

The Impact of Colonialism on the Spread of English in Modern India

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Abstract:

British colonialism in India at that time certainly had a lot of impact on the Indian state, one of which was in the field of language, namely English which became the second official language after Hindi. This article aims to explain how English also contributed to British colonization in India in many ways. The methods used in this research article will focus on how English affected the social structure, education, communication in Indian society both during the colonial and post-colonial periods. In addition, this article aims to provide a deeper understanding of how English was not only a tool of communication, but also a tool of domination and control in British colonialism in India. Thus English in India is not just a legacy left over from the colonial era but also a tool of social movement and progress in this modern era.

Keywords: Colonial; English Language; Indian modernization; education; heritage

INTRODUCTION

Background

Indian culture is known to be one of the oldest and has tremendous diversity. Culture encompasses various aspects of life such as art, social systems, and beliefs that are passed down from one generation to the next. It also reflects the way of life of a people group. In the context of the term “postcolonial”, cultures that were once colonized by colonial powers show varying impacts in each country. The term postcolonial is often associated with “Third World” countries, although the boundaries between the two in modern literature are often unclear. The term “Third World” itself has undergone many changes in meaning influenced by political, social, cultural and literary factors over time. Along with economic development and other situational changes, India's position as a postcolonial country is now part of the global discourse, despite being a British colony for two centuries. Indian literature today is no longer seen only as British literature or local literature influenced by British colonialism. The influence of British imperialism and colonialism is felt in the development of Indian literature, both in autonomous territories and those ruled by local rulers under British control.

When colonizing India, the British intended to carry out a process of westernization through trade, industrial development, and political reform. They believed that it was their responsibility to improve the living conditions of the Indian people who were considered underdeveloped. The British launched various projects to develop the economy and communication system in India. In addition, they also took part in improving the morals of the people through the education system built through various institutions. In general, the British wanted to create an Indian society that was physically Indian, but had the thoughts and tastes of the British.

RESEARCH METHODS

Approach and Type of Research

This research uses a descriptive qualitative method that focuses on studying the history, language development and cultural dynamics of India in the postcolonial context of Indian society when colonized by the British in more depth, which at that time affected the Indian people's habit of speaking English but were accustomed to the way of speaking of the Indian people themselves. We chose this approach because the main focus was to explore and understand more deeply the impact of colonialism on the spread of English in the Indian region through history and socioculture. This qualitative research allows researchers to analyze data in a complex and dynamic social context, without using numerical diagrams and statistics.

Location and Time of Research

The conduct of this research is through the stages of literature and documentation studies related to the history of British colonialism in the Indian region, including the development of English in post-colonial India. This research was conducted from March to May by accessing several academic sources, journal articles, history books, manuscripts, and official documents relevant to this research.

Data Collection Techniques and Sources

Various data in this study were obtained by means of literature study techniques, the data sources of which consisted of:

1. Various books on the history of colonialism and the spread of English in India
2. Journals related to the science of sociolinguistics and also colonialism

3. An archive or manuscript document of the history of British colonialism in the Indian region
4. Credible scholarly articles and opinions from educated and linguistic figures in India

The use of this technique was chosen by the researcher because it suits the purpose of the study which focuses on tracing the historical and social and cultural consequences of colonization.

Data Analysis Technique

The collected data was analyzed using the content analysis method by studying the themes, meanings, and narratives in the text. This analysis was done in a structured and systematic manner to identify the relationship between colonialism and its role in spreading English in India. The researchers also showed how English, which was originally a foreign language, was transformed into an official language and a symbol of postcolonial social status.

DISCUSSION

Colonialism is the expansion of a state's power over territory and people beyond its borders. Colonialism often aims to seek economic dominance of the region's resources, labor, culture and markets. The British dominated India for about 150 years. The British seemed to take an interest in India for many reasons such as its culture and literature. Culture is the icon of a region or country. Indian culture is quite diverse. The British emphasized western education and English as the language of instruction in India in the 1830s. This colonialism also impacted the language and literature in India which was forced to change to English due to its dominance. The British influenced Indian literature through the autonomous regions. India was under British domination for almost 150 years. The writing of literary works in English in India continued to attract both domestic and foreign audiences. Indian literary writers also learned to use English for their literary works during the colonialism period.

The Influence of English on Social Environments in the Colonial and Postcolonial Eras

The British emphasized western education and English as the language of instruction in India in the 1830s. This colonialism impacted the language and literature in India which was forced to change to a language due to its domination. India was under British domination for almost 150 years. Language is a social communication tool that results

from human speech. Humans as social beings need a means to interact with other humans in society. Language is a form of communication of a country. The colonizers also quietly entered the gap by spreading ideas using English which made the rapid spread of English. People, writers, students and activists were forced to change the use of the local language or the language of the locals, namely India, to English and were prohibited from speaking the local language of the Indian people.

The Influence of English in Colonial and Post-colonial Educational Settings

In Colonial Periods

In addition to the use of English, which was originally influenced by the colonization of the British Nation, it affects the social sphere of society in the Indian State, it turns out that this also has an impact on the scope of education in India, both in colonial and post-colonial times. During the British colonial rule in India, there were many policies of the British Colonial government that had an impact on Indian society at that time, one of which was that they organized a policy that regulated the field of education in India at that time. This policy was organized by the British Colonial government with the aim of developing Western or British education which was first initiated by the government of Governor General Lord Bentinck (1828-1835). Then, as director of the Committee of Public Instruction, Lons Macaulay made and passed a law that contained the enforcement of English as an introduction to learning in schools in the Indian State. Hence, this resulted in English becoming the second official language after Indian in the Indian State till date.

In addition, the British Colonial government also included and enforced the teaching of English Language and Literature in the Education curriculum which was included in every level of Education in India at that time with the long-term goal of producing colonial administrative employees who had to submit, obey and serve the colonial government, then they also aimed to create a class that culturally and intellectually, they could apply the phrase “English in taste, opinions, morals, and intellect” which they must have an English nature in terms of taste, opinions, morals, and also intellect that must be the same as the British. Although biologically, they are native Indians.

In Post-Colonial Periods

After India declared independence in 1947, English was not necessarily eliminated by them in the education system, but on the contrary they still maintain English as the language of instruction in educational institutions. Then they also still apply the learning

system implemented by the previous British Colonial Government, namely they still include the teaching of English Language and Literature in their curriculum at this time. It is because they are arguing about it that this colonial education continues. Like the words of Seth quoted from Paranjape (1998: 1049) that Indian writers think that English is the language used to express an opinion or voice of the third world (or Indian society itself) to the global world scene, and Seth also thinks that Indians and British are equal and the same nation as if they are at the same center and unity.

Then the English language also influences global knowledge in Indian society. They consider that English is the key to success and a symbol of a higher social and economic class, parents are competing to send their children to English medium schools, one of which is to get access to higher education abroad, where they will get world knowledge that they will not get in local education. Furthermore, English also provides wide access to literature and knowledge, which is important as most academic journals are published in English, Indian students and researchers can engage in global table discussions without having to translate content from other languages as they are already fluent in English, and most online learning resources (such as Coursera, edX, Khan Academy) are in English which makes it an important tool in accessing education digitally.

The Influence of English in Colonial and Post-colonial Communication Settings

In Colonial Periods

During the British colonial period, English was systematically introduced into the formal education system in India by the British colonial government. The aim was to produce educated Indians to be obedient servants of the colonial administration, so that they were “Indian in blood and color” but “English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect”. Later, English became the main language in the colonial bureaucracy and administration, replacing local languages and other official languages such as Urdu that were previously recognized by the colonial government. In addition, the use of English also became a tool of cultural domination and power which made it very easy for the British to control and change the perspective of Indian society in accordance with colonial interests. The English language also influenced the culture of the upper classes and elites in India, seen in the use of English place names and institutions, which became symbols of social status and power, In addition to language, the British also brought modern

government systems and measurement techniques that influenced India's social and administrative structure.

In Post-Colonial Periods

After India's independence in 1947, the influence of English in this part of India remained strong and even dominated, especially in government, education, and official communication. India retained the British colonial-style system of government and administration. Thus, English became one of the most important languages for expressing the voice of Indian society in the globalized world, especially in literature and international communication. This was influenced by the ongoing debate on India's national identity, where English was considered a colonial legacy as well as a tool to participate in the globalized world, vis-à-vis local and traditional languages such as Sanskrit and regional languages. Furthermore, the mastery of English opened up access for Indians to be integrated in higher education and international academic publications, despite its initial imposition for colonial purposes. Overall, English served as a communication and administrative tool that reinforced British colonial dominance in India, as well as a cultural heritage and strategic tool that postcolonial Indians retained and utilized to interact on the global stage and shape their modern identity.

English As a Tool of Domination & Control in Colonialism

The English language that now dominates global communication has historical roots as a tool of control in colonialism. Its spread was closely linked to the expansion of the British Empire which made the language the primary means of administration, education and trade in colonized territories. In the colonial system, only the educated elite were given access to English-language education, creating a social divide between them and the general population who continued to use local languages. English became a status symbol and a tool of domination that excluded indigenous cultures and languages. Although the colonial era is over, many countries continue to use English as an official or second language. This shows how colonialism shaped linguistic and cultural identities that still persist. In the postcolonial era, the dominance of English continues through media, education and popular culture, spreading Western values globally. However, a language decolonization movement also emerged. Figures such as Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o chose to write in local languages to counter British hegemony and emphasize the importance of preserving cultural identity through indigenous languages.

English As a Tool of Social Movement and Progress in Modernizing India

English, though originally a colonial legacy, has played an important role in driving social movements and progress in India, especially in the era of modernization. It became the bridge that connected India to the globalized world and facilitated transformations in the educational, social and economic spheres (UMY Repository, 2023; E-Journal IAIN Kendari, 2022; FIB UI, 2021). After independence, India maintained English as the language of instruction in many institutions of higher education and science. This allowed access to modern knowledge and Western technology, while opening up professional opportunities at both national and international levels. Educational institutions such as the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College (now Aligarh Muslim University) used English as the main language of instruction, enabling the integration of traditional and modern education (STAI Al-Hikam, 2020). English also became an important tool in raising social and political awareness in India. English-language print and electronic media became a means of advocating for human rights, gender and economic justice. Social movement leaders use English to communicate with the wider community, strengthen national solidarity and promote social inclusion (FIB UI, 2021). Mastery of English has been key to social and economic mobility in India. English proficiency opens access to jobs in the information technology, business and government sectors. India is becoming a global hub for outsourcing services such as call centers and software development, strengthening the country's position on the world stage (Journal ARIPI, 2023).

CONCLUSION

British colonialism's influence on the English language's expansion in India has left a significant and long-lasting legacy that permeates Indian society today. This study has demonstrated that English was purposefully used as a tool of cultural dominance and control in addition to being a linguistic tool that was introduced for administrative convenience. The British were effective in integrating English into India's social and institutional structures through governmental, educational, and communication networks.

English became a symbol of prestige and power during the colonial era due to the imposition of English education systems and the marginalization of regional languages, which caused a class split. Given its strategic importance in gaining access to worldwide

information, international diplomacy, and economic progress, India kept English as a second official language even after gaining independence.

English has changed from being a sign of oppression to a tool of empowerment in the postcolonial era. It is essential to social mobility, worldwide communication, higher education, and technological advancement. English has become a tool for inclusive growth and progressive change in modern India, as well as a way for Indian voices to be heard on the international scene.

Although English is still a colonial heritage, Indian society has seized it as a means of cultural expression, modernity, and national advancement. Future studies could examine how India manages its multilingual identity in a globalized environment, as well as the conflict between English's ongoing dominance and the revival of India's native tongues.

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