

Towards the Anti-Canon A Brief Focus on Newspaper English in India

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Focus

This paper aims at studying the factors behind the new expression in newspaper English in India in terms of words, structures and meaning contents. It tries to establish the fact that there are various factors that govern the act of writing in newspaper English. The writer deliberately and consciously coins the new alternate medium.

Basic Observations

1. The English press in India with its various sections—editorial, feature articles, sports, business, entertainment, advertisements—has been a great source of influence towards enriching English in the Indian context.
2. The Standard English does not cater to the needs of everyone. It has been elitist and purely academic and formal. The new 'Englishes' can fulfill the requirements of the semi-literate, the less urbanite, and the mass.
3. One newspaper advertisement reads: *Khul Ja Sim Sim Offer*. In fact *Khul Ja Sim Sim* is a popular proverb in Indian context. It confirms that the English press in India is bilingual and at times multilingual, incorporating various regional tongues.
4. Language of newspaper is catchy and trendy. In the sports column we often see words like 'Maharaj' (stands for Sourav Ganguly, the Indian cricket captain), 'the Bengal Tiger' (also for the same person), Ton Dul Kar (for Tendulkar), 'Rawalpindi Express' (for Shoaib Akhtar, a bowler from Rawalpindi), Aussies, Kiwis, Windies etc. that stand for respective cricketing countries and players.

5. The writer's interaction is multifarious. He switches to the national and domestic tone. The words like 'Kargilonomics' (the economic situation and scandal associated with the Kargil War), Hinglish (mixture of Hindi and English) sprout from the writer's identity rooted in the national soil. Similarly, a journalist, Jug Suraiya regularly used the term 'gormint', 'Rabri gormint' (Frequently in *The Times of India*) as it is pronounced in Bihar. This is purely an acceptance of the regional tone.

CONDITIONS INFLUENCING THE WRITER

There are various factors contributing to the growth of a separate class of writing, a distinct variety of English with traits of Indianisation. The writer is supposed to respond to a host of issues and medium relating to the respective regional, local needs. His/her language bears the stamp of a semi literate rustic. Very often he breaks away with the rigidity imposed by the Queen's English.

(a) *Socio-cultural needs.*

'Amma' in our newspaper columns invariably stands for J. Jayalalitha, the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu. Similar is the use of 'babu', 'bhadralok' dealing with news items of West Bengal and Orissa. Newspapers have coined terms which would later gain acceptance officially; Kolkata (Jug Suraiya, *The Times of India*, 25 October 1998) 'Bongdom' and 'Bongness' are the other terms used by the same columnist.

(b) *Linguistic Influence*

The mother tongue has a sound influence on the writer's English. There are newspaper titles, clippings with distinct mother tongue influence of the interrogative: Sourav's boys second best? (*The Times of India*, 4 November 2001).

Earlier, linguists have tried to see the need for such deviations arising out of 'formal' factor as found in Weinrich's Socio-cultural setting (Weinrich 1968) and Kachru's contextual approach (Kachru 1983). Labru emphasises on the orthographically phonemic nature of indigenous languages unlike English (Labru 1986). In this connection John Holloway says:

English in India is generally what I was being told it was all the time, not

a foreign but a second language; one which the Indians build into their culture and through which that culture itself, in its modern form, in part built... in a hundred different ways, it is something for home use in the sub-continent (Holloway 1959).

The following examples from Labru certify the above statements:

- (a) Thank you very much indeed (Excessive Politeness).
- (b) I am extremely grateful.
- (c) At the feet of our parents.
- (d) I beg to submit.
- (e) Our most beloved ladies and gentlemen.
- (f) Charmingly beautiful.
- (g) The happiest lad on earth.

(c) *Technology*

The use of computers, internet and other technological boom have been productive in terms of the English language. 'Swadeshi enterprise', writes F.K.R. Mehta (*TOI*, 7 November 1998). There are also other expressions like 'desi entrepreneur'.

There have been words like 'telethon' (from television-marathon) and faxathon (an unending stream of faxes). Similarly 'talkathon' is used as an advertisement for a cellphone referring to unlimited talk on phone (*TOI*, 26 November 2001) 'e-lancers' stands for free agents who are electronically linked for different projects.

(d) *Interdisciplinary approach*

Journalism is both an art and a profession. Registers of different disciplines merge and create a peculiar yet highly communicative expression. We cite an example of one such use where the discipline of politics, poetry (being alliterative) and political satire (the nexus between the two leaders) manifest together:

'Basu and Bahu, Congress Coat and Communist Tail' (Shastri Rama Chandran, *TOI*, 13 November 1998).

'Biharisation of politics' refers to criminalisation of politics. This is a case of putting existing notions of society into rhetoric.

e-mail that comes from the discipline of electronics stands for an example for other expressions like e-speech, e-text, e-ticket, e-money and so on.

(e) *Influence of Mother tongue*

To make communication compatible to the mother tongue structure, the news writer employs its rule and strikes an economy of expression.

'Moore babies' is the title of a news item that informs about Hollywood actress Julianne Moore giving birth to a child (*The Times of India*, 30 October 2001). The L₁ structure 'Baccha diya', 'Bachcha Paida Kiya' influences it. Similarly many of the newspaper headings take the interrogative form influenced by the L₁ method.

Life is beautiful? (*TOI*, 27 November 1999).

Don't have a valentine? *TOI*, 13 February 2000.

Lucky you? (*TOI*, 13 February 2000)

Want to be a part of US based IT company? (*The Telegraph* 21 February 2000)

(f) *Globalisation*

In the economic sphere 'globalisation' stands for 'free market' situation worldwide making the consumer choose a product worldwide of multinational companies. So it is a freedom of availability. Language cannot remain aloof to such a major trend in economy. So the journalistic discourse refreshes and reshapes words to suit to their need as we find in news items as well as advertisements. Depending upon subjects i.e. French, German, American, the writer uses English accordingly, not necessarily the British variety. And it is also coloured in Indian context pertaining to the need faced by the writer.

'Dunno what it's about me, I generate controversy'

(Manisha Koirala's statement as written in *The Times of India*, 30 October 2001).

The reporter also writes 'wannashines' (want to shine, the stars who want to rise) in the same column. Such words attract people of all professions alike. The new commercial brand of our society easily identifies with such catchy expressions. Here are a few words that sound trendy.

- | | |
|--|---|
| Accessorise | <i>The Telegraph</i> , 24 October 1999 |
| Citifed housewives | <i>The Times of India</i> , 22 October 1999 |
| (Pejorative, city bred and city mania) | |
| Cybersquatter | <i>TOI</i> , 18 October 1999 |
| (illegal display of VIP's personal life by internet) | |

Celebs *The Times of India*, 5 November 1999

(Celebrity, Stars)

Digitised *TOI*, 5 October 1999

(Digital technology working everywhere)

In fact there are plenty of such usage in our newspapers for the purpose of economy, flexibility and decoration. It is the rule of the market that dictates media language. The world today has dependent markets and interdependent economies. Just like the words 'Hinglish', 'Punjlish' we often get in touch with 'indipop' (a variety of Indian pop music in mixture, *Indian Express*, 25 June 1999).

(g) *Assertiveness*

Writing in English has been global and local simultaneously in order to cope with the cosmopolitan identity of the writer. *The Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary* has incorporated quite a good number of words of Indian origin. The journals are in a rush to make Indian English popular. We are exposed to 'Englishes' today rather than keeping affinity with any particular 'Standard English'.

Sudipta Basu cites about the authentication of Indian slang, college chat and professional communication of modern life on a column in *The Telegraph* (5 December 1998):

Fandu concept tha be. Total enthu se film dekha. Ladki kya powder thi.

The mixing of code is just one aspect of the statement alone. The other important observation is that of India, local or a group specific meaning of the words such as 'fandu', 'enthu' and 'powder'.

Basu says this is the 'private lingo' and it is towards reinventing the English language. He says, 'Indians writing in English have invented a new idiom and the Veejays on television have made Hinglish fashionable. Never mind if the academic world is yet to gather this phenomenon within its fold.'

Certain situational influence works in a fertile manner towards the growth of a language. The word 'Saffron' stands for sacrifice, honesty and is traditionally associated with saints, seers and is in itself a colour. But in newspapers it denotes a particular ideology in politics, the RSS, BJP or VHP mindset. So the meaning has been pejorative over the years.

Sample Entries

Items

1. unputdownable

Sources

The Telegraph, 3 July 1999.

Context: The unputdownable.

Process: It first adopts the process of affixation.

Put down - Put downable (suffix-'able')

In such a process the phrasal verb becomes an adjective.

Again the process of affixation (prefixing 'un') is at work for the change.

Put downable (prefixing 'un') unputdownable

It gives us two words; 'Put downable' and 'unputdownable'.

2. (i) Marketisation S.K. Pillai, *Indian Express*
25 June 1999
- (ii) Siachenisation Rohit Nair, *The Asian Age*
30 June 1999
- (iii) Customisation Editorial, *TOI*, 3 December 1999
- (iv) Genderise:

Context: 'Don't Genderise
the Women's Bill'.

Editorial, 7 July 1998
The Times of India

The Process: Affixation

It follows the model of words like 'globalisation',
'commercialisation' etc.

	<u>ise (Suffix)</u>	ion (Suffix)
Market -	Marketise -	Marketisation
(N)	(V)	(N)

	ion (Suffix)
Customise -	Customisation
(V)	(N)

	ise (Suffix)	ion (suffix)
Siachen -	Siachenise -	Siachenisation
a glacier	(V)	(N)
(N)		

	ise (suffix)	
Gender -	Genderise -	also 'genderisation'
	(V)	can come out of it.

So in this double suffixing process we get a number of words
to be used both as new verbs and new nouns.

(v) Museumise Shiv Visvanathan,
TOI, 13 September 1998

In the same process as above this word is generated. It can also be used as a noun as in 'museumisation'.

	Museum	-	Museumise	-	seumisation
	(N)		(V)		(N)
3.	Manmohanomics	(i)	<i>The Economic Times</i>		
			23 July 1996 and frequently		
			quoted in a number of		
			newspapers.		
		(ii)	27 October 1998, Interview with		
			Manmohan Singh,		
			<i>The Times of India</i> .		
	Swaminomics		A regular column in <i>The Times of</i>		
	(Swaminathan Ankalesh		<i>India</i> frequently used as the		
	Aiyar, a leading		column on the economic scenario.		
	Economist)				
	Kargilonomics		Ashim Chatterjee,		
			<i>The Asian Age</i> , 30 June 1999.		
	Naidunomics		Editorial, <i>Times of India</i>		
			18 October 1999.		

The Process: Blending.

The active use of all these processes here has the credit of the Indian hands using them for their use and contribution in terms of new vocabulary content.

		His economic Policy	
Manmohan Singh	_____	Manmohanomics	
(The Ex.Finance	(+Economics)	(a particular trend in	
Minister)		the Economic Policy)	
at a time			
N			
Swaminathan	The column he	(+ Economics)	
(Ankalesh Aiyar)	<i>writes on the</i>		
	economy		
(N)		Swaminomics	
(N)		(what he says about	
		economy)	
Kargil	(The economic	Kargilonomics	
(Place name)	situation prevailing	(N)	
(N)	due to the war)		
	+ Economics		
	because of it		

There is every possibility of a word like 'Kargilisation' which

could set the Indian figurative use of the word to highlight the war scenario.

These words are formed out of proper names. But since in all languages so many words have come from important names, events, places, it is also a fertile area in Indian standard to use the possibility extensively for new words.

4. Words given below Editorial column,
characterise Indian *The Times of India*, 12 August 1999
assertion of colloquialism.
Maroing -(suffixing 'ing' to an Indian word)
Jharoing- (suffixing 'ing' to an Indian word)
Process: suffixation
Meaning:
Maroing means misappropriation of funds.
Jharoing means giving a jhar (Indian word) – Someone being
bashed up.

5. Great Anarch *The Times of India*, Editorial,
3 August 1999

Process: 'Anarch' (N) comes from
'anarchy' or 'anarchic'.

(N) (Adj.)

And it is done by 'back formation'

It is also influenced by the word

'Monarch'(from Monarchy).

If 'Monarch' is used, why cannot
anarch'?

6. Kleptocracy
(i) Srikant Gupta, *The Times of India* (5 August 1999)
(ii) Souvik Chakraverti *TOI*, 22 September 1999

Process:

The words which are already in
use are 'Kleptomania' and 'Democracy',
'Autocracy' etc.

And the new word comes by blend.

Kleptomania + Democracy=Kleptocracy

The term is again repeated in the same paper by Souvik Chakraverti
on 27 May 2001 in an article "Hoobbes' Mistake" as 'Kleptocracies'.

7. Curiouser and curiouser *The Times of India*, 4 August
1999

Suffixation takes place to create the requisite word to meet the
growing need.

Curious - er (suffix) curiouser.

Apart from the title, the news item also uses a sentence like '...the controversy is getting curiouser and curiouser'.

- 8 (i) Netizen (i) *TOI*, 10 August 1999 and used very frequently in all English dailies.
- (ii) 'Netizens frown upon Jaya's moves' (ii) *TOI*, 9 April 1999.

The process is that of clipping and blend which take place between two words:

- a. Net actually has come from internet. It is a case of clipping.
 b. Net and the citizen using Internet - Netizen (N)

A new noun is formed by blending.

- (iii) Netizen *The Times of India*, 5 October 1999.
9. X Press Engine, *The Times of India*, 13 August 1999, LML Vespa advertisement, also appears on 26 August 1999.
- X-treme Thrills *TOI*, 19 September 1999, Title of an article by R. Edwin Sudhir.
- Steam X Press (Advertisement of Usha Iron), *Filmfare*, July 1997).

The process of syncopation [ones - once], loss of vowel [at home - a to me] comes to active use in these cases and acronym formation also has a role to play here.

10. Suited, booted, tie wearing gentry, *TOI*, 15 August 1999.
 By suffixation new adjectives and past participles are formed.
- | | | |
|------|--------------|--------|
| Suit | -ed (suffix) | Suited |
| (N) | | |
| Boot | -ed (suffix) | booted |
| (N) | | |

The writer does not use the word 'tied' but retains 'tie wearing' since such a use may confuse the reader with the usual meaning of the word 'tied' (in chains or thread etc.).

11. (i) Winnability Editorial, *TOI*, 17 August 1999
 Context : 'Women lack the winnability factor'
- (ii) Winnability Trap, Title of an essay, *TOI*, 10. 01.1998
- (iii) Winnable, Fightable K. Subramanyam, 'Linkages and Leverage, Diplomacy in the

- Nuclear Era', *The Times of India*,
28 September 1998.
- iv. Winnability factor Editorial, *The Times of India*, 13
October 1999
- v. Winnability Ajay Mehra in 'Bizarre in Bihar'
The Hindu, 17 May 2001

The term 'winnable' is also again used by *The Hindu* as discussed ahead.

By suffixation such words are used.

Win (able) suffix winnable -(ity) - winnability

Fight (able) suffix - Fightable.

12. (i) Stop Damming *The Statesman*, 14 August 1999.

The process of suffixation; 'ing' suffix added to the noun 'Dam'; gives a verb in which 'Damming' means constructing a Dam. The dictionary only talks of the phrasal verb 'Dam up' and not 'damming'.

Example (in dictionary): Dam the river up and 'Dam' as a noun. So Damming is a new usage.

- (ii) Electrify and be *Times of India*, 29 October 1998
Dammed (Interview with Ex-Power
Minister, P.R. Kumarmangalam by
Lalita Panicker.

13. (i) Talibanise
context: ...grave threat Editorial, *The Times of India*,
centred in Talibanised 21 September 1999
Pakistan and Afghanistan
Talibanising *TOI*, 24 November 2001/25
November 2001.

- ii. Talibanisation
context: ...Talibanisation Editorial, *TOI*, 22 September 1999
of Pakistan...
- iii. Talibanised
Process : Affixation. Dilip Chitre,
Times of India, 28 September 1999.

By suffixing 'ise' to the terrorist group known as Taliban in contemporary times, a new word is created which can replace or stand for terrorism, gradual growth of insurgency and some such ideas.

- 14 Adultescent Rasmmeez Z Ahmed, *TOI*,
Screenager 24 August 1998.

The columnist explains that a person (an adult) who is addicted to

youth culture is an adulescent and a computer addicted teenager is known to be a screenager.

- The Process :
- (i) Compounding:
 - Just like Teen + ager = Teenager
 - Screen + ager = Screenager
 - (ii) Process: Blend:
 - Adolescent + Adult = Adulescent

CONCLUSION

Writers as well as readers are subject to numerous factors, affiliations. They are tendentious and subjective. There has been a movement deliberately to explore new boundaries of a language. Language is used as a product and its saleable property is at the focus of newspaper writing. There has been tremendous effort on the part of the writers to cater to all kinds of readers, especially people who find strict academic notion of a language too conservative and restrictive. The readers are crazy for new knowledge, ideas, fresh language for variety and fashion. English is no more the formal, institutionalised medium, it is anti elitist in the newspapers, cooked for the mass and takes a flexible shape to accommodate all kinds of aspirations of the trendy modern reader.

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