

# The Changing Perception Towards “Hinglish” in the Modern Linguistic Scenario

Anurima Das<sup>1</sup>&Vijay Bhushan<sup>2\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Hislop College, Nagpur, Maharashtra

<sup>2\*</sup>Assistant Professor, Department of English, Kalinga University, Naya Raipur, Chhattisgarh

\*Email: [vijay.bhushan@kalingauniversity.ac.in](mailto:vijay.bhushan@kalingauniversity.ac.in)

## ABSTRACT

The word ‘Hinglish’ is a portmanteau word which means that it is formed by mixing two distinct words, this case it is the name of two languages Hindi and English. But in actual usage it refers to a hybrid code-switching language which uses a mixture of words and phrases from English and the different languages spoken in the Indian subcontinent for example – Hindi, Marathi, Gujarati, Punjabi, Bengali etc. This paper will make a deep analytical study of a popular linguistic phenomenon i.e. Hinglish. The paper will commence by tracing the origin of this linguistic trend which is often assumed to be fairly but it may come as a surprise to many that the word ‘Hinglish’ was actually coined in 1967. The prevailing social conditions in colonial India which led to the formation of this language will be studied in detail.

After covering the origin of the language, we will proceed to elaborately analyze its evolution which had been constant. The paper will also study the successful use of ‘Hinglish’ in many areas such as Marketing, Advertisement, Literature and English Language teaching by thoroughly studying the views of different linguistic experts on ‘Hinglish’, which will be related and compared to the present status of the language in the Global Linguistic Scenario.

We will then be delving deeper into the role that ‘Hinglish’ is playing worldwide as an effective tool of mass appeasement in the world of Marketing by analyzing various articles written on ‘Hinglish’ in national and international newspapers and magazines which talk was the reputation that this linguistic phenomenon is creating at global level.

**KEYWORDS:** Linguistics, Language Studies, Hinglish, Marketing, Literature

## INTRODUCTION

The term “Hinglish” is a combination of two words, Hindi and English which are basically the names of two languages. These types of words are also called ‘Portmanteau’ words, which simply means a word created by mixing two distinct words. The common notion is that the word Hinglish is a relatively recent creation but it may come as a surprise to many that the earliest record of the usage of this word was in the year 1967. Since then many variations of the word has been coined such as “Hindhish”, “Hindhlish”, “Henglish” and “Hinlish”. If we deduce the meaning of ‘Hinglish’ on the basis of the two words that made it then it might be logical to assume that it may contain words coined by mixing Hindi and English but in reality the actual range of the word covers a much wider linguistic domain. To understand the entire spectrum covered by this word we need to study its definition. The word ‘Hinglish’ is popularly accepted as a hybrid language which employs words from English and the languages used in the Indian subcontinent such as Hindi, Bengali, Gujarati, Punjabi etc. to form its vocabulary and diction.

### Origin and reason behind it

Generally, the mixing of two distinct languages happen when the native speakers of both the languages are somehow co-existing together. And the case of creation of ‘Hinglish’ was no different. During the 18th century when the East India Company was flourishing in India, the languages of India were brought into contact with the foreign element of English. When India was a colony, English became a symbol of authority and a powerful hegemonic tool to propagate British culture, including Christianity. The inevitable rise of the English language was reflected in social and professional roles; this meant that the legal system as well as the studies in medicine and science was conducted in English.

And the ambition of getting educated and securing employment led to the increase of learning English in society of Indian natives. The young generation of Indians wished to participate in academia and pursue professional careers. With the passing of the Charter Act in 1813 missionary work was legalized by the Company, including the

introduction of English education. By the beginning of the twentieth century, English had become the unifying language in the Indian struggle for independence against the British.

Meanwhile, English was on its way to gain the status of lingua franca. By the end of the twentieth century, it had special status in seventy countries, including India. Worldwide, English began to represent modernization and internationalization, with more and more jobs requiring basic fluency in it. In India especially, the language came to acquire a social prestige, 'a class apart of education', which prompted native Indian or South Asian speakers to turn bilingual, speaking their mother tongue at home or in a local context, but English in organizational frameworks.

The context of South Asian languages, a category that refers inclusively to Hindi and Indian languages, with English, led to the emergence of the linguistic phenomenon now known as Hinglish.

### **Present status of Hinglish**

It is but a fact that Hinglish has not yet received the status of an official language, but a close analysis of the global linguistic scene will observe that it is gaining popularity and creating a speaker base at a noticeable pace.

According to prominent British linguist, Professor David Crystal who has penned more than 50 books on English, "350 million Indians speak Hinglish as a second language, exceeding the number of native English speakers in Britain and the US"

In context to the above mentioned fact, Professor Crystal also points out the growing popularity of Indian culture around the world, including Bollywood movies, and predicts that Hinglish will soon become more widely spoken outside the continent.

Professor Crystal also points out that because of the dominating presence of Indian professionals in the computer programming sector and the fact that a noticeable number of Indians are writing computer software means that Hinglish will spread via the internet. In his words "Certain phrases are bound to become global with so many Indians working in information technology. As more Indians talk in chat rooms and send emails, the phrases and words they use to describe their lives will be picked up by others on the internet".

### **Appeal of Hinglish in the World of Marketing**

The undeniable charm of catchy Hinglish phrases is steadily finding its way into the commercial scene of marketing and advertisement in India, grading it as a linguistic phenomenon steadily becoming one of the most powerful tools to connect with the Multilingual consumer base. Just targeting strictly English or Hindi speaking audience in India is slowly going out of trend, when it comes to selling products and services, advertisers are acknowledging the potential of this mixture of one of the nostalgic Indian language and the globally appealing English language as an assured mantra of success. Companies without a basic understanding of Hindi words risk losing a considerable client base in the Indian market.

For reaching the majority of population in modern India, Hinglish has to be the language of choice. It is the language that the Indian customer is most receptive to, particularly the younger generation.

Particularly the young demographic group in India regards Hinglish as a status symbol. To this group of people the language is part of their identity.

While discussing the success story of Hinglish in the advertising field in India, it is of extreme relevance to consider the example of 'PEPSI'. In 1990, its tagline 'Yeh hi hai right choice, baby' meaning 'You got the right one, baby' proved to be one of the most successful in the company's history. The position reaction received by Pepsi opened doors to Hinglish being used in the advertisements of many other prominent brands in India.

For example:

Hungry Kya– Domino's Pizza

Yeh Dil maange more– Pepsi

Pal banaye magical– Lays

Hum mein hai hero– Hero Motocorp

Kya aap Close Up karte hain? – Close-Up

Come on girls, waqthai shine karneka! – SunsilK  
 Life ho to aisi – Coca Cola  
 What your bahana is? – McDonalds.

### **The Scope of Hinglish in Indian Literary Scene**

Using Hindi words in a sentence or using Hinglish as a language of choice has long been the way of Indian English authors to pay a tribute to their routes and create a larger appeal in the small town audiences. Eminent Indian authors such as Arundhati Roy, Upmanyu Chatterjee, Amitava Ghosh, Mulk Raj Anand, Rohinton Mistry, RK Narayan, Salman Rushdie have used Hinglish pretty regularly in their works. And therefore, after observing the appeal of Hinglish among the readers in India, many of India's young and budding authors are no longer aspiring to write strictly anglicized literature. Instead, they are aiming to create ethnic narratives which are more relatable to the Indian readers coming from all walks of life. So a massive portion of literature especially 'Young Adult' literature written targeting Indian readers is inclined towards Hinglish for its narrative, and the writers using this mantra are outpacing the sales of many Booker winner author's works, selling hundreds of thousands of copies in a country whereselling 5000 copies for a new Author was considered a positive response.

### **Global Perspective on 'Hinglish'**

Hinglish might seem as a fairly recent and somewhat irrelevant phenomenon to most of us but its growing importance can be understood by observing the intensity of attention its receiving not only in the native subcontinent but also in the global scenario. I would like to start by pointing out that there is at present a Wikipedia page dedicated to 'Hinglish' which can be an indication of its slow but Steady journey towards getting an official status as a language. Wikipedia describes 'Hinglish' as "a language that combines words from the English language with those of South Asia. The name Hinglish itself is a portmanteau of "Hindi" and "English". It is spoken on the Indian subcontinent", it also goes on to give an introduction of its origin during the colonial era.

The word 'Hinglish' and many hinglish words have also found their place in the latest edition of the Collins Dictionary, a total of about 26 words which are a mixture of Hindi and English have been added to the latest edition of Collins Dictionary. According to Jeremy Butterfield, the Editor in Chief of Collins Dictionary – "The beauty of English is that from the earliest times it has been able to incorporate and adapt words from other languages. Already we probably can't get through the day without using words derived from Indian languages. In the long run, we can expect Hinglish to influence in many fields in the same way Latin and French have over several centuries."

'Hinglish' has also been added to the latest edition of Cambridge English Dictionary which describes it as "a mixture of languages Hindi and English, especially the type of English used by speakers of Hindi".

Google has also developed an app called 'Hinglish Dictionary' which helps people to find out the meanings of Hinglish words. Apart from getting recognized by Wikipedia, several dictionaries and Google, Hinglish is also getting notable attention from print media platforms. Many articles on hinglish can be found on the web portals of New York Times, The Guardian, Times of India, The Hindu etc.

An article called "Make Room for Hinglish" written by MriduKhullarRelph on 16<sup>th</sup> September, 2011 in the web portal of New York Times, observes the rise of Hinglish novels in the literary scene of India. Another article called 'Meanwhile: A mix of Hindi, English and 350 million speakers' in the opinion section of New York Times says that "The new Hindi is emerging as a social leveler. For the English-speaking elite it is a way to connect with the millions in the country that are not fluent in English. For the non-English speaker, throwing in a few English words is a way to appear to be in tune with the new world"

An article published in The Guardian on 6<sup>th</sup> November, 2006 called 'The Hinglish-speaking world' informs that "More people speak English in south Asia than in Britain and North America combined. The result is Hinglish, a blend of English combined with Hindi, Urdu and Punjabi."

And this is just the 'tip of the iceberg' that is 'Hinglish' the internet is flooded with articles on English and this stresses the fact that the modern world is keen towards learning and using the language.

Hinglish is not only attracting the marketing world but is also creating an interest in the education sector, not only in India but also across borders which can be pointed out from the fact that a college in UK which introduced a linguistic course on Hinglish

in the year 2017 decided to expand it to a wider range of students from the following year because of getting a positive response from students to learn the new language, which is a blend of Hindi and English.

Portsmouth College, the college which introduced the course said- “the popularity of the course, offered as part of a wider module, reflects an interest among students for work placements with Indian companies and that having a basic grasp of Hindi would give them a head start in the market”.

## **Negative Repercussions of Hinglish: A reaction of the conservative Linguists**

The introduction of Hinglish in the linguistic scenario has attracted positive as well as negative reviews. It sure had a rejuvenating effect on the marketing and commercial world. It was also well received in the world of Indian English literature but there is a group of academic scholars, critics and linguistic who consider it to be an obstacle on the path of Indians becoming progressively fluent in the standard global English. In her article published on 11<sup>th</sup> February, 2016 written by Vineeta Chand talks about how ‘Hinglish’ is emerging as a competitor to English in becoming the Lingua Franca in the Indian subcontinent. According to her “New research by my colleagues and I has found that while the hybrid language is not likely to replace English or Hindi in India, more people are fluent in Hinglish than they are in English”.

## **CONCLUSION**

After analyzing the origin and evolution of ‘Hinglish’ at various parameters, it is safe to say that apart from negative reviews from conservative academicians, it shows the potential of becoming an effective tool in creating an active interest among the natives of the Indian subcontinent to learn English. It is also slowly becoming a bridge between the global and Indian markets and is fixing the gap created by the lack of communication between Indians and citizens of western countries which originates because of not having a common language to communicate in. The reception of Hinglish in the Indian subcontinent has so far been pre-dominantly positive because it not only fixes the gap between India and the world but also inside India as well because the communication gap is present also between the Indian citizens belonging to different states because each state has its own different language and dialects. Therefore, Hinglish will also play an important role in help Indians communicate better with each other as well as with the world.

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