




# Indian English



*Indian English* is speech or writing in English that shows the influence of the languages and culture of India. Also called *English in India*. Indian English (IndE) is one of the oldest regional varieties of the English language.

English is one of the 22 official languages recognized by the Constitution of India. "Soon," according to Michael J. Toolan, "there may be more native speakers of English in India than in the UK, a cohort speaking a new New English second in size only to the old New English spoken in America"

"In India, English has been in use for more than four centuries, first as the language of the early merchants, missionaries and settlers, later as the language of the British colonial power, and finally--after India's independence in 1947--as the so-called associate official language.



In India, those who consider their English to be good are outraged at being told that their English is Indian. Indians want to speak and use English like the British, or, more lately, like the Americans. This desire probably also springs from the fact that it is a second language for most Indians and to be able to speak a non-native language like native speakers is a matter of pride--more so in the case of English, given its higher status and the several material advantages it carries.

# Vocabulary

Many words from Indian native languages have been introduced into the global English language spoken worldwide:

jungle, bungalow, punch, shawl, and veranda

And just as is true with American and British English, there are some words which are unique to speakers from India and instances of misunderstanding are not uncommon. Two examples of Indian English words that non-Indian English speakers probably never encounter include

“*airdash*” which is used for someone who is in a hurry, and “*badmash*”, another word for a hooligan.



# Vocabulary

Sometimes, speakers of English in India add a new level of meaning to existing words.

For instance, if a person wears a “hi-tech outfit”, it does not mean that they are equipped with the latest digital gadgets. Instead, a hi-tech outfit stands for fashionable and modern and that follows the latest trends. In other cases, words from the local dialects and languages make their way into Indian English – words that would be unintelligible to non-speakers. Sometimes these words replace the English entirely.

If you hear “*achchaain*” the middle of a conversation led in English, do not be surprised. It only means *good*.

# Vocabulary: hybrids, adaptation and idioms

The great variety of mixed and adapted usages exists both as part of English and as a consequence of widespread code-mixing between English and especially Hindi: HYBRID usages, one component from English, one from a local language, often Hindi:

*brahminhood* the condition of being a brahmin

*coconut paysam* a dish made of coconut

*goonda ordinance* an ordinance against goondas

*grameen bank* a village bank

*kaccha road* a dirt road

*lathi charge* (noun) a charge using lathis

*lathi-charge* (verb) to charge with lathis

*pan/paan shop* a shop that sells betel nut and lime for chewing, wrapped in a pepper leaf

*policewala* a policeman, *swadeshi cloth* home-made cloth

*tiffin box* a lunch-box.



Local senses and developments of general English words:

*batch-mate* a classmate or fellow student

*body-bath* an ordinary bath

*by-two coffee* (in the south) a restaurant order by two customers asking for half a cup of coffee each


*communal* used with reference to Hindus and Muslims (as in *communal riots*)

*condole* to offer condolences to someone

*England-returned* used of one who has been to England, for educational purposes, a been-to

*Eve-teasing* teasing or harassing young women

*Foreign-returned* used of someone who has been abroad for educational purposes



*four-twenty* a cheat or swindler (from the number of a section of the Indian Penal Code)

*head-bath* washing one's hair

*interdine* to eat with a member of another religion or caste

*intermarriage* a marriage involving persons from different religions or castes

*issueless* childless

*military hotel* (in the south) a restaurant where non-vegetarian food is served

*out of station* not in (one's) town or place of work

*outstation (cheque)* a cheque issued by a non-local bank

*prepone* the opposite of postpone, *ration shop* a shop where rationed items are available

*undertrial* a person being tried in a court of law.





Words more or less archaic in BrE and AmE, but used in IndE, such as

*dicky* the boot/trunk of a car

*needful* ‘Please do the needful, Sri Patel’

*stepney* a spare wheel or tyre

*thrice* ‘I was seeing him thrice last week’



The many idiomatic expressions include:

*to sit on someone's neck* to watch that person carefully

*to stand on someone's head* to supervise that person carefully

*Do one thin*

*Sri Gupta*

There is one thing you could do, Mr Gupta

*He was doing this thing that thing, wasting my time*


He was doing all sorts of things, wasting my time.



# Loanwords

LOANWORDS and LOAN TRANSLATIONS from other languages have been common since the 17c, often moving into the language outside India:

Words from Portuguese (*almirah, ayah, caste, peon*) and from local languages through Portuguese (*bamboo, betel, coir, copra, curry, mango*).




Words from indigenous languages, such as HINDI and Bengali. Some are earlier and more Anglicized in their


spelling: *anna, bungalow, cheetah, chintz, chit/chitty, dacoit, dak*

*bungalow, jodhpurs, juggernaut, mulligatawny, pice, pukka, pundit, rupee, sahib, tussore.*


Some are later




Less orthographically Anglicized: *achcha* all right (used in agreement and often repeated: *Achcha achcha, I will go*), *basmati* a kind of rice, *chapatti* a flat, pancake-like piece of unleavened bread, *crore* a unit of 10m or 100 lakhs (*crores of rupees*), *goonda* a ruffian, petty criminal, *jawan* a soldier in the present-day Indian Army, *lakh* a unit of 100,000 (*lakhs of rupees*), *lathi* a lead-weighted stick carried by policemen, *masala* spices, *paisa* a coin, 100th of a rupee, *panchayat* a village council, *samo(o)sa* an envelope of fried dough filled with vegetables or meat, *Sri/Shri/Shree* Mr, *Srimati/Shrimati/Shreemati* Mrs.



Words from Arabic and Persian through north Indian languages, used especially during the British Raj: *dewan* chief minister of a princely state, *darbar* court of a prince or governor, *mogul* a Muslim prince (and in the general language an important person, as in *movie mogul*), *sepoy* a soldier in the British Indian Army, *shroff* a banker, money-changer, *vakeel/vakil* a lawyer, *zamindar* a landlord.



Words taken directly from SANSKRIT, usually with religious and philosophical associations, some well known, some restricted to such contexts as *yoga*: *ahimsa* non-violence, *ananda* spiritual bliss, *chakra* a mystical centre of energy in the body, *guru* a (spiritual) teacher (and in the general language a quasi-revered guide, as in *management guru*), *nirvana* release from the wheel of rebirth, *rajas* a state of passion, *samadhi* spiritual integration and enlightenment, *sattwa/sattva* a state of purity, *tamas* a state of heaviness and ignorance, *yoga* a system of self-development, *yogi* one who engages in yoga.



CALQUES from local languages: *dining-leaf* a banana leaf used to serve food, *cousin brother* a male cousin, *cousin sister* a female cousin, *co-brother-in-law* one who is also a brother-in-law.



# Pronunciation

Speakers of English in India do not make any difference when it comes to the sound /v/, which is produced using one's lower lips and top teeth; and sound /w/ in the production of which both lips are used.

Also, the two "th" sounds /θ/ and /ð/ are usually replaced by /d/ and /t/, so that *three of those* sounds like 't<sup>h</sup>ree of d<sup>h</sup>ose'.

/ə/ and /ʌ/ most commonly disregarded and replaced by the vowel /a/.

Another characteristic of the sounds used by speakers of English in India is the replacement of two adjacent vowels by a single long vowel followed by /r/sound. So beer becomes /bir/ and pear is pronounced as /per/.

# Pronunciation

IndE is rhotic, /r/ being pronounced in all positions.

It tends to be syllable-timed, weak vowels being pronounced as full vowels in such words as *photography* and *student*. Word stress is used primarily for emphasis and suffixes are stressed, as in *readiness*. Distinctive stress patterns occur in different areas: *available* is often stressed in the north on the ante-penultimate, in the south on the first syllable.

The alveolar consonants /t, d/ are retroflex.

/f/ is often pronounced as aspirated /p<sup>h</sup>/, as in 'p<sup>h</sup>ood' for *food*.

# Pronunciation

In such words as *old*, *low* the vowel is generally /o/.

Among northern (Indo-Aryan) speakers, consonant clusters such as /sk, sl, sp/ do not occur in initial position, but have an epenthetic vowel, as in 'iskool' for *school* in the Punjab and 'səkool' in Kashmir.

Among southern (Dravidian) speakers, non-low initial vowels are preceded by the glides /j/ (as in 'yell, yem, yen' for the names of the letters *l, m, n*) and /w/ (as in 'wold' for *old* and 'wopen' for *open*).

South Indians tend to geminate voiceless intervocalic obstruents, as in 'Americ-ca'. Because gemination is common in Dravidian languages, double consonants in written English are often geminated: 'sum-mer' for *summer* and 'sil-lee' for *silly*.

Distinct kinds of pronunciation serve as SHIBBOLETHS of different kinds of IndE: Bengalis using /b/ for /v/, making *bowel* and *vowel* HOMOPHONES; Gujaratis using /dʒ/ for /z/, so that *zed* and *zero* become 'jed' and 'jero'; speakers of Malayalam making *temple* and *tumble* near-homophones.

# Pronunciation

A large number of IndE speakers, sometimes referred to as speakers of *General Indian English (GIE)*, have a 17-vowel system (11 monophthongs and 6 diphthongs):

/i:/ as in *bead*,

/i/ as in *this*,

/e:/ as in *game*,

/ɛ/ as in *send*,

/æ/ as in *mat*,

/ɑ:/ as in *charge*,

/ɒ/ as in *shot*,

/o:/ as in *no*,

/ʊ/ as in *book*,



# Pronunciation

/uː/ as in *tool*

/ə/ as in *bus*;

/aɪ/ as in *five*,

/ɔɪ/ as in *boy*,

/aʊ/ as in *cow*,

/ɪə/ as in *here*,

/eə/ as in *there*

/ʊə/ as in *poor*.



# Grammar

There is great variety in syntax, from native-speaker fluency (the acrolect) to a weak command of many constructions (the basilect). The following represents a widespread middle level (the MESOLECT):

Interrogative constructions without subject/auxiliary inversion:

*What you would like to buy?*



# Grammar

Definite article often used as if the conventions have been reversed:

*It is the nature's way;*

*Office is closed today.*

*One* used rather than the indefinite article:

*He gave me one book.*

# Grammar

Stative verbs given progressive forms:

*Lila is having two books;*

*You must be knowing my cousin-brother Mohan.*

Reduplication used for emphasis and to indicate a distributive meaning:

*I bought some small small things;*

*Why you don't give them one one piece of cake?*





# Grammar

*Yes* and *no* as question tags:

*He is coming, yes?;*

*She was helping you, no?*

*Isn't it?* as a generalized question tag:

*They are coming tomorrow, isn't it?*



# Grammar

Reflexive pronouns and *only* used for emphasis:

*It was God's order itself* It was God's own order

*They live like that only* That is how they live.

Present perfect rather than simple past:

*I have bought the book yesterday.*



# Grammar

Prepositions: 'pay attention on, discuss about, convey him my greetings'

Word order: 'Who you have come for?' 'They're late always.' 'My all friends are waiting.'

# Videos

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OoF4i77kPak>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dJgoTcyrFZ4>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z7MlyQS9p5E>
- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v9arM\\_agKFA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v9arM_agKFA)