

# Exploring Lexical Features of Indian English Newspapers for English Language Pedagogy

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## Abstract

*Indian English newspapers represent a distinctive variety of English that reflects the sociolinguistic landscape of India. This research explores the lexical features present in Indian English newspapers and examines their pedagogical implications for English language teaching in Indian contexts. The study aims to identify characteristic lexical patterns, borrowings, code-mixing practices, and semantic variations that distinguish Indian English print media from other English varieties. Using corpus linguistic methodology, a systematic analysis of five major Indian English newspapers was conducted over a six-month period, collecting approximately 500,000 words. The research employed quantitative and qualitative analytical techniques to identify frequency patterns, collocation structures, and context-specific lexical choices. Results reveal significant presence of Indianisms, hybrid constructions, cultural borrowings, and localized semantic extensions. The findings demonstrate that Indian English newspapers employ a unique lexical repertoire that bridges formal Standard English with indigenous linguistic elements. These lexical features provide authentic, culturally relevant materials for English language pedagogy in India. The study concludes that incorporating newspaper-based lexical features into curriculum design can enhance learner engagement, cultural awareness, and communicative competence in context-appropriate English usage.*

**Keywords:** Indian English, lexical features, newspapers, English language pedagogy, corpus linguistics

## 1. Introduction

The evolution of English in India has created a distinctive variety known as Indian English, characterized by unique phonological, syntactic, and lexical features that reflect the country's multilingual and multicultural context. Indian English newspapers serve as significant repositories of this linguistic variety, functioning as both mirrors and shapers of contemporary Indian English usage. With over 125 million English speakers and thousands of English-medium publications, India represents one of the largest English-using communities globally, yet the pedagogical implications of its distinctive English variety remain underexplored in language teaching contexts.

English language pedagogy in India has traditionally relied on British or American English models, often overlooking the legitimacy and utility of local English varieties. However, the recognition of World Englishes and the pluricentric

nature of English has challenged this approach, advocating for pedagogical models that acknowledge and incorporate local linguistic realities. Indian English newspapers, being widely accessible and culturally embedded, present authentic linguistic data that can bridge the gap between prescribed standard forms and actual usage patterns encountered by learners in their daily lives.

The lexical dimension of Indian English is particularly significant as it encompasses borrowings from Indian languages, semantic shifts, neologisms, and culturally specific collocations that reflect Indian thought patterns and social realities. Newspaper language, situated between formal written registers and conversational styles, provides learners with exposure to professional yet accessible English usage. Understanding the lexical features of Indian English newspapers can therefore inform curriculum development, materials design, and teaching methodologies that are contextually appropriate and pedagogically effective. This research addresses the need for systematic documentation and analysis of lexical features in Indian English newspapers and explores how these features can be leveraged for English language teaching. By examining authentic newspaper texts through corpus linguistic methods, the study aims to identify characteristic lexical patterns and propose pedagogical applications that recognize Indian English as a legitimate variety worthy of study and instruction.

## **2. Literature Review**

The study of Indian English has gained considerable scholarly attention over the past several decades. Kachru (1983) established the foundational framework for understanding Indian English as a distinct variety within his three-circle model, positioning India in the Outer Circle where English functions as a second language with institutionalized status. This conceptualization legitimized the study of Indian English features as systematic variations rather than errors or deviations from native-speaker norms. Subsequent research has documented phonological, grammatical, and lexical characteristics that distinguish Indian English from other varieties. Lexical features of Indian English have been examined from multiple perspectives. Sailaja (2009) provided comprehensive documentation of Indian English vocabulary, identifying categories such as borrowings from Indian languages, hybrid formations, semantic shifts, and culture-specific lexical items. Her work demonstrated that Indian English lexicon extends beyond simple borrowing to include creative morphological processes and meaning extensions that reflect Indian conceptual frameworks. Similarly, Sedlatschek (2009) conducted corpus-based analysis of Indian English, revealing distinctive collocation patterns and lexical bundles that characterize Indian English usage in various registers.

Newspaper language has been recognized as a valuable resource for linguistic analysis and language pedagogy. Reah (2002) examined newspaper discourse, highlighting how lexical choices in newspapers reflect ideological positions, cultural values, and audience expectations. In the Indian context, Agnihotri and Khanna (1994) analyzed language use in Indian English newspapers, noting the negotiation between international intelligibility and local identity expression. Their findings suggested that Indian newspapers employ strategic code-mixing and borrowing to connect with local readerships while maintaining journalistic professionalism. The pedagogical applications of corpus linguistics and authentic materials have been extensively discussed in language teaching literature. Hunston (2002) demonstrated

how corpus-based approaches can inform vocabulary teaching by revealing actual usage patterns, frequency information, and contextual variations that dictionary definitions alone cannot provide. Johns (1991) introduced the concept of data-driven learning, where learners engage directly with corpus data to discover linguistic patterns, promoting autonomous learning and critical language awareness.

Research specifically addressing Indian English in pedagogical contexts has emerged more recently. Canagarajah (2006) argued for critical approaches to English language teaching that acknowledge multilingual realities and local language practices, suggesting that pedagogies should build on learners' existing linguistic resources rather than replacing them with external norms. Mahboob and Ahmar (2004) examined Pakistani English textbooks, revealing disconnections between prescribed norms and local language realities, findings applicable to the Indian context as well. Several studies have explored the specific lexical characteristics of Indian English that have pedagogical relevance. Mukherjee and Hoffmann (2006) analyzed lexical cohesion in Indian English academic writing, identifying distinctive patterns in lexical repetition and synonym use. Lange (2012) investigated Indian English collocations, finding systematic variations from British English that reflect Indian semantic preferences and cultural concepts. These variations suggest that explicit attention to Indian English lexical patterns could enhance learners' productive competence in context-appropriate English usage. The gap in existing literature lies in the limited systematic investigation of how specific lexical features identified in Indian English newspapers can be translated into pedagogical practices. While descriptive studies of Indian English lexicon exist, and theoretical arguments for local variety inclusion in curricula have been made, empirical research connecting newspaper lexical analysis with concrete pedagogical applications remains scarce. This study addresses this gap by systematically analyzing lexical features in Indian English newspapers and proposing evidence-based pedagogical implications.

### **3. Objectives**

1. To identify and categorize the distinctive lexical features present in Indian English newspapers, including borrowings, hybrid formations, semantic variations, and culture-specific vocabulary.
2. To analyze frequency patterns and collocation structures of characteristic Indian English lexical items in newspaper discourse through corpus linguistic methodology.
3. To examine the contextual and functional distribution of Indian English lexical features across different newspaper sections and journalistic genres.
4. To propose pedagogical applications and strategies for incorporating Indian English newspaper lexical features into English language teaching curricula, materials, and classroom practices.

### **4. Methodology**

This research employed a corpus linguistic approach combined with qualitative discourse analysis to examine lexical features in Indian English newspapers. A specialized corpus was constructed specifically for this study, comprising articles from five major Indian English newspapers: The Times of India, The Hindu, Hindustan Times, The Indian

Express, and The Telegraph. These newspapers were selected based on their national circulation, regional diversity, and representation of different editorial perspectives, ensuring comprehensive coverage of Indian English newspaper discourse. The data collection period extended over six months, from January 2019 to June 2019, during which articles were systematically sampled from various sections including national news, international news, business, sports, editorial, lifestyle, and entertainment. This multisectional sampling strategy ensured representation of different journalistic registers and subject domains. Articles were digitally archived and processed using corpus linguistic software tools including AntConc and Sketch Engine for quantitative analysis.

The analytical framework integrated quantitative corpus techniques with qualitative linguistic analysis. Frequency analysis identified high-occurrence lexical items characteristic of Indian English, while keyword analysis compared the Indian English newspaper corpus against reference corpora of British and American English newspapers to highlight distinctive lexical features. Collocation analysis examined word association patterns, revealing culture-specific lexical bundles and phraseological units. Concordance analysis provided contextual information for understanding semantic variations and pragmatic functions of identified lexical features. Qualitative analysis complemented quantitative findings by examining the sociolinguistic and cultural contexts of lexical choices. Borrowed words from Indian languages were categorized according to semantic domains and analyzed for their functional roles in newspaper discourse. Hybrid formations were examined for morphological processes and semantic motivations. Semantic extensions and meaning variations were documented with attention to cultural conceptual frameworks underlying these shifts. The analytical process was iterative, with initial quantitative findings directing focused qualitative investigation, and qualitative insights informing refined quantitative analysis. Ethical considerations included respecting copyright by using newspaper texts solely for academic research purposes and acknowledging all sources appropriately. The research focused on publicly available published materials, requiring no human subject participation or institutional permissions. Data management followed systematic protocols ensuring reliability and reproducibility of findings.

## 5. Results

### Borrowings from Indian Languages

The analysis revealed extensive lexical borrowing from various Indian languages, particularly Hindi, but also including Tamil, Bengali, Urdu, and regional languages. The corpus contained 2,847 instances of direct borrowings, representing approximately 0.57% of total corpus words. These borrowings clustered in specific semantic domains reflecting cultural concepts, social institutions, political terminology, and everyday life elements significant in Indian contexts. Political and administrative terminology showed substantial borrowing patterns. Terms such as *panchayat* (village council), *zila parishad* (district council), *gram sabha* (village assembly), *lok sabha* (lower house of parliament), and *rajya sabha* (upper house) appeared with high frequency across political reporting sections. These items occurred without italicization or explanatory glosses, indicating their established status in Indian English newspaper conventions. The term *panchayat* appeared 187 times, demonstrating its integration into standard Indian

English political discourse. Similarly, administrative terms like *tehsildar* (revenue officer) and *patwari* (village accountant) were used without translation, assuming reader familiarity.

Cultural and religious vocabulary constituted another major category of borrowings. Terms including *dharma*, *karma*, *guru*, *ashram*, *mandir*, *masjid*, *gurudwara*, *puja*, *prasad*, *bhajan*, *kirtan*, and *darshan* appeared frequently, particularly in lifestyle, cultural reporting, and social news sections. The word *dharma* appeared 134 times, often in contexts discussing moral obligations, religious duties, or philosophical concepts that lack direct English equivalents. These borrowings reflect cultural concepts deeply embedded in Indian worldviews that English vocabulary cannot adequately capture. Social relationship and kinship terms borrowed from Indian languages were prevalent, including *babu*, *sahib*, *ji*, *didi*, *bhaiya*, *beta*, *chacha*, and *tau*. These terms carry specific social meanings regarding hierarchy, respect, intimacy, and relationship dynamics. The honorific *ji* appeared 298 times as a suffix to names and titles, reflecting Indian cultural norms of respectful address. Such terms demonstrate how Indian English newspapers encode social relationships through lexical choices that Standard English cannot express with equivalent nuance. Food-related borrowings were extensively documented, with terms like *dal*, *roti*, *chapati*, *naan*, *biryani*, *samosa*, *lassi*, *chai*, *mithai*, *kheer*, *halwa*, and *pakora* appearing frequently in lifestyle sections but also in general news when cultural events or social contexts were discussed. The word *chai* appeared 156 times, often in phrases like "chai pe charcha" (discussion over tea), indicating both the beverage and the cultural practice it represents. These food terms reflect culinary traditions integral to Indian identity.

### Hybrid Formations and Code-Mixing

The corpus revealed systematic patterns of hybrid word formation combining English and Indian language elements. These hybrids appeared 1,423 times, demonstrating productive morphological processes in Indian English newspaper writing. Hybrid formations served communicative functions including cultural specificity, semantic precision, stylistic effects, and identity marking. Productive hybrid patterns included English words with Hindi plural markers, such as *goondas* (thugs), *dhobis* (washermen), and *netas* (politicians). The Hindi plural marker *-s* combined with Hindi nouns created forms that function seamlessly in English syntax while retaining cultural specificity. Terms like *lathi-charge* (baton charge), *gherao* (encirclement protest), *bandh* (strike), and *dharna* (sit-in protest) represent hybrid formations describing Indian-specific protest actions. These terms appeared frequently in political reporting, with *lathi-charge* occurring 89 times and *bandh* appearing 134 times.

Compound formations combining English and Indian elements included *vote-bank*, *poll-bound*, *temple-town*, *railway-budget*, and *coalition-dharma*. The term *vote-bank* appeared 76 times, representing a political concept specific to Indian electoral dynamics where political parties cultivate support from specific community groups. Such hybrids demonstrate semantic innovation where neither language alone provides adequate expression. Code-mixing appeared as strategic stylistic choice rather than linguistic deficiency. Journalists employed Hindi phrases within English sentences to achieve specific rhetorical effects including authenticity, local flavor, humor, or emotional intensity. Phrases like "*aam aadmi*" (common man), "*sab changa si*" (all is well), and "*jugaad*" (innovative fix) appeared in

quotation marks or italics, indicating their marked status while demonstrating their communicative utility. The phrase "*aam aadmi*" occurred 112 times, particularly in political contexts discussing policies affecting ordinary citizens.

### Semantic Variations and Extensions

Indian English newspapers demonstrated systematic semantic variations where lexical items carry meanings differing from or extending British and American English usage. These semantic patterns reflected cultural conceptual frameworks and communicative needs specific to Indian contexts. The research identified 387 lexical items showing semantic variation or extension. The term *community* in Indian English newspapers frequently refers specifically to religious or caste groups rather than just geographic or interest-based groups. Analysis revealed that in 78% of occurrences, *community* carried this specific ethno-religious meaning, as in phrases like "minority communities" or "scheduled communities." This semantic specialization reflects India's social organization around religious and caste identities. Kinship terms showed semantic extension beyond biological relationships. *Brother* and *sister* frequently appeared as respectful address terms for non-relatives, particularly in direct speech quotations and informal contexts. The corpus contained 234 instances of such usage, demonstrating systematic pragmatic extension of kinship vocabulary to social relationships. Similarly, *uncle* and *aunty* served as respectful address terms for older non-relatives, appearing 178 times in this extended sense.

Political vocabulary demonstrated semantic particularization. The term *party* overwhelmingly referred to political parties rather than social gatherings, appearing in this specialized sense in 94% of its 456 occurrences. *President* and *minister* frequently appeared without articles or with different article usage than Standard English, reflecting Indian English grammatical patterns but also indicating their status as quasi-proper nouns in Indian political discourse. Temporal expressions showed distinctive usage patterns. *Today itself* (meaning "this very day"), *yesterday only* (meaning "just yesterday"), and *out of station* (meaning "away from one's usual location") appeared frequently, representing Indian English phraseological patterns. These expressions occurred 167 times collectively, demonstrating established conventional usage in Indian English newspapers despite their non-standard status in other varieties.

### Culture-Specific Collocations

Collocation analysis revealed distinctive word association patterns reflecting Indian cultural concepts and social practices. Statistical analysis identified 523 collocations with significantly higher frequency in the Indian English newspaper corpus compared to British and American reference corpora, indicating culturally specific lexical patterning. Festival-related collocations were prominent, including *celebrate Diwali*, *observe Ramadan*, *mark Holi*, *during Durga Puja*, and *festive season*. These collocations appeared with characteristic verb choices reflecting cultural practices; *celebrate* collocated most strongly with *Diwali* (78 instances), while *observe* typically paired with *Ramadan* (43 instances), reflecting different cultural conceptualizations of these festivals. Administrative and bureaucratic collocations included *file FIR* (First Information Report), *lodge complaint*, *move court*, *approach authorities*, and



*submit representation*. The phrase *file FIR* appeared 93 times, representing the specific legal procedure in Indian criminal justice system. Such collocations reflect institutional procedures specific to Indian administrative contexts.

Educational collocations demonstrated Indian-specific patterns including *board examination*, *CBSE affiliated*, *entrance test*, *merit list*, and *reservation policy*. The phrase *board examination* occurred 87 times, referring specifically to standardized examinations administered by educational boards, a central feature of Indian education system. *Reservation policy* appeared 64 times, referring to affirmative action policies unique to Indian governance. Social issue collocations revealed culturally specific concerns and discourse patterns. Phrases like *dowry death*, *honour killing*, *caste discrimination*, *manual scavenging*, and *mob lynching* appeared with concerning frequency, reflecting social issues prominent in Indian public discourse. *Dowry death* appeared 34 times, representing a gender violence category specific to Indian legal and social contexts.

### Register Variation Across Sections

Analysis of lexical distribution across newspaper sections revealed significant variation in the frequency and types of Indian English features. Political sections contained the highest concentration of administrative borrowings and political hybrids, with 43% of all administrative terminology occurrences appearing in political reporting. Cultural and lifestyle sections showed greatest diversity of borrowings, particularly food terms and cultural vocabulary, accounting for 67% of food-related borrowings. Sports sections demonstrated interesting patterns with cricket-specific vocabulary including borrowed terms like *googly*, *gully cricket*, and *ranji trophy*, appearing 124 times collectively. Editorial and opinion pieces showed more conservative lexical choices with fewer borrowings and hybrids, suggesting that formal argumentation contexts favored more standardized English lexicon. However, even in these formal registers, culture-specific terms appeared when discussing inherently Indian concepts, indicating that certain semantic domains require local vocabulary regardless of register formality.

## 6. Discussion

The findings demonstrate that Indian English newspapers employ a rich lexical repertoire that systematically incorporates elements from Indian languages while maintaining English syntactic frameworks. This lexical hybridity serves multiple communicative functions including cultural specificity, semantic precision, identity expression, and reader engagement. The quantified patterns of borrowing, hybrid formation, semantic variation, and culture-specific collocation provide empirical evidence for Indian English as a systematic, rule-governed variety rather than a collection of random deviations from standard forms. The extensive borrowing from Indian languages, particularly in semantic domains related to culture, politics, administration, and social life, reflects areas where English vocabulary lacks adequate expressive resources for Indian contexts. Rather than viewing these borrowings as deficiencies in English proficiency, they should be understood as lexical enrichment that enables precise communication about Indian realities. The established nature of these borrowings, evidenced by their use without italicization or explanation, indicates their integration into conventional Indian English usage acceptable in formal written contexts. Hybrid

formations reveal productive morphological processes where Indian English speakers creatively combine resources from multiple languages to generate new lexical items meeting specific communicative needs. These innovations demonstrate linguistic creativity and adaptability. The systematic nature of hybrid formation patterns suggests underlying morphological rules governing how elements from different languages can combine, contradicting notions of Indian English as unsystematic interlanguage.

Semantic variations and extensions documented in this study illustrate how Indian English has developed culture-specific meanings for lexical items shared with other English varieties. These semantic shifts reflect different conceptual frameworks shaped by Indian cultural contexts. Understanding these variations is crucial for effective communication within Indian contexts and for avoiding misunderstandings in intercultural communication. The pragmatic extensions of kinship terms exemplify how cultural values around social relationships influence lexical usage. The culture-specific collocations identified provide evidence that Indian English has developed distinctive phraseological patterns reflecting Indian thought patterns, social practices, and institutional structures. These collocation patterns represent conventional usage that Indian English users implicitly know and employ. For language learners, explicit instruction in these collocational norms can improve naturalness and appropriateness of language production in Indian contexts.

### **Pedagogical Implications**

These findings have significant implications for English language pedagogy in India. First, they support the inclusion of Indian English lexical features in teaching materials and curricula. Authentic newspaper texts can serve as excellent pedagogical resources providing exposure to formal yet culturally relevant English usage. Rather than treating Indian English features as errors to be corrected, pedagogical approaches should acknowledge them as legitimate features of an established English variety. Vocabulary instruction can be enhanced by explicitly teaching culture-specific lexical items, borrowings, and hybrids that learners encounter in their daily linguistic environments. Understanding when and how to use these items appropriately enables learners to navigate different communicative contexts effectively. Collocation dictionaries and corpus-based materials focusing on Indian English patterns would provide valuable learning resources currently lacking. Critical language awareness activities using newspaper texts can help learners understand sociolinguistic variation, register differences, and the relationship between language and cultural identity. Comparing lexical choices across different newspapers, sections, and topics develops metalinguistic awareness and critical reading skills. Such activities also validate learners' existing linguistic knowledge and multilingual competencies.

Materials development should incorporate authentic Indian English newspaper texts alongside texts from other English varieties, helping learners develop receptive competence across varieties while building productive competence in contextually appropriate Indian English. This pluralistic approach recognizes the legitimacy of different English varieties while equipping learners for diverse communicative situations. Teacher education programs must address World Englishes perspectives and train teachers to recognize, explain, and teach features of Indian English as



systematic variations rather than errors. Many teachers currently lack confidence in validating local English varieties, often having been trained in prescriptivist approaches privileging native-speaker norms. Professional development focusing on Indian English features and their pedagogical applications can transform teaching practices. The findings also have implications for assessment practices. If pedagogical materials include Indian English features, assessment should likewise recognize their legitimacy and avoid penalizing learners for context-appropriate use of Indian English lexical items. Developing assessment rubrics that acknowledge Indian English as an acceptable variety would align evaluation practices with contemporary sociolinguistic understanding.

## 7. Conclusion

This research has systematically examined lexical features of Indian English newspapers through corpus linguistic analysis, revealing distinctive patterns of borrowing, hybrid formation, semantic variation, and culture-specific collocation that characterize this variety. The findings demonstrate that Indian English newspaper language represents a legitimate, systematic variety of English adapted to Indian sociolinguistic contexts. These lexical features reflect cultural concepts, social structures, and communicative needs specific to India, enriching English with resources for precise, culturally appropriate expression. The pedagogical implications are significant: Indian English newspaper lexical features can and should be incorporated into English language teaching in India. Authentic newspaper texts provide excellent materials for vocabulary instruction, reading comprehension, critical language awareness, and cultural understanding. Recognizing Indian English as a valid target variety validates learners' linguistic experiences and multilingual identities while developing communicative competence appropriate for Indian contexts. As English continues evolving as a pluricentric global language with multiple legitimate varieties, English language pedagogy must adapt to recognize and teach local varieties alongside international norms. Indian English newspapers, as accessible repositories of established Indian English usage, offer valuable resources for pedagogical innovation. By grounding teaching practices in authentic local language use rather than external prescriptive standards, educators can create more relevant, engaging, and effective learning experiences.

This study contributes to the growing body of research on Indian English and its pedagogical applications, providing empirical evidence for the systematic nature of Indian English lexical features and their suitability for inclusion in language teaching. The findings support arguments for pluralistic approaches to English language education that acknowledge linguistic diversity and empower learners with context-appropriate communicative resources. Future curriculum development and materials design should embrace Indian English newspaper language as a legitimate and valuable pedagogical resource.

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