DECOUPLING LANGUAGE IDEOLOGY AND UNDERSTANDING INDIAN ENGLISH AS THE ESSENTIAL INDIANIZATION OF ENGLISH IN THE CONTEXT OF EMERGING WORLD ENGLISH-ES

Shreya Mehta[1]

ABSTRACT

English has grown to be widely spoken all across the globe and has been used as an 'instrument' to perform various roles. In the process, English spoken by native speakers had been focused to the point that it acquired a status of being defined in terms of a norm, prescription. Until recent times, the varieties of English spoken by the non-natives had always been termed as 'broken English', 'ungrammatical', with 'lots of mistakes', 'funny' or very 'fuzzy and mind-boggling'. What is important to note however is that this 'Other' English has slowly begun to elevate itself. The study of "World English-es" came as a respite to this issue. (Kachru 1988). Speaking particularly of India English, Kachru (1996) suggests that by examining the processes of lexical extension and meanings in deviation in the socio-cultural contexts, we can attempt at understanding the essential 'Indianness' associated to it. This paper attempts to the very same. Data as evidentiary support for the paper is presented from the works Nectar in a Sieve by Kamala Markandaya, V.S. Naipaul's A House for Mr. Biswas and R. K. Narayan's The Dark Room, The Guide and The Financial Expert. An attempt is hence made in the paper to de-couple the ideology of Indian English from being considered as an incompetent variety of English to an effective and rather complete and stable language.

KEYWORDS: Indian English, Kachru, Lexical Extension, Other English.

INTRODUCTION

John Adams, the second president of United States of America had perhaps foreseen the future of English and hence claimed,

"...English would be the most universally read and accepted in times to come...it was destined to be universally spoken in the next century and the succeeding centuries more generally as the language of the world..."[2]

Indeed, true to his word, English has grown to be widely spoken all across the globe. English has been projected, used and identified as an 'instrument' for performing various roles as far as the Indian context is concerned. In fact, whatever role was or rather is demanded, is always played by the English language, whether it be the acting as a medium for indigenous elites, the foundation for the literary heritage to be represented on an international platform, the medium of media, science and technology, trade, diplomacy, education and many more. English language has also been used as a 'tool' for unifying a nation, for establishing political boundaries and for creating political dissent.

---

[1] Research Scholar, PhD Linguistics,Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi
[2] Kachru. Braj. B. *The Other Tongue: English across Cultures.* Second Edition. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996.P-2.

Essentially the spread of English can be accounted for as the one having two sides. One side represents those people who use English as their first language and the other represents those who use English as an additional language. The number of people using English as their additional language, the 'other language' has indeed grown very large in size in comparison to those who employ English as their first language. The question however that has been repeatedly asked is "why English?", "couldn't there have been any other international language, a language maybe artificially constructed with no prior cultural and linguistic connotations?"

To this most linguists and critics claim that a major reason for the same is that of colonization and the very fact that English was essentially the language of the colonizers. The need to represent oneself and fight against the colonizer in the language of the colonizer was essentially adopted as one of the ways of representation and writing back to the empire. It is essentially the power in the English language and the power behind it that has indeed brought it to such great heights.

The varieties of English however spoken by the non-natives has always been on the radar and called the 'Other English'. The description provided for such English-es is always that varying from being called 'broken English' to English of ambilingual competence. What is important to note however is that it is this side of English that has actually elevated itself and is being used internationally and not the variety spoken by the native speakers.

However, the sad story remains that the global consequences of this 'Other English' so spoken has rarely been represented, while the one spoken by the native speakers has been concentrated upon to the point where it has acquired a status of being defined in terms of a norm, description and prescription.

The study of "World English-es" came as a respite to this issue. In the simplest of terms "World English-es" are defined as the study of the varieties of English used in diverse sociolinguistic contexts, representingessentially a paradigm shift in research, teaching, and application of sociolinguistic realities to the forms and functions of English.

However, the point missed in most approaches to World English-es is the very fact that this approach essentially projects an unbiased view of the world rejecting the dichotomies existing in the perspectives of the world as Bhatt(2001) suggests, like, the 'native' versus the 'non-native', the 'being' versus the 'other' and the 'colonizer' versus the 'colonized';

"It rejects the dichotomy of the native speakers vs non-native speakers and emphasizes instead on pluralization of English-es as that which symbolizes the formal and functional variations, the divergent sociolinguistic contexts, the linguistic, sociolinguistic, and literary creativity, and the various identities English has accrued as a result of its acculturation in new sociolinguistic ecologies"[3]

Since quite some time now various attempts have been made to understand and analyze in a very systematic manner, the model of the English speakers of the world. The most appreciated and celebrated as the more realistic has been that of Braj Kachru. Kachru's (1988) "Concentric Circle Model" captures the historical, sociolinguistic, inquisitional and literary contexts of the spread and diffusion of English. In this model, Kachru refers to three circles that are concentric, i.e. Inner Circle, Outer Circle and Expanding circle.

The "Inner circle" where on one hand encompassed those countries like USA or UK where English was spoken as a primary language by the native speakers estimated to about 320-380

---

[3]Bhatt. Rakesh M.*World* Englishes. Annual Review of Anthropology, Vol. 30. 2001. P-526.

million speakers (Crystal 1997), the "Outer circle" represented the spread of English in non-native contexts, where it had been institutionalized as an additional language, with an estimated 150-300 million speakers including countries like Bangladesh, Ghana and India.

The "Expanding circle", with a steady increase in the number of speakers and functional domains, included nations where English was primarily used as a foreign language, with an estimated 100-1000 million speakers including countries like Saudi Arabia and Japan.(Crystal 1997).
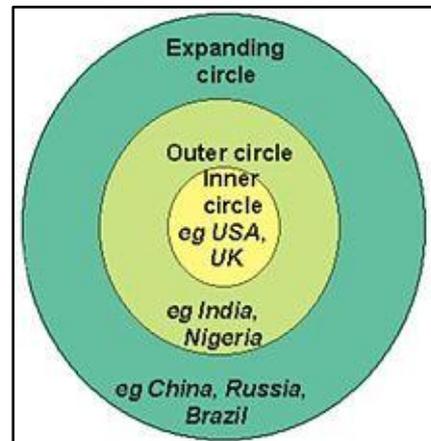
The English of the 'Other', the subjugated and the marginalized had always been considered 'wrong', 'ungrammatical', with 'lots of mistakes' and very 'fuzzy and mind-boggling'. The reason that perhaps why the various varieties emerging of English have been looked down upon is that the differences that it projects have been viewed in terms of 'mistakes' when actually they need to be dealt with as 'deviations'.

Kachru proposes that there is indeed a need to look at these English-es from the perspective of World English-es as it is then that we would be able to incorporate an unbiased opinion of the very same. This paper aims at doing the very same by analyzing Indian English as essentially the "process of Indianization of English" and tries to understand the what is so 'essentially Indian' in Indian English.

Kachru (1996) suggests that what we need to do is to look at the processes of lexical extension and meanings in deviation in the socio-cultural contexts and it is then only that we can truly understand the essential 'Indianness' associated to Indian English. This solution proposed by Kachru is what is looked upon in this paper and data to support the claim is collected from the works *Nectar in a Sieve* by Kamala Markandaya, V.S. Naipaul's*A House for Mr. Biswas* and R.K. Narayan's*The Dark Room, The Guide* and *The Financial Expert*. An attempt is hence made here to de-couple the prevailing ideology of Indian English from being considered as being an incompetent variety of English to stable, effective and rather a complete and stable language.

It is also helpful to remember that spread of English and its adoption across cultures and languages has been viewed as an aberration in various societies, when in reality, acquiring and maintaining another language has historically been a normal human activity and tendency. English has been spreading in a controlled manner with it being counterbalanced by the sponsored and protected spread of the national and sub-national languages of the governments (Kachru 1996).

[4]http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Englishes (18-04-2014, 21:01)

As a result of this, those who learn English learn in the context of other languages that have their own prerequisites and potentials. This is what essentially influences the image of English in many parts of the non-English mother tongue world itself. Before actually proceeding further it becomes important to first understand the historical profile of Indian English first and its spread in India.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF SPREAD OF ENGLISH IN INDIA

The beginnings of English coming in contact with India can be associated to the coming of the British East Indian Company with the purpose of trade. When English came to India and the need arose to learn English to participate in East India's functioning, English began to be learnt as a supplementary language, bilingualism began to emerge. As colonization began to take a toll on India, so did English.

It is customary to trace the roots of English on the Indian subcontinent to 31st December 1600 when Queen Elizabeth I granted a charter to a few merchants of the city of London giving them a monopoly to trade with India and the East. According to the various surveys conducted on the very same, the beginnings of the general spread of English have been stated to be primarily due to three reasons; i.e. the 'activities of the Christian Missionaries', the 'demand from the Indian public' and the 'Government policy'.

Once the charter was reframed and the 'missionary clause' added to the charter in 1698, the flow of missionaries began with great efforts. With the foundation of the first 'Christian Institution' in 1886, a large number of Protestant institutions grew with focus increasing to spread the language of the Bible so as to supplement a better understanding of the Bible.

Realizing the importance of knowing English in that scenario, various representatives of the Indian subcontinent began to voice the need to learn English.Raja Rammohun Roy primarily focused on the need to incorporate English in various academic, scientific and other international scenarios so as to represent the nation on an international platform and rise. It was essentially after 1765 that the English East India Company began to become a political power in India.

The highly significant *Minute* of 1835 by Macaulay was passed on February 2. Along with his mention of Raja Rammohun Roy's concern to incorporate English, Macaulay presented in the *Minute* very strong and powerful views of English being forced upon and absorbed making it more important than regional languages. Macaulay in his *Minutes* mentions that the best way to exert their control over the Indian subcontinent was by,

"*…creating a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions who we govern- a class of persons, Indians in blood and color English in taste, opinion, in morals ad intellect…*"[5]

He suggests that by engaging in oriental studies it would be easier to understand the orients and thus govern them. Thus, English began to be associated and encouraged as a 'prestige language' replacing other vernaculars. With the World War, education in English showed a huge rise with English acquiring the role of a 'dominant' language now.

Even during the independence struggle, to make their voice heard and to represent themselves on the international platform, English continued to play an important role

---

[5] Kachru. Braj. B. *The Other Tongue: English across Cultures.* Second Edition. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996.P-22.

especially in diplomatic talks as well as in the media. With independence achieved, the next question was to choose a national language that would be incorporated as a part of the Constitution of India.

From this time on, English began to play the role of a 'link' language. Since no consensus was achieved even after the debates, with the Dravidian states refusing to adopt Hindi as the official national language, a period of fifteen years was chosen as a period to adopt Hindi and supplement the incorporation of Hindi as the national language. However, the desired effect wasn't received as Hindi was adopted as the official language but not the national language along with English that was also adopted as the associate official language.

The 'three language formula' was adopted in 1968 by the Indian government which involved learning of the three languages Hindi, English and the regional language in the Hindi speaking belt and in the non-Hindi speaking belt, English, the regional language and Hindi was encouraged. Even this attempt couldn't encourage the adoption of Hindi as the national language and instead encouraged English throughout with the coming of globalization and better opportunities of employment across the globe. Thus, English became and still continues to be the medium of expression ever since, a medium that can be heard and that which represents what it embodies.

APPROACH TO THE INVESTIGATION OF "INDIANNESS" IN INDIAN ENGLISH

It is important to note that the Indian English is actually a result of Indianization of English, a consequence of what linguists claim is the 'transfer or interference' between Indian languages and English and thus we need to adopt this understanding of 'contact feature' when we investigate. Kachru confesses that the distance between the natively used varieties and Indian English can't be explained in terms of grammar, phonology alone as these deviations are an outcome

"…of Indianization of English which has gradually made Indian English culture bound in the socio-cultural setting of India. Rather the phonological and the grammatical deviations are only the part of this 'process of Indianization'…"[6]

Hence Kachru (1983, 1996) proposes that to understand the true worth of this Indian English it is important to note and understand this essential 'Indianness' in English and the 'process of Indianization' that English has undergone after coming in contact with Indian languages. For this it becomes all the more necessary to note the "Meaning in Deviation or the Lexical Extension" that essentially took place when Indians adopted English along with studying the "Language in Context: Socio-cultural perspective".

As the English language spread,through linguistic imperialism and linguistic pragmatism to non-native contexts and came into close, protracted contact with genetically and culturally unrelated languages, it went through a process of linguistic experimentation and nativization by the people who adopted it for use in different functional domains, such as education, administration, and high society. The same was the case in the Indian context as well.

---

[6]Braj B. Kachru. *The Indianness in Indian English*, <i>WORD</i>, 21:3, 391-410, DOI:10.1080/00437956. 1965.11435436. Downloaded from http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00437956.1965.11435436.

Non-native English speakers thus created new, cultural-sensitive and socially appropriate meanings and expressions of the bilingual's creativity by altering and manipulating the structure and functionsof English in its new ecology. As a result, English underwenta process of acculturation in order to compete in local linguistic markets that were before dominated by indigenous languages. Given the linguistic and cultural pluralism in Africa and South Asia, linguistic innovations, creativity, and emerging literary traditions in English in these countries were immediately accepted.

Kachru suggests that there are four essential formations for the 'Indianisms' when taking a closer look at 'Lexical extension'. First involves those constructions in which there seems to be a transference taking place from Indian Languages into Indian English. He gives the example of the *varna sankara* which meant the 'confusion of caste' and *lepan* 'dung wash'.The second type that he goes on to suggest is that of not necessarily involving a transference but only collocationally unusual usage like *salt-giver, rape-sister*. Thirdly, he goes on to discuss those that are formed on the analogy of natively used forms of English and thus lesser degree of cultural collocationally deviant forms like *black money, black market*. Lastly, he discussed those forms that are non-deviant but are "culturally bound" like *government.*

As far as the discussion of the sources is concerned, we notice that the meaning is derived with the 'Transference of Context' firstly as for example in the case of an Indian plot or taboo being employed. Transfer of L1 meanings to L2 items keeping in mind socio-political context for which he gives the example of the word *phul shauya* in the sentence "on this*flower bed* her seven children were born" where the *flower bed* denotes the meaning of 'nuptial bed' and here we see that a word restricted to the functioning of gardening is employed and its meaning extended to this context. Thirdly and lastly, he mentions "transfer of form context component", those contextual units that are typically Indian and are not normally used in L1 varieties yet may not seem unusual. For this he states examples of words like *You eater of your masters, may thy womb be dead, bow thy forehead, fall at your feet, let the sindoor mark ever trace the parting of your hair, king of pearls.*

DATA COLLECTION AND FINDINGS

As I began collecting data from the Indian English novels *Nectar in a Sieve* by Kamala Markandaya, V.S. Naipaul's*A House for Mr. Biswas* and R.K. Narayan's*The Dark Room, The Guide* and *The Financial Expert*, the first and the most important thing that I came across was the various adaptations and mentions of the lexical innovations by the writers. The Indianisms that have special meanings in the Indian culture may be termed contextually determined Indianisms. These may be deviant in the sense that they involve Indianisms that are unintelligible to the users of other varieties of English.

These involve transference of meaning from regional languages to Indian English.Words like *pirha, pattal, tilak, coir, sari, charkha, dhoti, pooja, swami, purohit* are some of the words that we come across that indicated transference of meaning from the regional languages to Indian English.

As far as words those words that may not be essentially transference but are however are colloquially unusual concerned, we find words like*curry leaves, bullock proof, carry-all, killjoy, spitfire*, *caste-mark, caste dinner, nose-screw, waist-thread, separate eating* that were used with great potency.

As far as the words found with analogy of natively used forms of English and thus lesser degree of cultural collocationally deviant forms were concerned, words like *bunch of keys, love of God, black money, bedding rolls, twice born, bride price, eating leaves, procession throne, cousin sister, cousin brother,alms-bowl, ankle-bells, bangle-man, betel-bag, bangled-widow* were found.

Lastly, as far as the words that were essentially culturally bound were concerned, we find words like *avatar, ashram, rice-eating ceremony, rice-initiating ceremony, marriage-season, bride showing, seventh month ceremony, bridal bath, blessing ceremony, forehead-marking, marriage drums, invitation rice, red-paste trident, nine stranded thread, cow-worship, bridal bath,* and *bath milk.*

These "Indianisms" were mostly those that belong to the context of material objects, flora and fauna, socio-religious and political systems, relations of caste and social hierarchy, speech functions and social roles and culture.

Some of these have also been considered as Hybrid Indianisms-that have at least one element from the Indian forms along with other element from English like *nazul-land,* and *police-jamadar, betel-bag* and *nose-screw.* Not only did I manage to easily associate to these to my knowledge of the vernaculars but my interest became keener as far as the enthusiasm to read these was concerned thus.

Coming to 'Contextualization' or what Kachru calls as "Transfer of Socio-cultural Context", a lot of seemed to be based on the very same. As far as the 'transference of context' is concerned we find a lot of instances of them depicted throughout the various Indian English Novels chosen. *Mr. Biswas being drawn into the household of Tulsi* (AHFMB)*, Biswas in childhood has been asked to keep off from water as it could cause him great misery* (AHFMB)*, the Indian dowry system and the role of the wife and her duties to her husband that she believed she was destined to fulfil no matter what (*NIAS).

There are also instances where we can seem to understand the meaning attempted at being portrayed of the transfer of social and cultural contextual from L1 to L2 keeping the context in mind-*Rukmani keeping the lingam locket in between her breast so as to help her develop fertility*(NIAS)*, the doctor 'helping' Rukmani to conceive*(NIAS*), due to fasting a person being born in Raju and later developing into a Mahatma (TG).* As far as the 'transfer of form context component' is concerned; *touch your feet (NIAS), bow your head (NIAS), blessed by hovel with the good dust of your feet (NIAS), oh you prostitute of the wind, we are lickers of your feet (NIAS*)*, all the wishes of the worshiper of the regional god being worshiped(TFE),the very names employed to the characters and the very concept of traditional south Indian joint family(TFE).*

Thus, by employing the model proposed by Kachru an attempt has been made to look at Indian English from the perspective of World English-es as it is then that we would be able to incorporate an unbiased opinion of the very same. This paper thus successfully analyzes Indian English as essentially the "process of Indianization of English" and tries to understand the what is so 'essentially Indian' in Indian English. The processes of 'Lexical Extension and Meanings in Deviation' in the 'Socio-cultural Contexts' as suggested by Kachru that can truly help us understand the essential 'Indianness' associated to Indian English is attempted to in this paper.

The data to support the claim is collected from the works *Nectar in a Sieve* by Kamala Markandaya, V.S. Naipaul's*A House for Mr. Biswas* and R.K. Narayan's*The Dark Room, The Guide* and *The Financial Expert.* An attempt is hence made here to de-couple the

prevailing ideology of Indian English from being considered as being an incompetent variety of English to stable, effective and rather a complete and stable language.

We realize that essentially incorporating these features in the text, novel and poems of English not only is the Indian reader able to correlate to these but he is also able to represent what is not essentially 'Indian' in English, by the essential nativization of English that has very successfully lead to the 'Indianization of English.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bhatt. Rakesh M. "*World* Englishes". Annual Review of Anthropology, Vol. 30, (2001) P-526.

Crystal. David. *English as a Global Language*. Cambridge. UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997. Print.

Derrida, Jacques. *Monolingualism of the Other*. Patrick Mensah. California: Stanford University Press, 1996. Print.

Halliday. M.A.K. *Explorations in the Functions of Language*. London: Arnold, 1973.Print.

Braj B. Kachru.*The Indianness in Indian English*, <i>WORD</i>, 21:3, 391-410, DOI:10.1080/00437956. 1965.11435436. Downloaded from http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00 437956.1965.11435436. (22-03-2017, 12:12)

Kachru. Braj. B. *The Indianization of English: the English Language in India.* New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983. Print.

Kachru. Braj. B. *The Other Tongue: English across Cultures.* Second Edition. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996. Print.

Markandaya. Kamala. *Nectar in a Sieve.* Second Edition. New Delhi: Penguin, 2010. Print.

Naipaul.V.S. *A House for Mr. Biswas*. Oxford: Picador, 2011. Print.

Narayan.R.K. *The Financial Expert.* New Delhi: Indian Thought Publication, 2001. Print.

Narayan.R.K. *The Guide.* New Delhi: Penguin, 2006. Print.

INTERNET SOURCES:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indian_English (21-03-2017, 17:34)

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Englishes (21-03-2017, 23:23)

http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED132854.pdf (14-04-2017, 23:27)

IMAGE SOURCE:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Englishes (18-04-2017, 21:01)

ABBREVIATIONS USED FOR BOOK NAMES:

AHFMB-*A House for Mr. Biswas*

NIAS-*Nectar in a Sieve*

TG-*The Guide*

TFE-*The Financial Expert*

TDR- *The Dark Room*