

"Indian English"

Indian English is closer to British English than it is to American English because it was under the British Raj from 1757 until 1947. The English used in India has two things in common with the nationalized Englishes of the other second language countries. First, in all these countries, the English that is in use today has grown out of educational systems in which English was either the medium of instruction or a subject of study. Next, in recent decades, it has been perpetuated with little or no input from native speakers of the British or American varieties. As professor Balasubrahmanian observes, "most educated Indian who speak English did not learn it from an R.P. speaker." In fact, in India, English is spoken in all kinds of regional varieties (Bengali English, Tamil English, Punjabi English) etc. Some speakers in these regions have near-native competence. But there are also speakers whose accent is so grossly Tamil, Tamilian or Punjabi, or Bengali, and so on that they may not be intelligible outside India or even outside the particular region to which they belong. But,

there are local standards British and norms which determine the degree to which deviations from standard British English may be tolerated. For example, scholars at CIEFL, Hyderabad have set up a normative model of General Indian English, ~~at~~ a variety of English speech free from gross regional features which should be used by educated Indians.

Indian English has acquired a distinctive vocabulary. Some lexical items unique to Indian English belong to the days of the British Raj (this expression itself is an Indianism). Many of these are now in standard British usage as well, e.g., brahmin, bungalow, calico, cheroot, chintz, chutney, coolie, curry, gum, Ingerment, jungle, jute, nabob, pundit, purdah, rajah, sahib, sandhi, tiffin, verandah, etc. But the vocabulary of Indian English has grown ~~considered~~ considerably in the years following Indian independence. Some recent coinages include: ayah [nurse/maid servant], bandh [labour strike], crore [10 million], dhobi [washerman],

durzi [tailor], godown [warehouse],
goondah [cooligan], prepone [antidote],
Jawn [soldier], Lakh [a hundred thousand],
lathi [baton], ryot [farmer], shir
[agitation], Swadeshi [indigenous],
Swadeshi hotel [native, vegetarian
restaurant], stepney [spare wheel],
backward class [deprived group],
Himalayan blunder [grave mistake],
military hotel [non-vegetarian restaurant]
pin-drop silence [dead silence], platform
[pavement or sidewalk].

Indian English has reached
a stage at which critical questions arise
regarding its identity and status, espe-
cially in the fields of education and
literature.