

# THE JOURNEY OF ENGLISH IN INDIA WHILE BECOMING AN INDIAN LANGUAGE FROM A EUROPEAN LANGUAGE – A REVIEW

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### ABSTRACT:

*English is a European language. It came to India when the British came here. It was with the Royal Charter given to English East India Company to do business in India by the then Queen of England, that the English for the first time felt the urgency of having some Indians with them who would know the language of English or at least be able to get themselves involved in some basic communication in English. They felt that this would smoothen the process of operations in India and also make themselves more acceptable in India. Thus, started the journey of English as a language in India and which has been going on still now. With the passage of time English grew to be one of the most important languages of India.*

**KEY WORDS:** Origin of English, European language, India, Vernacular Language.

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## INTRODUCTION

The main purpose of literature review is to get an idea about prior researches and to save time for mankind and the civilization.

### **Review of Literatures Related to Topic of Research or Related Topics:**

Akshay A. Yardi of Karnataka University wrote an article titled “The Origin, Development and Current Status of English Language in India”. In this article the author wrote that English language has been one of the most wonderful gifts given to the people of this country. English has helped Indians as a window to the outside world and a gateway to knowledge. The writer wrote that the study of this language makes us easily employable in the professional world. This article would have been even more absorbing if light would have been thrown towards the origin of English language in India.

On 2 February, 2016, Dr. Rajender Pandra wrote a research paper titled “English Language Teaching in India: A Review”. In this paper the writer wrote that liberalization of the Indian economy ushered in all kinds of reasons to learn and research on English. Although it is a foreign language, it has become more or less an Indian language. It occupies the state of an associate official language. It is used throughout India as a link language. The author concluded by saying that not much historical evidence is there about the origin of English language in India but there is a necessity to do so. In order to make this article even more interesting the author could have written about the arrival of the British in India and introduction of English language as a result of it.

The journey of English as a language in India started with the granting of the Charter by Queen Elizabeth 1 in the year 1600 to the British East India Company. This Charter gave the permission to the East India Company to trade within the boundaries of India without any hesitation and does all things necessary for the establishment of smooth trade. The establishment of ports in coastal areas like Surat, Bombay (nowadays known as Mumbai), Calcutta (nowadays known as Kolkata) and Madras (nowadays known as Chennai) helped in the spreading of English as a language in this country.

When the British were ruling India, in those historic times India was one of the linguistically most diverse regions in the world. So the East India Company felt the urgency of having a common language for official communication. They felt an urgent need for so. So public instruction began in India in 1830s during the rule of the British East India Company. However, the situation changed in 1835. Due to some internal problems the British had to introduce Persian as the language for official communication. But many failed to accept this. Lord Macaulay was the foremost of them. So he introduced western concepts in education in India. He was the man who thought that when western concepts would be added to education, then English will have to be used as the language of communication to best explain those concepts. At this critical juncture Lord Macaulay played a major role for the replacement of Persian by English. He was the main man who eased the process of introduction of English as a discipline of study in schools, colleges and universities. He supported the training of Indians in English in order to produce some English speaking Indians. Lord Macaulay's main objective was to produce some Indians who would be able to help the British in their effort to rule India. It was during this phase that for the first time in history that English speaking Indians were being recruited as teachers in various schools and colleges. Throughout the 1830s, 40s and 50s a revolution came to Indian education system. Many lower level and higher level schools were set up across various districts in India. In these schools the medium of instruction was not necessarily in English. It was mainly vernacular based. But some subjects were taught in English only. 1857 was a very important year in the event of origin of English in India. It was seen that the schools that were set up in various corners of India were producing school pass outs who could speak a little bit in broken English. So there was urgency felt by the British government about the higher education of these students. The result was setting up of universities in cities like Bombay, Calcutta and Madras. These universities were not set up to provide higher education to the Indians. They were set up by the British to produce some Indians who would be educated in English. These universities were set up following the systems and patterns followed in University of London. In all these universities set up in Bombay, Calcutta and Madras the medium of instruction was strictly English.

During the rule of the British Raj in India from 1858 to 1947, English slowly and gradually gained importance. The absorption of the Indians in civil services also contributed towards its growing importance. When the British were

leaving India and India was becoming independent, English seemed to be the only language that was being used by the Indians consistently for official purposes.

After independence attempts were made to declare Hindi as the only national language of India. Many researchers and historians felt that due to the protests lodged from Tamil Nadu and other non-Hindi speaking regions of India, the Government of India wanted to give time to herself. That is why, English was declared as the language for all official work. This was the policy of the Government of India till 1965. English was surprisingly retained as a very important language and the language for all official work. This attitude of the government added to the importance of English even after India gained independence. Interestingly even after 1965 the opposition from non-Hindi speaking parts of the country was very strong because of which Hindi could not be declared as the national and most important language of the country. So English Language Amendment Bill declared English to be an associate language.

Since that period the status of English as a language in India remains unchanged. It continues to be a very important language. But it has been argued that it is the language of the elite classes of the society. According to some sociologists the two hundred and fifty years of British rule in India have left an indelible mark on the minds of many Indians which they have not still been able to overcome. They associate English language as the language of the masters. They take pride in communicating in this language. That has helped the survival and maintenance of English language in this country.

In 1947 when India gained independence only a few hundred thousand Indians could communicate in English. The percentage came to 0.1%. What is thoroughly surprisingly is that according to the 2001 census 12.6% of Indians know English. This census also told us that approximately 86 million Indians said that English was their second language while 39 million Indians said that English was their third language.

In 2005 a survey was conducted by the Government of India. It came to be known as the Human Development Survey. In this survey 41,554 male respondents participated. Out of that 72% of men did not speak any English. The number came to 29,918. 28% of respondents spoke at least some English and 5% only spoke fluent English. Among female respondents 83% were not speaking any English, 17% were speaking some English and 3% were speaking in English fluently.

The statistics of District Information System for Education of National University of Education Planning and Administration said that enrollments in English medium schools increased by 50% from 2008-09 to 2013-14. The number of English medium schools increased in India in the same period from 15 million to 29 million.

According to the 2011 census 10.6% of Indians spoke English as their first language. 0.02% of Indians spoke English as their first language. 6.8% spoke English as their second language. 3.8% reported English as their third language. All these statistics proved that English is the second most widely spoken language in this country after Hindi.

Aneesa Bashir of Mewar University in Rajasthan, India wrote an article titled "English in India: A Historic Perspective". It was published in volume IV, issue 1 of International Journal of English Language, Literature and Humanities. In this article the writer wrote that English as a language stood in India against all odds. English is the language of the British. It came to India with the hands of the British Empire which was the biggest and strongest colonial power in the world at one point of time. Its strength and acceptability grew from the fact that it was connected with the British Empire. In fact, that is the reason that English became one of the most important languages in the world as well as in India. The author wrote that English crossed the English Channel way back and became more than a colonial jargon. It is no more than a regional European language. It is now widely spoken all over the world. It has gained popularity everywhere because of its history, literature, lucidity, ease of expression etc. It is just not looked as a language today. It is looked as a bridging material across continents, cultures, countries, regions and diversities. Its richness has successfully placed it across all spheres of life. English has become the language of national policies, research, international communication, industry, business, experiments and what not. Nowadays every activity of our life revolves around this language. It is the symbol of better education, brighter future, richer culture, progress, pride and higher intellect.

The author linked the introduction of English in India to the commencement of the rule of the British in India. She wrote about Lord Macaulay's contribution to promote English as a language in India. Topics like setting up of Indian universities and production of Indians who knew English have been incorporated within the ambits of this study. However, to make this even more interesting the author could have written about the condition of the Indian society in detail when English was becoming a part of the Indian society. The British wanted to push English in India and the Indians accepted it. The question that arises in this context is that why did the Indians accept English. English is a foreign language and at that time the society was even more orthodox and closed minded towards English. Then why is it that the society did not show any reluctance to accept English. In fact, why is that they were so open minded in accepting English? An incorporation of these points would have made this even more interesting.

Lord Curzon was a very important personality who contributed heavily towards the origin and growth of English as a language in India. He appeared in India at a very important time frame. India at that time was heavily under the colonial influence of the British. This was the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century when severe flood and famine had hit India. Moreover, the problems of epidemic of Plague were creating havoc in the society. The spirits of the country as a whole were very low. But with the formation of Indian National Congress in 1885 the situation started to improve. Feeling of nationalism was being promoted by the then leaders of the Congress like Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das, Dadabhai Naoroji, Gokhale and many others. Lord Curzon arrived in India in the year 1899. He was the Viceroy of India. In an attempt to control the feeling of nationalism he diverted the attention of the country towards education. He started organizing the education sector of India and thereby making it fully dependent on English language. His first attempt was a conference in Simla (today known as Shimla) in 1901. 150 resolutions were passed in that conference covering all stages of education in India. The issue of using English as the medium of instruction was disguised in these resolutions. He was the first man in India to focus on teacher training, payment of teachers on a contractual basis, improvement of the curriculum etc. Curzon was a very shrewd strategist. He knew that it would be difficult to control the feeling of nationalism that was being promoted by the leaders of Congress. With the emergence of leaders like Gandhi and Nehru, Curzon took a different route. He wanted to prove to the Indians that he was making an attempt to promote their educational standards and thereby make them at par with the British citizens of Great Britain. So he was introducing English and making its bases strong in education. In reality what Lord Curzon was aiming to do was promote English and make Indians dependent on this language so that they would accept the supremacy of the British. That would suppress the nationalistic feelings of the Indians and make them even more dependent on the British. They would lose their education, culture and systems and accept those of the British only. However, Curzon could not implement his plans perfectly. The emergence of the new leaders of India and with the rise of Gandhi everything changed. Moreover, the partition of Bengal in 1905, not only created an upheaval of nationalistic feelings in Bengal but also in other parts of the country. Thus, English continued to flourish as a language in India but it was unable to disturb the roots of Indian education and languages.

#### **INFERENCE FROM THE REVIEW OF LITERATURE:**

This is the chapter in which literature related to the origin of English as a language in India and its journey even after the British period has been reviewed. Effort has been made to understand the reasons for the origin of English as a language in India and some other related topics. These reviews of literature prove that there is an urgent need of this research to explore the said title. That would reveal a lot of historical aspects regarding English and its usage in India. Since English has influenced the Indian society as a language, that there is an urgent need to go ahead with this research.

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