

INDIAN ENGLISH

There has been a discussion, sometimes heated, about the existence of 'Indian English'. The term is very widely used and some distinguishing features of Indian English have been described by many. These distinguishing features are especially concerned with pronunciation. Other areas are vocabulary, transliteration, usage, idiomatic distortions and so on. There are several types of speakers of English in the country. On the one hand are well educated speakers of English who are virtually indistinguishable from native speakers. On the other, there are the speakers who use a highly deviant form of English heavily influenced by their native expressions and accent. There are millions of people who are somewhere in between.

Though there are many varieties of English spoken around the country, there are some common features found in many parts of the country. Some of these are unique to India and some of them are found in other countries as well where English is spoken as second or foreign language.

History

In the early years of seventeenth century, the communication between the representatives of the East India Company and the Indian people was only through the middlemen. However, in some of the seaport towns in India, because of the contacts with the Portuguese traders, there evolved a special variety of Portuguese language which later became the common language for all the Europeans. Because of this, many Portuguese words along with several Arabic words in their Portuguese form were adopted by many Indians in their native languages and then incorporated in the vocabulary of the Indian English. As the East Indian Company established its influence and the British gained political power, the importance of English gradually increased and along with that the vocabulary of Indian English also grew.

Slowly, English became the language of commercial and administrative business. In the later years, English became the language of education after the missionaries started spreading the language. With the establishment of Indian Universities in 1857, English became one of the Indian languages for all purposes. Today, English is no longer considered a foreign language but one of the Indian languages.

Because of the fact that almost all Indians are taught English by Indian speakers of the language or many of them learn English through books, Indian English tends to be bookish on occasions. Many of them also pronounce several words going by their spelling. Added to these are the difficulties in understanding the nuances of meaning and usage.

Indian English has some special features to it.

Pronunciation

Because of strong mother tongue influence (MTI), the English spoken by many Indian speakers of it has a special flavour to it. Because of the several differences between the sounds of English and Indian languages, many English words are mispronounced. Words like – cat, cart, cot and caught are pronounced alike since as many different vowel sounds are not present in Indian languages. The vowel sounds in the words about, girl and gull are also pronounced almost alike.

Many words starting with e or pronounced as if they start with ye – i.e. effect, enter etc.

Extra vowel sounds /u/ or /i/ are inserted in the last syllables of the words like uncle, people, tackle, ankle etc.

Words like school and style are pronounced with the vowel sound /i/ at the beginning.

Many Indian speakers fail to distinguish between the consonant sounds in the words jail, zoo and pleasure and use /dz/ on all the three occasions.

Not differentiating between /i/ and /i:/, s and sh is also observed in some parts of the country.

Malyalis tend to replace /p/ with /b/ and /t/ with /d/.

They also use the retroflex variety of /n/ which is non-existent in English.

The retroflex varieties of /t/ and /d/ are used by many Indian speakers whereas they are only dental in English.

/v/ is used both for /v/ and /w/.

Its vocabulary contains a number of words not found in British English.

There are several words of Portuguese origin like – almirah, ayah, cobra, peon etc.;

Many Indian words like – betel, bamboo, mango, curry, chit, jodhpuris etc.

Vocabulary

There are large number of Arabic words continuing from the Moghul rule like – zamindar, mofussil, chowkidar, sepoy, bandobast, davakhana etc.

Words such as bandh, lathi, lakh, crore, lathicharge, doubleroti etc. have become part of the everyday vocabulary of many Indian speakers of English.

It is common among the Indian speakers to use the expression – she is carrying to refer to a pregnant lady. This expression does not carry any meaning to a native speaker of English. In a similar context they use expressions like - she is pregnant or she is expecting.

‘Cinema hall’ for ‘cinema’, ‘head bath’ for ‘a shower’ or ‘hair wash’, ‘neck out’ or ‘collar out’ for ‘kick out’ ‘pant’ for ‘pants’ are also very frequent.

Words like **also** and **only** are used carelessly sometimes resulting in ambiguity. The noun advice and the verb advise are also wrongly used by many Indian speakers of English. Also, advice is wrongly used as countable noun resulting in the phrases one advice and two advices etc.

Grammar

Using wrong prepositions

About is used after the verbs discuss, describe, mention, study etc. where no preposition is required. **By** is used after the word accompany where **with** is to be used. In the expressions – **angry with somebody and angry about or angry at something**, the prepositions **on** is used (angry on somebody). In the sentence – he failed to answer my question, the preposition **to** is wrongly used.

Redundant expressions like **repeat again, return back** are also very common. The use of **because** and **the reason is** and **although** and **but** is also seen where one of the two expressions is enough. The expression **adequate enough** is also very commonly found – another instance of redundancy.

Idiomatic distortions

Many idiomatic expressions used in the native tongue of several Indian speakers are transliterated into English resulting in distortion of actual English idiom.

When somebody is not being sincere or putting on airs many Indian speakers use the expression ‘stop acting’. In a similar context, British speakers use either ‘stop pretending’ or ‘come off it’.

Similarly, ‘donkey’s work’ is used to refer to ‘spade work’ or the difficult part of a particular work.

‘In camp’ is used to mention that somebody is ‘on tour’.

The exclamation ‘hundred years to you’ is used when somebody who is conversation suddenly appears whereas, in a similar context, a British speaker may use the expression ‘talk of the devil, and he will appear’ or ‘think of angel and you will hear its wings flapping.’

Firing is used with the meaning scolding or fuming with anger whereas this word is mostly used for dismissal or removing from service.

An expression like 'pulling on' is used to refer to 'get on' or 'get along'.
'By heart' is used as a verb meaning 'memorise' or 'learning by the rote' whereas in English it is used only as an adverb in expressions like 'learning a poem by heart'.

COMMON ERRORS

1. The teacher, along with his pupils, have left for South India tour.
2. My friend has lived in Anand Nagar at Hyderabad.
3. Among the two brothers of Mrs. Lakshmi, the elder one is a doctor.
4. I have lived in US for ten years; I don't live there any longer.
5. As students enter universities abroad for their PG programmes, they must adopt themselves to the new environment.
6. The indiscriminate felling of trees by anti- social elements have resulted in ecological disaster.
7. On occasions, the young people of the country behave irrationally, isn't it?
8. The Chairman and the Managing Director of the company has left or US on a business tour.
9. There was a corps lying on the street yesterday.
10. There are less applicants for the job this year than those last year.
11. Seshu has visited Switzerland in 1998.
12. One has to take care of his health all the time.
13. Neither the students nor the principal have turned up.

14. Prof. Mehta is teaching Power Electronics since 1992.
15. Many of the new students are more intelligent than their predecessors, isn't it?
16. Raghu had visited Mumbai last year.
17. Why you are so late?
18. He is your brother, isn't it?
19. He asked as that whose pen it was?
20. We inquired when was the next train?
21. One should always do his duty.
22. These both girls are clever.
23. Shakespeare is greater than any poet.
24. I neither insulted Tom nor his father.
25. I am living in Hyderabad since five years.
26. You are more beauty than her.
27. You should avail the offer.
28. He described about the cricket match.
29. I suggest you to see a doctor.
30. This book comprises of five sections.
31. I couldn't attend to the meeting.
32. She is used to work hard.
33. Kalidasa not only wrote plays but also Kavyas.
34. Gandhiji was older than Sardar Patel.

35. The customer offered either to pay for it now or tomorrow.
36. I consider Krishna Rao as an efficient technologist.
37. Our country abounds by rich minerals.
38. Entering the college, the gates were closed.
39. The philanthropist Tata found the Indian Institute of Science.
40. Some students refused to give the examination on flimsy grounds
41. You are going home in summer. Is it not?
42. At the age of twelve, my family moved to Bombay.
43. These mangoes are too cheap to be good.
44. The principal is wanting to speak to you.
45. I am reading the HINDU everyday.
46. The principal and the correspondent of the college has attended the meeting.
47. Aditya is senior than Abhinav at least by four years.
48. In many ways, Indians are different than The British.
48. Why you are talking like that?
49. He just do not know anything about music.
50. His brother-in-laws are going abroad.
51. My cousin brother is coming tomorrow.
52. None of my friends are intelligent.
53. It is in 1997 that we first flew to the United States.
54. Children visiting the park are amused by the monkeys play in the cages.

55. Ram's salary is much larger than Ramesh.
56. I love dancing as well as listen to music.
57. After you will return from New York, I will come and see you.
58. The only good thing bout these pens are their colour and their size.
59. A tallest man I have ever seen lives in my village.
60. The African countries are poor, isn't it?
61. Too many ill-equipped hospitals is coming up in rural India.
62. Either you or he are coming to me tomorrow.
63. I am having a big house in Chennai and a small one in my village.
64. You must write with ink.
65. Mother-in-laws are a nuisance.
66. She is suffering with malaria.