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English as a Communication for Technocrats & Professionals in India

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Abstract

English in India is a diglossically high language. The reasons for this lie in the colonial times when the power was attributed to English, From then on, English became a symbol of political power, the position of which it holds, still: English, today, represents the scientific knowledge, modernization and development. The use of English clearly increases in the more formal domains. Also, the more formal the situation is, the bigger the number of languages possible for each occasion. In the domains of education, government and employment it is, without doubt, the most preferred medium. It is, however, making its way to more informal domains, as well: about 40% of the informants claim to speak English with friends, and people get introduced to each other most often in English. Over half of all personal letters, too, are written in English. In the neighborhood domain English is the most preferred option when people's languages differ. Thus, the usefulness of Hindi as a lingua franca seems to be regionally limited, as Spolsky has claimed. In the domains of education, government and employment English shows itself, without doubt, as the most preferred medium. Today, English has become a link language that helps us to converse with people around the world. More so, because the world has become a global village and we can easily transcend borders for employment. Well, even if we are not looking for employment, there is a whole world just waiting for us to explore trekking, sightseeing and more. If we have the money and adventure, then no place is far. English comes in handy when conversing with strangers, getting visa and finding our way around.

Key Words: Professional & Technical Communication, Domains of Language, Received Pronunciation, Communicative Language, Education, Government.

English as a Communication for Technocrats & Professionals in India

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English has a status of assistant language, but in fact it is the most important language in the world. So it is well known as a global language and the most popular language for the people. It is the most convenient language to communicate around the business pattern as a global basis. In this paper, I have tried to show the different process of English communication as well as keys for effective communication. We need English speaking in professional life and education, because as we know, English become a global language. Here, I have given the attitudes of English language in India from old period to modern period and use of English language. The two main reasons why English was used for working purposes at the time: first, exports and the search for markets and, second, the establishment of large multinational foreign companies. As Indian market is become a global market, to exist in this market, should be known the global language that is English language. _

English in India has, indeed, come far from its original uses in the colonial times when it was mostly used as the language of the government. Nowadays, English has spread into many new domains, also the more personal ones, such as the family and friendship. English has, also, acquired new functions, including the self-expressive or innovative function. Today, in fact, it is hard, almost impossible to think of English as it is used in India only simply as another foreign language. In the domain of transactions, local language that is regional language is used more often than English at both the market place and in shops and at the railway station. This is quite natural when one is reminded that English is, really, a language of the educated: quite possibly the people selling goods and food in the market place do not often know a word of English. Attitudes about a language are important, for they more or less determine its place in the multilingualism of a country. English has traditionally been the language of the government and other domains with prestige, and still today it carries more prestige than Hindi in India and it is, too, considered important and an advantage to the country as a whole. People's motives for supporting English are mostly instrumental: the results of the study reveal that English is perceived as a useful language to know mostly because of job opportunities: English is considered necessary would one want to have a job. On the other hand, Hindi is not perceived important when it comes to getting a job: only one informant claimed he/she could not get a job without the knowledge of Hindi. The informants, too, support the role of English as an associate official language, for 62% of them require a person to be able to speak English to be admitted to

a public post. Education is an important proof of the status of a language in a society, and if this is true, in the case of English its status seems quite secure: over 90% of the informants are of the opinion that all children should learn English at school.

Whereas English was considered important to India in most of the responses (90%), Hindi is perceived important for the development of the country only by 33% of them. The informants strongly identified themselves with their mother tongue and the group that speaks it; this is important for the maintenance of the native languages of the country: especially in the case of varieties with less official acknowledgement group solidarity becomes very important. The maintenance of a group's language makes one part of it. Integrative motivation seems to be very important for maintaining Hindi as the official language of India. It is, also, beneficial for the maintenance of a language to be associated with positive cultural values; especially when a less prestigious language is in question. Although, as mentioned earlier, English is clearly perceived as a more useful language to know, people on the other hand can identify themselves more easily with Hindi (only 17% said they identified themselves with British and Anglo-American culture, whereas about 67% of the informants feel proud to speak the language and consider it a big part of their culture and identity). Most of the informants would like the use of Hindi to be encouraged in India, as well as they would like to see it as the official language also in future. Most of them thought, too, that they would miss out on many enjoyable parts of culture could they not speak Hindi. Although Spolsky has claimed that people rarely know any other language other than their own, this was clearly not the case in my study: people reported, on average, four different languages. The usefulness of Hindi as a lingua franca, however, appeared to be regionally limited, as in some areas few people know it or they dislike speaking it. Many people do not see any reason why Hindi would be any better as an official language than their mother tongue. Indian English has definitely emerged as a variety of its own in the eyes of the Indian people themselves. Although many acknowledged RP (Received Pronunciation: BBC English; Standard English in Britain) as the best model for Indians to strive for, almost as many supported variety in a language arguing that because of linguistic and cultural reasons, Indian English is naturally different from, say, the British standard variety of English. Some people, though, expressed their view of Indian variety as somehow "deviant" by talking about corrections which should take place in the variety, and also by comparing Indian English to the more standard and orthodox type of standard variety of English as used in Britain. People, indeed, seem to be somewhat ambivalent about Indian English and its features. Some people would even divide the use of English so that RP would be reserved for more formal uses, whereas "Indian English" (whatever one understands with it) is considered suitable for, as one informant puts it, "informal conversation".

As we can see from the results of the study, English has become more nativized in the Indian environment: it seems that English now belongs to India's linguistic repertoire in a very natural way. English, however, is still clearly a language of "ideas, not of emotions", as one informant put it. What gives English its status, therefore, is not so much its utilitarian function as the prestige attached to it and the social role attributed to it. The history of language, however, bears witness to the relevance of such a distinction. There are two hypotheses concerning language power: the intrinsic-power hypothesis and the acquired-power hypothesis. The first one claims that English would intrinsically possess certain linguistic characteristics which would make it a

preferred language for international purposes. This position can be seemed similar to claims of racial superiority. The second hypothesis emphasizes the ways in which a language acquires power, and thus it is also easier to understand. Even though English is acquiring new identities in new cultural contexts, such as in India (which in itself should be a natural phenomenon), often the new English's are considered as deviations of the standard British or American English norm, and Indian people, too, are quite ambivalent about their variety of the language.

Analysis:

The statements related to domains such as family, friendship, neighborhood, transactions, education, government and employment. The informants' duty was to fill in the language he/she most often uses for each occasion (grading the frequency of use from one to four, four indicating the highest frequency). The aim was to analyze the use of English in India in different domains. The domains used in the study could be divided into formal and informal domains: education, employment and government are formal; family, friendship, neighborhood and transactions more informal domains. While the use of English in the fields analysed here is connected with internationalization in its various forms, such use also encroaches in every case on the internal practices of national communities. The degree of encroachment varies with the field and the community. It is particularly significant in northern Europe. Elsewhere English is also identified with what is international and global, but such identification seems to go well beyond its real function as a vehicular language, especially in countries with widely spoken languages. Apart from a genuine role as a lingua franca, it is probable that the use that is said to be made of it does not always correspond to the situation on the ground and that there are cases where its use does not correspond to a real necessity. In India, the state where one comes from is important, for some of the states are more pro-English or pro-Hindi, or pro-regional language than others. Traditionally, the opposition of Hindi has been the most fervent in the south (such as in Tamil Nadu, for instance). One reason to this may be that Hindi belongs to a different language group than the Dravidian languages which are native to the south of India, and it is thought of as unfair to have such an unfamiliar language as an official language. Sometimes, however, the use of Hindi is opposed simply because people do not want to appoint any special role to Hindi. They do not see why Hindi would be more special than any other language.

Although some informants seem to be quite polyglots, even in the family domain (such as Ker1, who reported the use of English and mother tongue just as common, Tamil1, Mah1, and few others), all in all, mother tongue was, as could be expected, the most common language used at home (for 87% of the informants). English was the second most common reported language. It was, perhaps surprisingly, most popular (17%) when "discussing a personal matter/problem", although even then L1 was far more popular, with 79%. Discussions with family members at dinner are usually carried out in the mother tongue (90%). Among West Bengalis, local language was reserved, almost exclusively, for the family domain. Tamils, on the other hand, mentioned English most often (even though as a secondary option after the local language) [thus, here, too, we can see the preference of the people of Tamil Nadu to English, rather than Hindi. Hindi is mentioned only once in groups other than for which it is a mother tongue, when "commenting on a TV program which is in your mother tongue/Hindi". Probably then, too, the reason was that one of the options given for the medium of the TV program was Hindi; perhaps it feels natural to

comment on a TV program in the same language as it is in. It was interesting to note, however, that the use of Hindi did not increase (in general) even though it was the medium of a TV program: mother tongue was also then the most popular option. Hindi was mentioned as an option in very few papers. Hindi does not seem to be very popular among Tamils. The reason to this is fairly obvious, since Hindi has traditionally not been very popular in the south; Hindi is not one of the languages spoken in the area. Tamils, in general, support the use of English. Their reasons for favoring English have been explained earlier on in the study.

Bengalis are not too keen supporters of Hindi, either. They are very proud of their own language; many think that it would have the same right as Hindi has to be the official language of the country (it is surprising, however, that Hindi is reported as the second most common language used at home by a West Bengali (perhaps, for instance, one of the family members of the informant speaks Hindi as his/her mother tongue)). The Bengalis were supporting English for the same reason during the Anglicist-Orientalist controversy in the beginning of the 19th century. Over half of all personal letters are written in English (62%). People are also introduced to each other most often in English (local language 29%, Hindi:6%). People who have not met before, too, prefer English as the common language of conversation (40%; local language 33%, Hindi 6%).

Personal problems are not talked about in English (21%), but usually in local language (31%). On the other hand, many informants report several different languages; combinations such as local language /English (17%) and local language /English/Hindi (14%) are quite common. Maybe this is due to the fact that many have friends and acquaintances with a different language from them (considering how many different languages there are in India). General topics are usually conversed in English (33%), after which come local language (27%) and English/ local language (17%). Hindi is not popular here, either. Neighborhood In 67% of the cases, English is reported as the most commonly used language when conversing with neighbors. Hindi and English/Hindi (both 13%) come next, followed by local language and regional language (both 3%). In case the mother tongues of the neighbors differ, English serves as the link language most of the time (67%). Hindi and H/E are reported second most common languages (13% both). If, however, the mother tongues of the neighbors are same, only one informant claims to resort to English, others report that they would use it together with Hindi (3%) or local language (7%). Language and Hindi are most commonly used languages of transaction in this study. This is not unexpected, for many common Indian people do not speak English much at all (in India English is, as mentioned earlier, the language of the élite and the educated). The informants reported that they most often use language when in shops, at the railway station etc. (29%). Hindi comes next (25%), after which English (18%). In the market place Language is more clearly the most commonly used language (with 50%; Hindi 18%). Language and regional language both 7%. If combinations such languages, English is used at the market place 20% of the time.

Education and Government:

In education, English is the most common medium (87% of all the situations). At school, friends who spoke the same language usually talked in local language (45%), although English comes next (25%), and Hindi third (14%). English was considered the best medium of

communication in the instances in which the languages of the parties in question differed (75%; Hindi 14%). English dominates in the domain of government, both when it comes to writing letters (93% are written in English) and also as a general language of the domain (70%; Hindi 7%). But, when meeting government officials, there is more division: English is still the most common language (37%), but local language is also used quite often (23%), as well as Hindi (10%) and a regional language (10%). As well as job interviews are without exception carried out in English (100%), so are also business letters written in English. If one's and one's boss's languages differ, the common language will most often (97%) be English. Language comes second (3%). When it comes to talking to one's colleagues who come from different parts of India, 67% of the time one would resort to English (Hindi 17%, Language 17%).

Conclusion:

In this paper, I have tried to show the different process of English communication as well as keys for effective communication. We need English speaking in professional life and education, because as we know, English become a global language. Here, I have given the attitudes of English language in India from old period to modern period and use of English language. The two main reasons why English was used for working purposes at the time: first, exports and the search for markets and, second, the establishment of large multinational foreign companies. As Indian market is become a global market, to exist in this market, should be known the global language that is English language. English language competency is a significant aspect of an engineering student's academic life and prospective career. Employers give considerable value to graduates acquiring a diverse set of skills in different work environment. Besides analytical and problem solving skills, subject specific knowledge, research and improved decision making ability, management skills, understanding of other culture, confidence and competence to work in international environment are considered the most essential qualities for engineers. However, at the bottom of these lies an effective communication skill. If students fail to see the broader scenario of the corporate world and ignore the communication skills, it can endanger a shallow level of understanding. It is because the main mode of communication used and most of the teaching contents and the sources for information are in English. The present paper deals with the importance of English language competence in every walk of the professional life of an engineer for his bright future and how the teachers and students need to make integrated efforts build their competency in English skills that would enable students successful in studies, campus interviews and their corporate life.

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