAL PERIOD**

Vasco da Gama's discovery of the sea route to India also paved the way for the introduction of English in the sub-continent in 1498. However, it was only in the 18th century, when the Mughal Empire was on the decline and the English East India Company had secured a foothold in India that India's tryst with the English language began. During this period, English was the language of communication of the elite people and was not the lingua franca of the people. 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 responsibility

for the education of the Indians. The Indians were also realizing the importance of the English language.

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 decide 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. Lord Macaulay wanted to make the people "Indian in blood and color but English in taste and opinion." He thought the members of this class would spread their knowledge through English. Macaulay's purposes were: i) to create the dominance of British culture over the Indians and to have control over the minds of the Indian people through English. ii) to train Indians and make them fit for employment. The British Government gave preference in jobs to the Indians who knew English. Many Indian students found poetry, drama, and other writings difficult to get their degrees. Meanwhile, many new colleges and universities were formed. The system of English education founded on English literature continued till independence.

## **COLONIAL PERIOD**

T.B. Macaulay, in the Minutes of 1835, for the first time, formally introduced the teaching of English in the South Asian subcontinent. In his Minutes he mentioned the importance and usefulness of the education that would be given to the natives through the medium of English. Although it was designed to serve the interest of the Masters, not of the subjects, but provided the framework of formal English education to India which to a large extent is followed even today.

Thus by the middle of the nineteenth century the aims and objectives of teaching English were very clearly laid out. For the remaining period of colonial rule there were a few landmarks in the development of English such as:

- The establishment of universities in Kolkata, Mumbai, and Chennai in 1857 and in Dhaka in 1920
- Selective education and training in administration, imparted through English, the Indian University Act (1904)
- The Resolution on Educational Policy (1913).

For the entire period of British rule four broad developments concerning English education took place:

- 1600 -1800: During the early years the variety of English used was imitative and formal. It was the language of the rulers and the elite class.
- 1850 -1947: During the later years more varieties (from very high to very low) appeared. Indian intellectuals and freedom fighters effectively used English as a tool for political awakening and resurgence.

Interaction with vernacular languages: As the use of English penetrated the different sections of the educated Indians, a new variety of English emerged. This variety of English had a very distinct Indian flavor and several words of vernacular origin were absorbed in English, e.g., Brahmin. Coolie, jungle, and so on.

Methodology: Language studies were based on literature and grammar and the means of studies was the grammar-translation method. The spoken component of the language was not practiced. The emphasis was given on correctness and complete sentence construction.

English also played a critical role in India's struggle for independence as it became the language of political awakening and resurgence. Even Mohandas K. Gandhi (1869-1948), used the English language effectively to put forth his message to the British Government.

### **POST-COLONIAL PERIOD**

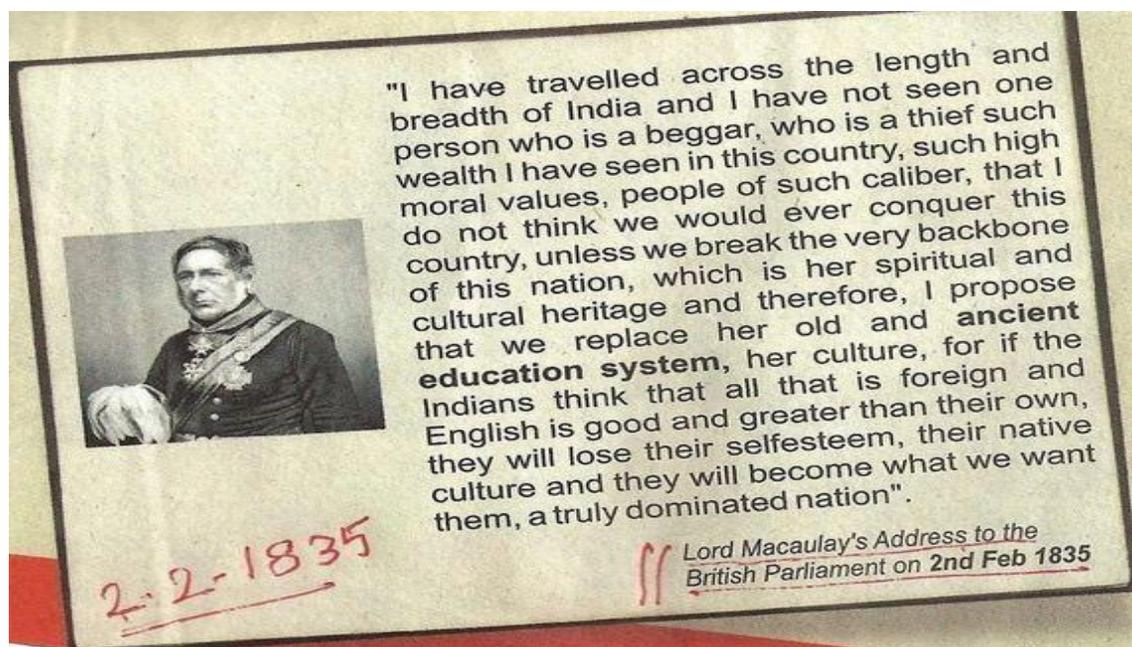
Post-independence, the perception of English as having an alien power base changed. For most of the twentieth century, it remained a language used by a select few. English primarily remained the language of law and administration.

### **TRANSPLANTATION versus EVOLUTION for a fair assessment:**

Lord Macaulay's attitude was that of a typical colonial administrator. The rulers required a class of English knowing urban "baboo"- Western-educated bureaucrats who would be loyal to their masters. Educating that class and allowing them to 'educate' the masses was the policy of the British.

Macaulay visualized India to be a dependency of England, to be at war with their enemies, to be at peace with their allies. He felt India cannot have a free government, but she may have a firm and impartial despotism. After stating the objectives of colonial education, he took up the question of the medium of education. He wrote in the Minute:

All parties seem to be agreed on one point: that the dialects commonly spoken among the natives of this part of India contain neither literary nor scientific information, and are, moreover, so poor and rude that, until they are enriched from other quarters, it will not be easy to translate any valuable work into them.



The English language, its literature, and its religion were made central to the cultural enterprise of the EMPIRE and the expansion of their trade. The firm establishment of the Empire was the ultimate aim of the Macaulayan transplantation approach.

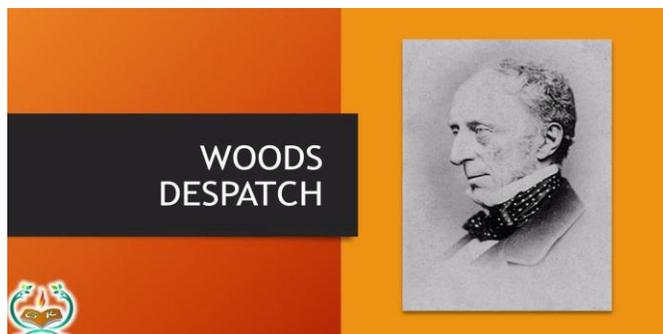
The Orientalists were even prepared to compromise and make English an optional medium along with the classical Indian languages, but the Anglicists wanted the English-only policy. Hindus were not in favor of the alien English education and English Language. Rural areas were untouched, urban areas were the only ones getting English, established. This was reflected in the number of newspapers and periodicals that started during this period.

**NAME****YEAR OF ESTABLISHMENT**

<i>Times of India, Bombay</i>	<i>1838</i>
<i>Calcutta review</i>	<i>1844</i>
<i>Examiner, Bombay</i>	<i>1850</i>
<i>Guardian, Madras</i>	<i>1851</i>

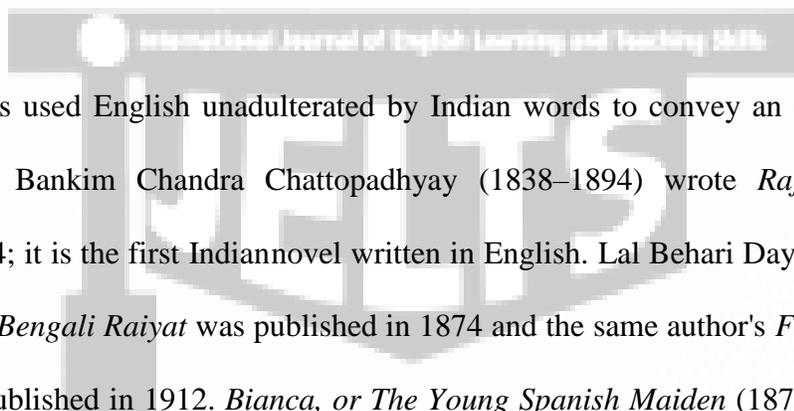
Some Indians of the period, like Michael Madhusadan Dutt(Calcutta), C.V.Boriah(Madras), Krishna Mohan Banerji(Calcutta), and Kashiprasad Ghose(Calcutta), are credited with literary writing in English.

English and English education got firmly consolidated by 1850 and some sections of the people, the Brahmins and a section of the middle class were very enthusiastic about learning English, especially in Bengal and Madras. The Hindu College, Calcutta, started by individuals was taken over by the Government in 1854 and renamed Presidency College.

**WOOD'S DESPATCH**

Wood's Despatch of 1854, sometimes called the Magna Carta of English education in India, was the first policy statement of the British Government and the Company on education. The following points were emphasized:

1. The English language would be taught where there was a demand for it and that it would not replace native languages.
2. The importance of female education.
3. Teachers must be trained.
4. The establishment of universities.



Early Indian writers used English unadulterated by Indian words to convey an experience that was essentially Indian. Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay (1838–1894) wrote *Rajmohan's Wife* and published it in 1864; it is the first Indian novel written in English. Lal Behari Day's *Govinda Samanta or the History of a Bengali Raiyat* was published in 1874 and the same author's *Folk Tales of Bengal: Life's Secret* was published in 1912. *Bianca, or The Young Spanish Maiden* (1878) by Toru Dutt was the first novel written by an Indian woman. Both Toru Dutt and Krupabai Sathianadhan, two promising Indian English writers of the nineteenth century died untimely in their early twenties and thirties respectively.

Sathianadhan's autobiographical novel *Saguna: A Story of Native Christian Life* was published serially in *The Madras Christian College Magazine* from 1887 to 1888. The only other novel by Sathianadhan is *Kamala: The Story of a Hindu Life* (1894).

Wood's despatch of 1854 very carefully and clearly stated the laudable aim of making English and the vernacular languages the instruments for the diffusion of European knowledge. English was made the

language of administration. All these made English a commodity that was in great demand. The Matriculation examination was the entrance examination to the university and it was conducted in English; middle school instruction was preliminary to high school education; so English continued to be considered the most important language.

The British empire was getting more and more well-established as a territorial empire and English and English education also got established in the minds of men, particularly in urban areas, as the 'English Empire'. It was at this time Lord Curzon came to India as a Viceroy.

A Bengali gentleman once wrote, **'If you happen to be traveling in a railway carriage in India, you will find scores of Bengali gentlemen reading English books as a matter of recreation, and some perusing *The Times newspaper*...'** They were accustomed to carry on a conversation in English, even the British found no difficulty in communicating with them. Thus, English education was producing "gentlemen-clerks" of the 'most obedient' type in India.

The Indian National Congress was formed in 1885 and in 1892 Dadabhai Naoroji was elected to the British Parliament as India's representative.

That was the time when the English educational system brought about the unification of the Indian subcontinent and brought all the educated Indians together through a common language. The use of a common language helped the native intelligentsia to exchange ideas with comparative ease, and reinforced the forging of unity within their ranks.

Thus, one can say without the existence of the British regime and their effort of teaching English to the Indians turned out to be a blessing in disguise.

Before the British came to India, she was ruled by hundreds of feudal lords who fought among themselves for power. The British, by a combination of power and administrative ability, brought the country together. English and English education introduced by them, led to the growth of educated

Indians and mass which brought about the question of staying under a subjugation. This gave birth to the nationalist movements. A common language gave the Indians the nationalist ideology.

- **“One of the most remarkable features of the British rule in India has been the fact that the greatest injuries done to the people of India have taken the outward form of blessings. Of this, English education is a striking example....”** as said by Ananda K. Coomarswamy.
- **“England has introduced a revolutionary agent of mighty potency in this country. The revolutionary agent is English education..”** as said by Surendra Nath Banerjee.

It was said that the impact of European education and the common language, English had prepared the country for national unity.

People from all strands of nationalism were English educated and they were at the forefront of the nationalist movement. The English language itself, the linguistic and literary core of English education, contained the message; the medium itself was the message.

After Indian Independence in 1947, Hindi was declared the first official language, and attempts were made to declare Hindi the sole national language of India. Due to protests from Tamil Nadu and other non-Hindi-speaking states, it was decided to temporarily retain English for official purposes until at least 1965. By the end of this period, however, opposition from non-Hindi states was still too strong to have Hindi declared the sole language. With this in mind, the English Language Amendment Bill declared English to be an associate language "until all non-Hindi States had agreed to its being dropped." This has not yet occurred, and it is still widely used. For instance, it is the only reliable means of day-to-day communication between the central government and the non-Hindi states.

The view of the English language among many Indians has gone from associating it with colonialism to associating it with economic progress, and English continues to be an official language of India.

While there is an assumption that English is readily available in India, available studies show that its usage is restricted to the elite, because of inadequate education to large parts of the Indian population. The use of outdated teaching methods and the poor grasp of English exhibited by the authors of many guidebooks disadvantage students who rely on these books, giving India only a moderate proficiency in English.

### **THE PRESENT STATE**

Twentieth-century witnessed great advancements in science and technology and this enabled many new ways of sharing information and doing business. India's international commercial activities led to the need for acquiring proficiency in English as an international language. Now, English is not just the language of the administrators and policymakers but also has become the language of the business and professional class. In India, the English speaking population is only about 3-4%, but with India's massive population, India is among the top three countries in the world with the highest number of English speakers. In terms of numbers of English speakers, the Indian subcontinent ranks third in the world, after the USA and UK. Most English speakers in India are second language speakers, in 1971, it was estimated that the rate of bilingualism in India was 13% and 99% of English speakers are second-language speakers English is the most widely spoken second language, followed by Hindi. English is more useful as a "lingua franca"; the usefulness of Hindi as a lingua franca is regionally limited. The small segment of the English speaking population controls domains that have professional prestige. It is this small segment of the Indian population that leads India's economic, industrial, professional, political, and social progress. Most interactions in the above spheres of life take place in English.

In the linguistically plural settings of India, English often acts as the link -language among people of different dialects. For many educated Indians, English is virtually the first language. Thus, in the present context, English is playing a vital role in bringing together people from different regional languages for a closer exchange of social, educational, and administrative networks of India. It provides a linguistic tool for the administrative cohesiveness of a country.

English is used in 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”. As pointed out before, the role of English is not replacive: it overlaps with local languages in certain domains.

### **English language in Indian Education System**

English is taught as a second language at every stage of education in all states of India and has been accepted as the main medium of instruction in higher education. English is also the state language of two states in eastern India, Meghalaya, and Nagaland.

In India, English has become an integral part of the curriculum almost at all levels of education. However, various social, political, and cultural factors affect the position of English in different boards, universities, and other institutions. While most States accord English the position of the second language, some others treat it as the third language; the regional language and the national language getting precedence.

**English language in other fields**

Nowadays English is “the so-called associate official language of the Indian Union” which is particularly used in the areas “education, administration, law, mass media, science, and technology”.

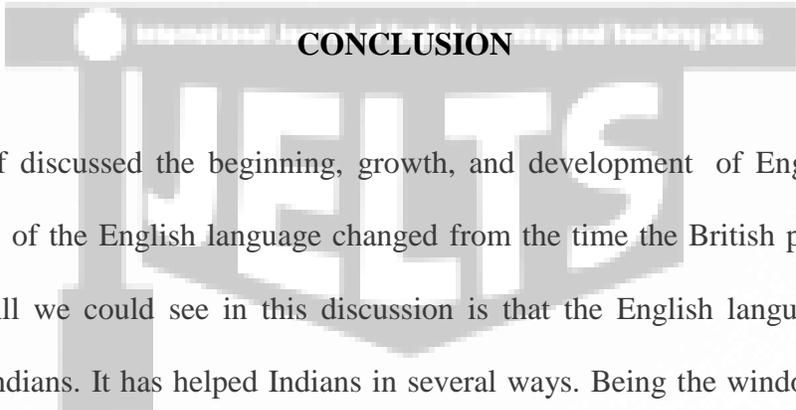
The common usage of English in India’s governmental affairs clearly shows its important role/importance in the country. Even in the Indian Constitution, it is defined “that all orders, rules and regulations, and bye-laws, etc., shall be in English”. Furthermore, the knowledge in the sectors “medicine, engineering, technology and all the sciences” is imparted in English and due to the reputable Anglophone school-learning and the fact that Indian Universities mostly teach in English, the “English-medium education enjoys great prestige”.

Besides the judicial and educational usage, there still is the cultural aspect of the English language in India which includes, inter alia, mass media like English-language newspapers. In addition to the press, the English language affects the sector’s film and theatre as well.

The firm establishment of English after independence benefitted India in several ways. Indians not only started learning it seriously but also learned how to express themselves efficiently in English. Several authors started writing in English. This gave a boost for the development of the special field in literature called ‘Indian English Literature’. Various genres of literature started employing the English language. Not only that, but English also worked as a vehicle to transport and popularise Indian works of art throughout the world.

Not only in literature has English played a major role, but it has also played a vital role in the economic development of the nation. India has been able to progress in the industrial competition in the modern era. The government policies regarding foreign affairs, international transactions are all very important in business and trade overseas. The use of English is inevitable in all these activities.

India has been able to advance in the scientific and technological fields too. All the credit must go primarily to the English language. We cannot now imagine the condition of India at present, had we rejected the English language after independence.



## CONCLUSION

We have thus in brief discussed the beginning, growth, and development of English in India. We also studied how the status of the English language changed from the time the British people ruled to the time after independence. All we could see in this discussion is that the English language has been the most valuable gift for the Indians. It has helped Indians in several ways. Being the window to the outside world and gateway to knowledge, English has been of great prominence and importance. The study of this language not only makes us more intelligible but also opens up many great opportunities for us in the professional world. We can easily say today that “There is no success, if there is no English!”.

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