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INDIAN WORDS IN ENGLISH : PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract:

Indian English has come to be recognized as a variety of English in its own right. The process of Indianization of English had started long before Independence. A large number of Indian words have been assimilated into the English language. More striking forms of assimilation are those that borrow the abstract concepts of Indian Socio-Cultural phenomena and the Indian way of conceptualizing reality through the Indian language items and use them to interpret the native English speakers own predicament.

Attempts have been made by number of scholars to identify the lexical borrowing and specify the circumstances in which this has happened. In this paper an attempt has been made to focus the most influential works in the field of lexical borrowing in English. It also focuses limitations of this work.

KEY WORDS:

Indian English, lexical borrowing, assimilation, Indian words, Indianization of English.

INTRODUCTION :

Indian English has come to be recognized as a variety of English in its own right. The process of Indianization of the English language had started long before independence. One of the major processes in this phenomenon was the borrowing of Indian words into the English language.

Borrowing is generally motivated by three main considerations:

- i) To fill a gap in the receiving language;
 - ii) To localize or regionalize more or less deliberately a language, like the Americanization of English or the Englishization of Indian languages (Kachru 1983:193-207)
 - iii) To establish communication between two different communities in a language contact situation where the two communities do not know each other's language.
- English is the one language which has had the privilege of borrowing on the most massive scale over the years.

INDIAN WORDS IN ENGLISH : PERSPECTIVES

Lexical borrowing in English has been discussed at length by a number of scholars. We shall briefly summarize the contribution of the most influential works below:

1. Yule and Burnell

In 1988, Yule and Burnell published *Hobson-Jobson : A Glossary of Colloquial Anglo-Indian Words and*

Phrases, and of Kindred Terms, Etymological, Historical, Geographical and Discursive. The Second edition, edited by William Crook, was published in 1903.

Even before this attempt, as Yule and Burnell have stated, early travelers to India had compiled some fragmentary lexical lists. One of the first 'register-oriented' studies in this direction is Wilson's Glossary of Judicial and Revenue Terms (1855).

According to the compilers of Hobson-Jobson modern Glossaries, have been of a kind purely technical, intended to facilitate the comprehension of official documents by the explanation of terms used in the Revenue Department, or in other branches of Indian administration.

But the compilers claim that their work is not of this kind on the other hand in their dictionary, Yule and Burnell proposed to

“... deal with a selection of those administrative terms which are in such familiar and quotidian use as to form part of the common Anglo-Indian stock, and to trace all (so far as possible) to their true origin – a matter on which, in regard to many of the words, those who hourly use them are profoundly ignorant -- and to follow them down by quotation from their earliest occurrence in literature” (P. XVI).

Further, the compilers of this glossary found it suitable to introduce and trace many words of Asiatic origin which have disappeared from colloquial use, or perhaps never entered it, but which occur in old writers on the East.

According to the compilers, southern India has greatly contributed to the Anglo-Indian stock of words. e.g. betel, margo, jack, cheroot, mongoose, pariah, bandicoot etc.

Yule and Burnell have also included a list of hybrids and corruptions of English fully accepted and adopted as Hindustani by the natives with whom they had to do, such as : simkin, port-shrab, brandy-pani, apil, rasid, tumlet (a tumbler), gilās ('glass' for drinking vessels of sorts), rail-ghari, lumber-dar, jail-khana, bottle-khana, buggy-khana etc.

According to Kachru Hobson-Jobson is the first attempt at applying the then-current techniques of lexicographical research.

2. Serjeantson

It was much later that many specialized studies on the Indian Elements (among others) in English appeared. Serjeantson has given an account of loan words from “Indian dialects” and the “Dravidian” languages in her book, A History of Foreign words in English (1935 Reprint 1961).

According to her, English has borrowed a few words, some directly and some indirectly, from Sanskrit, and these are among the very latest at that time and the very earliest from the East. In the old English period, and previously on the continent a few Sanskrit words had passed into Germanic or English through Greek and Latin : panther, pepper etc.

However, the greatest number of Indian loan words in English are from Hindustani, which is developed from old Sanskrit (and thus an Indo-Germanic dialect) but has a considerable admixture of Arabic and Persian words in its vocabulary. According to her, these appear first in the middle of the sixteenth century, but are rare until the very end of the century, after English traders had actually begun to come into direct contact with India by sea. Interestingly enough, she starts with a list of four words that are recorded before 1600 : lac, a kind of resin, 1533; raj, 1555; maund, a weight, 1584; banian, in the sense of a Hindoo trader, 1599.

In the main body of the chapter she has given a classified list of the loans of seventeenth century:

- i) People and titles: nobob, guru, mullah, moonshee, vakeel, moolvie, ryot, sahib, khansamah, sice, syce, mahout, pundit, maharajah, rane.
- ii) Textiles, clothes, etc. : chintz, chuddar, tussore, dhoti, puggaree, dungaree.
- iii) Animals, plants etc. : datura, bummallo, talipot, mongoose, sambur.
- iv) Food and drink : kedgerree, punch, ghee, pawnee.
- v) Houses, household objects, vehicles etc. : mussuck, punka(h), doolie, cot, bungalow, tomtom, hackery.
- vi) Coins and measures : crore, rupee, lac, lakh, pice, seer, cowrie.
- vii) Official : durbar, choky, cutcherry, chop.
- viii) Miscellaneous : ghat, shikar, shikari, maidan, juggernaut, pucka.

According to her, the distribution of new words in this century is remarkable; out of thirty-five words now recorded for the first time, only four occur before 1750.

Further, she mentions words that are borrowed in the eighteenth century. In this century there were a number of words denoting persons and rank, some of them military; rather fewer concerned with textiles and clothes; a fair number of plants and animals etc. :

- i) Persons, etc.: nawab, ressalidar, jemadar, nizam, wallah, baboo, soucar.
- ii) Textiles etc.: gunny, bandana, jaconet, sari.
- iii) Animals and birds : argala, myna, monal, muckna, cheetah.
- iv) Plants etc.: sunn, tatty, jute.
- v) Objects of ordinary use : anna, howdah, chatty, chit, bangle, bidree.
- vi) Districts : mofussil, taluk
- vii) Natural features : nullah, jungle.
- viii) Building : dak, gurru.
- ix) Miscellaneous : baksheesh, shampoo, nautch.

Of these only bandana, jute, bangle and shampoo have come into widespread use.

According to her, the number of loans increases in the nineteenth century, partly helped by the appearance of India in fiction as well as in further travels and memoirs.

However, terms for fabrics, etc., are fairly frequent, as are also names of plants and animals, and of things used in Indian life. Again of these only a few are at all widely used: cashmere, chutney, dinghy, gymkhana, loot, nainsook, polo, puttee, pyjamas.

- i) People : sowar, dacoit, thus, moonsif, chuprassi, dhobi, chela.
- ii) Textiles, garments etc.: puttee, nainsook.
- iii) Animals, fish etc.: gaza, gaur, gavial, dhole, panda, mugger mahseer, markhor, krait.
- iv) Plants : sisoo, toon, munjeet, mudar, deodar, sola, purree.
- v) Household, objects etc.: lota(h), charpoy, tonga
- vi) Food: chuppatty, chutney
- vii) Military : tana, kukri, gingall, jingal, tulwar, dumdum.
- viii) Miscellaneous: panchisi, Zillah, dinghy, loot, pie, gymkhana, pug, tamasha, polo.

In separate section under Persian she gives loans which have reached English through Hindustani, but are in origin Persian. Persian words borrowed in India: tabasheer, sirdar, cummerbund, lashkar, mohur, lascar, zemindar, havildar, subahdar, kincob, sepoy, seersucher, zenana, khidmatgar, purdah, khaki, nilgai.

Then she has grouped the non-Indo-Germanic dialects of Southern India, under the name Dravidian, which are represented in English by a small number of loan words from Tamil (spoken in South-East India and North Ceylon), from a variety of this known as Malayalam (spoken in South-West India), and from Telugu (spoken along part of the East Coast of India, North of Madras). These words appear first in the sixteenth century, and are most common in the seventeenth and in the late eighteenth century. A few of them have passed into current English use.

She has given century-wise list of words of Dravidian origin borrowed in English. Words borrowed during sixteenth century are: Calico, earlier also Calicut, Coir, earlier also Cairo, mango, copra, curry, earlier Carriel, coolie. During the seventeenth century words borrowed are : pariah, atoll, cheroot, catamaran, teak, tindac. During the eighteenth century words borrowed are: corundum, bandy, anaconda, bandicoot, mulligatawny. During the nineteenth century words borrowed are : yercum, patchouli.

3. Subba Rao

According to Subba Rao, Dr. Sarjeantson's study is admittedly a general and incomplete survey. Rao himself in his study of Indian Words in English : A study of Indo-British Cultural and Linguistic Relations (1954) gives an account of the Indian lexical borrowing of three and half centuries. According to him the borrowings of the seventeenth century are a result of first direct relations between India and England which were commercial in character. The Portuguese were already well settled on the West Coast of the Peninsula. The Mogul Empire was at its height of manificance and power. However, almost all the words borrowed in this century are 'content words' (names of things), many of which are connected with trade and commerce. Words like calico, chintz, chuddar, gurrah, jawar, tussore, bengal (applied to piece-goods of different kinds) etc.

According to him, the Englishman of this period, paid more than ordinary attention to everything around him and adopted a large number of Indian words into his vocabulary, that of the Hindu and Muslim festivals- Holi and Dewalee, Moharram and Ramdan should have early roused the interest of the Englishmen in India.

According to him, the Englishman in this period of their life in India learnt how to deal with strangers. They applied no English terms of disparagement to Indians, their customs, and religions. They adapted their own way of life to the social and climatic conditions in the new country of their living. In matters of dress, food and drink they soon acquired the Indian taste.

According to Rao, three things strike us most when we come to the eighteenth century concerning the words borrowed during this period:

- i) the number of words borrowed is smaller than that in the preceding century.
- ii) a variety of uses - - attributive, combinative, derivative, transferred and figurative - - is made of second half of the eighteenth century and even more so in the next century.
 - a) Attributive and combinative uses :
 - i) Bengal Silk (1711), dawk chowckies (1727), banian day (1748) ...
 - ii) Cot frame (1799), cutcherry list (1771), dawk bearers (1796) ... etc.
 - b) Derivatives : Indianize (1702), Islamism (1747), Indiaman (1709) etc.
 - c) Transferred and figurative senses : banian (1725) a loose gown or jacket, (orgi.attrib) etc.
- iii) the distribution of the new words is remarkably unequal - for those of the first half of the century are few while the large majority belong to the latter half.

However, these words show that throughout the century there was no slackening in the interest taken by the English in India.

According to Rao, in this century we have also an abundance of military and political terms. It points to the rapid changes that were taking place in the character of Indo-British relations.

He has given an account of Indian lexical borrowings of the nineteenth century. There is a striking increase in the intake of Indian words in this century. The nineteenth century happily discovered a new bond of kinship between India and England. The word Indo-European, which occurs for the first time, clearly indicates this phase in our relationship. The interest of English scholars in the 'ancient and precious linguistic tradition of India' already awakened towards the close of eighteenth century. It is clearly seen in the borrowings of names of languages such as Devanagari, Nagari, Prakrit, Pali etc.

According to him, the Indian contribution to English had until now been essentially materialistic. But in this century Indian philosophy, regarded as the most outstanding achievement of Indian civilization and Indian religion and literature began to attract the attention of English scholars. Thus, no satisfactory equivalents in English have been found for the terms like dharma, karma, maya etc. as they signify purely Hindu concepts.

A large number of words of other categories belong to this period. But he mentions only a few examples; names of people such as bungy and dacoit, names of textiles and garments like pyjamas and cashmere, household objects like charpoy and teapoy, and articles of food like chupatty and chutney. We find again a number of terms relating to sports and amusements like gymkhana, polo, pachisi and tamasha.

Rao goes on to give an account of lexical borrowings in twentieth century. In the twentieth century India's struggle for independence and the unique method adopted for its achievement are indicated by such words as Gandhism, hartal, khaddar, khilapat, satyagraha, swadeshi and swaraj.

Rao concludes his chapter on "History in the words" with the remark that "The full effect of the transfer of power to India, and of the continuance of the Republic of India and Pakistan as full and equal partners in the commonwealth, is not immediately discernible and will become apparent for some time to come" (P. 33)

Besides tracing the history of Indian words in English through the centuries, Rao has described the phonetic and semantic changes undergone by some of the borrowed words. He has also assessed the use of Indian words by eminent English men of letters over the years upto the eve of Indian Independence. Thus, Rao has made an endeavour to indicate the Indian influence on the English vocabulary.

The indianization of the English language after Independence has been studied by several scholars beginning with Kachru to which we may now turn.

4. Braj Kachru

Kachru discusses various types of lexical extensions and innovations in his 'Lexical innovations in South Asian English' (1975). He does not treat these innovations merely as Indian but as South Asian. The examples discussed in this article are drawn primarily from Indian English texts. i.e. press materials and creative writings.

In his earlier studies on SAE (e.g. Kachru 1961 and 1965 and later) he has focused attention on a number of productive linguistic processes characteristic of Indian English. But this study is data-oriented and is restricted to hybrid innovations. According to him the lexical aspect has serious implications for intelligibility - - both in the written and spoken modes between SAE users of other varieties of English. According to him, the deviations at this level are especially evident in the texts of SAE creative writing and journalism.

In this study he uses the term lexis in a rather restricted sense, referring to single lexical items. He

classifies these lexical innovations under two groups;

- i) Those items which have become part of the lexical stock of English language. He terms these as 'assimilated items' (or non-restricted lexical items).
- ii) Those items which have not necessarily been included in the lexicons of the native varieties of English. He terms these as 'restricted lexical items'.

According to him, the borrowing of lexical items from South Asian language into SAE is not arbitrary. These are register-restricted and may be classified according to their semantic fields.

Thus he makes a brief survey of single lexical items and mainly focuses his attention on certain productive processes employed by educated SAE users at the lexical level in producing hybrid lexical items.

According to him a hybridized lexical item is meant a lexical item which comprises two or more elements, at least one of which is from a South Asian language and one from English. The elements of a hybrid formation may belong either to an open set or to a closed system in lexis. An open-set item is considered 'open' in the sense that there are no grammatical constraints on the selection of the elements of the item, for example, lathi-charge; kumkum-mark. A closed-system item is 'closed' in the sense that at least one element belongs to the closed system of a South Asian language; for example, the suffix-wala in policewala.

There are certain structural and contextual constraints on hybridized items. By structural constraint is meant the possibility of 'element' substitution. In the term 'lathi-charge', 'danda' is not substitutable for 'lathi', although the two items are semantically 'identical'. On the other hand, there are other hybrid formations which are used interchangeably (cf. 'police thana' and 'police-station'). The question of contextual constraints on South Asian items in SAE is further discussed by him in 'Hybrid lexical sets'.

Thus Kachru's is the first concerted effort to identify Indian lexical items in (Indian) English based on actual data. It is obviously not a comprehensive survey.

5. Shastri

Shastri's 'Code-mixing in the process of Indianization of English : A Corpusbased Study' (1988) is an analysis of code-mixing i.e. mixing of Indian items in (Indian) English is based on a part of a large data base which was in the process of being built at that time. This study is an attempt to partly overcome the limitations of lexical work.

In this article Shastri proposes to distinguish between hybridization (not Kachru's 'hybridization') which may or may not survive and absorption on the one hand and assimilation on the other. However, as stated earlier for Kachru, a hybridized item is simply a lexical item which is comprised of two or more elements at least one of which is from a South East Asian language and one from English.

But according to Shastri 'hybridization', 'absorption' and 'assimilation' are distinct stages in that order, in the process of borrowing in languages.

Further, he illustrates the process of hybridization with examples from Indian English corpus texts. He has also analysed hybridized items.

Then he discusses the concept of absorption. According to him 'absorption' is a process of naturalization of the borrowed and hybrid items which become stabilized by gaining linguistic and socio-cultural sanction at the local or regional level. The language speaking community tacitly accepts them. Linguistically the phenomenon consists in borrowing items and treating them as if they were the stock of the receiving language at all levels.

Phonological, morphological and syntactic: Brahman (Indian) brahim/'brahmin'/(Anglicized) and then 'brahmins, brahmanic; 'brahmin' priest and born Brahman and so on.

Further the process of assimilation is discussed. The term 'assimilation' is used for those items that become part and parcel of the native varieties of English. According to him, the need for assimilating Indian elements into English has arisen especially in the field of philosophy and religion and in the field of fine arts. Though this is a recent phenomenon, a number of register bound items have already found their way into standard British and American dictionaries.

According to him, more striking forms of assimilation are those that borrow the abstract concepts of Indian Socio-cultural phenomena and the Indian way of conceptualizing reality through the Indian language items, and use them to interpret the native English speaker's own predicament.

However, the article does not give a comprehensive list of items borrowed into English i.e. those which occur in the corpus.

We have so far discussed the most wellknown and influential works in borrowing of indigenous items into (Indian) English. Obviously these works have their own limitations.

According to Kachru, all the lexical work in this tradition had limitations of several types : in terms of goals and users; the source materials and the data presented, the attitude of the compilers and the native language sources. According to him, the goals were essentially pragmatic; namely, to provide lexical manuals for visiting western administrators, travellers, and in some cases for specialists in various fields. Thus source material was often restricted. This points to the need for a large data of samples for studies of Indian lexical items in English.

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