

### THE CHANGING LANGSCAPE OF ENGLISH

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Understatement and subtlety was the British style, but today the English language is bold and blatant, young and colourful and acts as a catalyst in effective communication. English today is the language of the youth 'hot', 'cool', /chill/ rather than 'impeccable', or 'flamboyant/ It wouldn't be inappropriate to say that we have indeed come a long way from being captive under the British yoke; today we have captured their language in all its new nuances, their accent, spelling, pronunciation etc. and give ourselves the credit of nativising it. Certainly we have still preserved the queen's language in the confines of our academia, and use it to suit our requirements in our boardrooms and on international platforms.

Radio Mirchi is an entertainment channel with music as its core. The base line for all the channels reads, 'it's hof. This channel instructs and delights with snippets, useful medical info, popular music, city happenings, and interviews with celebrities, advertisements of films and products and lots more in an effective, functional and simplistic language. Just anyone can reach out and talk to them on any issue unmindful of their inadequacy in communication, be it in their own mother tongue or English. Code mixing, has made English language less formidable and communicative/ resulting in a new

medium 'inglish'- a merrymix of their mother tongue with smattering of English words, sans grammar and rules of syntax. The evolution of this new indigenous English in now used in the print media as well. The new language that has hit the stands today is no longer cerebral but of the heart/ objectivity has given room to subjectivity.

The stiff, stuffy and flatulent Victorian English is now brushed aside as pedantic affectations, and the operating language is slick, interactive and personalized.

The paper attempts to show the emergence of the new trend or English language, replete with the semantic changes, neologisms and code-mixing in the print and electronic media.

"The conventional wisdom has it that language evolves progressively and vocabularies hone itself with the passage of time". We are witnessing the transformation today. Any English usage text is a kind of paradox, it seeks to give rigidity to what is essentially flexible and provides a tested and accurate standard for what is better measured with a rough working rule. Despite the 'democratic freedom of the language' mere was a regret in the fact that at one period



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there was a kind of autocracy, not absolute but authoritative in English. It ends, that is as far as the pundits, and the self-appointed guardians of the language are concerned. "After all the formal rules of grammar can be taught, but not the indefinable spirit that underlies usage".<sup>1</sup> —G. H. Vallins

Adieu to Johnson and Bos well with all their complex syntax and their profusion of obscure diction. The custodians of the Queen's English could cry hoarse on the falling standards and the flouting of professional ethics, but let us accept the fact that the informal language has come in like a breath of fresh air to the younger generation.

Gone are the times when people swore by the English dailies and vouched for the authenticity of its news reporting.

The editorial in those days was virtually incomprehensible to the lesser mortals and required a dictionary for an understanding of the diction, which smacked of erudition. The English language has come to us as a colonial legacy, which has been carefully preserved and nurtured for a long time, but with the changing social and technological trend, the language has been undergoing a metamorphic change to cope with the accelerating changes in every field.

It is interesting to note Sanyal's observation: "The Victorian English was becoming a stumbling block, with its foggy writing, the string of parenthetical clauses, and Johnsonese, making editorials

of English language the breeding ground for abstractities and circumlocution. The fact remains that Indians equate impressive English with incomprehensible English. Clumsy Victorian English hangs like a dead albatross around each educated Indian's neck". The dynamics have changed now in this era of technology. It has ushered in a new genre of language where communication is more important than ornate expressions.

Today the language used in newspapers and magazines is not cerebral, but can appeal to your heart, on a one to one basis. Objectivity is out, and the subjective view is in. The informality is making it more accessible to the young and old, everyone alike.

English in journalism has become reader friendly and can cater to any kind of reader, those who skim and those who scan. Information on just any topic is available whether it is the abstruse philosophy that is simplified and presented as 'mind over matter' or the world of medicine made intelligible to even a lay person, for e.g. giving information about a dreaded topic like heart ailments comes to us as 'yen dil mange more' at once making it light hearted and easy to approach. This is the new trend of 'HINGLISH' that has changed the hue of the language making it commercially viable.

Print media and advertising campaigns have brought about the revolution of personalised English, simple and at its creative best. Journalistic English sans frills serves the purpose in striking a



responsive chord. Given the time constraints, people prefer information on a platter to facilitate perusal in a jiffy. The readers do not have patience for anything ambiguous or in the Addisonian sense of 'much might be said on both sides'. They want a language quick on the eye and mind.

Techniques of journalism are not a monopoly of a few who have mastered the language. Today's newspaper's buzz word is participative journalism. This has revolutionized the whole ball game of news reporting, which has directly impacted the language.

Observe the styles of Bachi Karkariya in one of her columns, for her easy adaptation of Hinglish, Kaun Banega Corruptpati?

"Anna-ji, Hazare saal jiyo. You waved the magician's wand, and dared to say 'Jantar Mantar Chhoo' to the corruption that has swamped and strangulated us.

May the non-force be with you. And may the sips of juice you took that momentous Saturday squeeze out the institutionalised evil that has shamed our fair land, diluted the growth story and resulted in the global cooling towards our much-touted achievements. Well, you have unleashed a climate change on that score, and we must hail it. Heartily.

Look Pal, I'm not going to join the gripes over your Jan Lokpal Bill or make a case in defence of that too-clever Kapil Sibal who seems to be annoying you even more than the beat cop's hafta. No, Sir, I

have no quarrel with your crusade. My problem is with some of those who have leapt on to your platform. Swamis and sants who are neither, and several others who may wax eloquent on morality, but whose own personal ethics are on the wane. If not quite eclipsed/'Bachi Kakaria, The Times of India.

Yet another style of expression, of Shoba De's

"I tell you... these guys in Delhi, na! Ooof...too much musibat. We know God moves in mysterious ways, but Manmohan, too? Last week's drama and hungama has left us very baffled. It is pretty hard to keep a track of all those portfolios and designations (Who moved my cabinet?), family feuds and party adjustments. By the way, just how many wives does Karunanidhi really have... does anybody know? How many children, grand-children, nephews and nieces does poor Manmohan have to deal with? At last count, there were 37 of them expecting key portfolios. Poor Manmohan was stuck with the rather tricky job of peace keeping - within that family, plus his own extended one.

Of course, I am kidding. But the point remains that after the wonderful Congress win, it was back to business as usual -Singh and Sonia (what a great talk show that would make), spent sleepless nights performing a difficult balancing act -massaging egos, soothing ruffled feathers, consoling the rejects, pampering new best friends, reassuring old enemies. This political circus needed expert trapeze artists capable of swinging across tricky



terrain minus safety nets. There were far too many ring-masters to effectively handle the restless animals, and the mustachioed lion tamer was missing."

Shobha De was the first to have lifted film journalism from mediocrity to a higher order by virtue of her stylized language. Her incisive, racy and crisp style was like a breath of fresh air, a language that is appropriate to describe the glam and glitz of Bollywood. The reader is at ease with her use of Hinglish "Bachpan Bachao", chota mota, jungle raj as well as American expressions like "The gateway goppers', cool, dude, fella, wassup'. Readership has undergone a sea change with the turn . of the 21st century. The era of globalization has brought with it -a new language for the press. A new genre replete with expressions that are Indianised, has arrived.

In keeping with the trend today the language style has to be slim and sleek in place of its earliest 'flatulent rotundity'. Unlike the language used in literary texts the figures of speech are effectively used today without pedantic affectation, to effectively capture the attention of the readers. In the process the Queen's English used and professed by the language enthusiasts has taken a backseat, the umbilical ties with the ,best dialect is severed: the journalese has arrived with a more regionalize flavour. The stiff archetypal language catering only to the educated elite is now mass centric, making the language more interactive; connective and personalized and yet remaining serious journalism.

The print media vie with each other to rope in, the best in the trade industry. Columns of Swaminathan Iyer, is an illustrative example. The simplicity of the language has encouraged various sports persons to become columnists in different newspapers. Nav Jyoth Singh Siddu has increased viewership and readership in the electronic and print media with his verbosity, popularly known as Siddhuism.

However soul riveting the TV might be, the Indian reader still has allegiance to the print media. A new digital savvy class is defining tomorrow's language. "Traditional rules of communication are being subverted by the digitally literate who are responsible for the widespread adoption of 'weblish', according to the latest study".

The global nature of the internet has let to the rapid adoption of web speak.

The text messages of the mobile users and the "E-mails have given a new complexion to the english language. For e.g. Cud cum 2mrw plz? Is an accepted form of usage amongst the gadget savvy communicators. Now wonder it is called as SHORT MESSAGE-SERVICE (sms)! the objective is to convey a message.

It will be in the interest of the 'Fourth Room Language Conventions' to simplify language further and rid it of the tedious punctuations, deleting apostrophe, accepting misspelt words, eliminating hyphens, etc. All this goes to show that English language has certainly come a long way breaking away from the hither to



rich literary traditions to a new kind which is user friendly, like the fast food, a kind of 'crunchy munchy\*' and 'utterly butterly delightful' to the young whose hearts are swayed by the mantra and tantra of change.

We are looking more to the yankies than to the Brits, the stiff upper lip race. It is good bye to the Anglo Saxons and welcome to the Melting Pot. People of our generation are privileged to enjoy the best of both the worlds of the Queen's English of the yester years and the breezy language of today.

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