The Discursive Nexus
A Scholarly Forum for English Studies and Critical Inquiry
Research Journal, Department of English, Symbiosis College of Arts and Commerce, Pune
Volume-1, Issue-2 | June, 2025 | ISSN 3107-4359

The Role of Hinglish and Multilingualism in Contemporary Indian Novels

Ms. Aditi Verma
Postgraduate Student
Symbiosis College of Arts and Commerce, Pune

ABSTRACT

English-language literature has gained substantial popularity in India because English novels surpassed 55% of all newly published titles in 2020 according to the Federation of Indian Publishers statistics. Hinglish emerged as a language combination of Hindi and English to fill the streets of daily conversations and media outlets' advertising campaigns and written works. Salman Rushdie calls this language mixture "chutnification" as he emphasises its Indian specifications. Hinglish usage in India reaches 350 million people according to British Council statistics from 2017 and major brands such as Coca-Cola and Vodafone use it in their advertising because it helps them reach a wide consumer base. Modern Indian authors now use a multilingual approach since the growing presence of English combined with the persistence of regional languages and the popularity of Hinglish. The researchers of "Language in India" (2011) revealed how Indian authors of today construct authentic stories through a fusion of English with local languages to depict the complex linguistic reality of the nation. The analysis of colonial influences on Indian literature is active but researchers study the translation effects of multilingualism on creative writing too less frequently. The research explores Hinglish together with multilingualism as they shape themes, characters and storytelling frameworks in modern Indian literature alongside writer approaches to Indian linguistic diversity.

Keywords: Hinglish, Multilingualism, Urbanisation, Code-switching, Globalisation

*

Introduction

A variety of sources investigate how Hinglish along with other languages influences literary identification in Indian literature according to their research findings. The book *Translating India: The Politics of Language and Culture* by Rita Kothari (2003) delivers a detailed

assessment of Indian linguistic diversity along with its literary translation and introduction processes. Rajend Mesthrie presents his analysis of English dialects in particular Hinglish within *World Englishes and the Multilingual Turn* (2014) for 'World Englishes' to explain linguistic development and its literary value. According to Nandini Bhattacharya in "Hybridity and Postcolonial India: Contemporary Indian Novels in English " (2011) published in the *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* the writer explores Indian English literature hybridity processes alongside postcolonial identity transformations. The work *Hinglish Lives: Language and Identity in Contemporary India* (2016) by Suman Gupta which appeared in *Language and Literature* explores both the cultural value and literary and identity impact of Hinglish. Neelam Patel investigates how code-switching specifically using Hinglish modifies the structural flow of Indian English fictional stories in her "Code-Switching and Its Effects on Narrative Structure in Indian English Fiction" (2017) article published in the *Journal of Literary Studies*. The linguistic phenomena appear prominently throughout contemporary Indian literature with the examples found in G. Sampath's *Inglish, Can You Speak It?* (2017), Vikas Swarup's *Q&A* (2005), and Khushwant Singh's *Delhi: A Novel* (1990). Through their works, these authors show how Indian authors combine multiple languages to represent the flexible linguistic trends that appear in modern narratives.

It will help in navigating the complicated issues of identity, belonging, and cross-cultural interaction in Indian literature which offers insight into how the use of multiple languages in a novel highlights the diverse experiences and perspectives of different social groups, challenging diverse experiences of Indian identity.

Language as a Marker of Identity

"Hinglish is no longer only a dialect of speech but a vivid reflection of India's evolving identity," Suman Gupta, *Hinglish Lives: Language and Identity in Contemporary India*.

In multilingual societies like India, we have many languages like English, and Hindi, regional languages that shape identity. Scholars like Frantz Fanon and Homi K. Bhabha argue that language can empower as well as alienate humans. This is illustrated effectively in Indian works

of literature with the fusion between English and the local languages. This study looks at Hinglish as an expression of the concept of hybridity given by Homi K. Bhabha in the works of Indian writers. Hinglish is a linguistic fusion of Hindi and English, typically used in India. It involves blending words and phrases from both languages within a single carried communication or text referred to as code-switching.

Numerous sociolinguistic studies show that language is central to identity. The book by Rita Kothari entitled *Translating India: The Politics of Language and Culture* (2003) quotes how a language is commonly used as a designator of culture which shows your place in the social hierarchy and your family. According to Kothari's theory of bilingualism or multilingualism in India, it's not simple using two or more languages, it goes beyond. It is associated with one's regional culture, social group, and the nation. Language is one of the main identity markers that is used to show belonging to certain groups. Hinglish is used to indicate the dual cultural connection of a character in Indian multilingual novels; both local and global. Hinglish shows a special cultural identity that helps people follow Indian traditions while living in a world where English is common.

In Khushwant Singh's *Delhi: A Novel,* for instance, he creates provincial dialects and languages, and Hinglish to paint the main character's arc through Delhi's old and traditional spaces. In this scenario, language is not just a tool of communication, but also an identity marker that locates the character in a specific historical and social context.

In one passage, the protagonist says to Bhagmati (a transgender woman):

"Arrey Bhagmati, tu kya samajhti hai apne aap ko? Dilli ka asli maalik? Dekh, duniya kya se kya ho gayi hai, aur tu ab bhi wahi galiyon mein phirte hai!"

The dialogue of the protagonist, Bhagmati, is a mix of English and Hindi. This reflects his identity as a Delhiite. He feels he owns the city as much as anyone else and is connected to the city's history *("Dilli ka asli maalik hoon"*) yet he is aware of the modern world ("*lkin duniya kya se kya ho gayi hai*"). Hinglish is a hybrid language that shows his ability to be able to work within both local and global cultures. Thus, making him a real symbol of contemporary Delhi.

The Discursive Nexus
A Scholarly Forum for English Studies and Critical Inquiry
Research Journal, Department of English, Symbiosis College of Arts and Commerce, Pune
Volume-1, Issue-2 | June, 2025 | ISSN 3107-4359

Code-Switching and Identity Fluidity

Code-switching is the way of switching on the language, codes, dialects, and style of speech according to the context. In many literature works, code-switching is used to show characters who change their language depending on context, audience, or even mood. Thus, it shows the adaptive identity is flexible and not fixed.

Studies show that code-switching is an (intelligent) tactic people use to express different aspects of their identities in societies where more than one language is spoken. For example, in India, one switches from Hindi to English to switch cultures, showcasing one's belonging to assorted social groups. The journal *Language in India* (Volume 11, 2011) shows that code-switching is mostly utilised by the writers to depict real-life experiences of multilingual characters, especially how people adjust quickly to altering social situations.

In Vikas Swarup's *Q&A*, the protagonist, depending on the social setting, the people he interacts with, and his own shifting self-perception, shifts between Hindi, English, and Hinglish. He doesn't use the dialect of the 'white community' of the area where he works. This mirrors his adaptability in the face of challenges. For example –

Interaction with Wealthier Characters

When Ram is talking to a rich man or an English-speaking character, he makes an effort to speak in English or uses a Hinglish phrase. In one scene, Ram talks to a lawyer and he makes a show of speaking in English and switching to Hindi in a bid to pretend to be, while simultaneously exposing his insecurity.

Dialogue Example:

Lawyer: "Why did you do it, Ram? Why would a poor boy like you even attempt such a thing?"

Ram: "Sir, woh... I mean... you know how it is... ek chance that, so I took it."

Here, Ram says to that man. He uses phrases like "*woh*…I mean" as well as "*ek* chance *tha*" which shows this person's linguistic compromise. He mixes English and Hindi to respond to

someone of a higher social class.

Casual Conversations with Friends or Street Characters

Ram feels relaxed when he talks to his friends or people from the same social and economic background. He often speaks in Hinglish. It shows that when the speaker feels safe in their identity, they can easily switch back and forth languages.

Dialogue Example:

Friend: "Dude, *tu kab sikhega*? *Yeh duniya bahut chalu hai*."

Ram: "*Arre chill na yaar! Sab samajhta hoon main*."

Here in the dialogue, he used the Hinglish expressions "*Arre chill na yaar*!" and "*Sab samajhta hoon main*" which are informal and demonstrate friendship. This language fluidity implies Ram's unsolidified social identity which easily adapts his speech based on the context and his relationship with the other person.

This illustrates how Vikas Swarup uses code-switching in dialogue to highlight Ram's fluid identity. This linguistic adaptability not only mirrors the realities of multilingual communication in India but also reveals the character's nuanced social navigation skills. Ram's language choices serve as a strategic reflection of his social environment, showing how he aligns himself with various identities to fit into diverse settings.

Hinglish and Multilingualism in selected novels

Salman Rushdie's "chutnification," related to how Indian cuisine combines numerous ingredients to develop a distinct flavour. Suman Gupta and Rajend Mesthrie, linguists and scholars, have tried to find and explore the linguistic features of Hinglish, they note that its syntax or sentence structure often reflects on how people pronounced Indian languages while the vocabulary is an integration of Hindi and English words which are adapted for ethnic and regional importance. In the analysis of Suman Gupta's novel, *Hinglish* has become an important means for building an identity as it disrupts the non-flexible dichotomy of conventional

"standard" languages which represents a more universal, harmonious literary voice. We will dive down into the origins and evolution of Hinglish which helps in outlining its route from a colloquial street language to an authentic literary language.

Code-Switching and Code-Mixing in Hinglish

An important key point of Hinglish in literature is its informal mix of Hindi and English, known as code-switching. Code-switching takes place when a speaker easily switches between languages or dialects in the middle of a sentence/conversation and combines both languages into one charming flow. For example, in *Delhi: A Novel,* Khushwant Singh uses the Hindi phrase "*Dilli hai mere yaar*" along with English. This particular mix not only makes the the story more exciting but also makes readers understand the culture in a better way. By moving and switching between languages, the characters easily articulate the emotions, absurdity, and cultural details that would be effortful to express in only one language. This helps readers to connect more deeply and better with the character's world which makes the story feel more real and true to India's many languages.

Another coined term is "Code-switching". In Hindi-speaking areas often, the use of English sentences with Hindi words is common. This makes the storytelling feel more indirect, realistic, and emotional. G Sampath's 2015 book is *Inglish - Can You Speak It?* The term "setting" refers to an informal arrangement, and "*jugaad*," which means a quick-fix solution that reflects the clever 'Indian way' and also takes readers into a world with a cultural weight whose meaning often transcends a simple translation. These writers create a familiar feeling with their readers who know these philosophies and also invite new readers in by adding words that mimic the everyday humor and details of Indian life.

Multilingualism in Indian literature shows how complex personal identity and inner struggles are. By blending the languages, writers disclose how the presented figures deal with altered parts of themselves, like their background, emotions, or goals. For example, in *Q&A*, Vikas Swarup practices both English and provincial languages in the novel to showcase the protagonist's beliefs and outlooks change based on who he's having a conversation with and the difficulties

he faces. Language has evolved into a means to show tiny fluctuations in mood or intention which helps readers comprehend the character's involvements better. This approach to using language adds wisdom to the character's inner feelings and helps in making the story feel more private and layered, beyond just cultural or social themes.

Hinglish and Identity Formation

In contemporary Indian writing, Hinglish is not merely just a combination of Hindi and English but it signifies traditional identity and connection. It is a mix that writers use in their narratives to connect with their roots and show the developing identity of postcolonial urbanism in India. This fusion enables the writers to portray the actuality of the world where beliefs and modernism meet and clash at times. Authors enable their characters to convey themselves in a manner that replicates their diverse cultural backgrounds. As a result, giving them voices to speak out that are both local and global. The term "code-switching" refers to the phenomenon of switching from one language to another in conversations, thus enhancing the story's themes of language, in turn, shaping the individual identity. In Vikas Swarup's *Q&A*, the protagonist's use of Hinglish shows how he negotiates his way through different social and cultural settings in India, illustrating his capability to belong to multiple identities simultaneously.

Kwame Anthony Appiah's ideas in *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* help explain this phenomenon. Appiah suggests that cosmopolitan identities are marked by a mix of local and global ties, which Hinglish in literature perfectly embodies. By moving between languages, characters show the adaptability of identity in a globalised world, aligning with Appiah's idea that people can hold multiple cultural views while staying connected to their roots. Hinglish, with its linguistic flexibility, thus becomes a personal and cultural statement of belonging, resonating with readers in a more connected world.

Evidence and Analysis

Research shows that using Hinglish offers viewers a greater connection to the character's cultural roots while subversing strict language norms. In *Hinglish Lives: Language and Identity in Contemporary India*, Gupta argues that Hinglish is a manifestation of a new kind of linguistic

adaptability as well as Identity. This mixture of languages disturbs or challenges colonial philosophies about what "perfect" English is and instead appreciates language mixing as a formula of cultural liberation. According to Gupta's theory, Hinglish is a tool of recovery that allows authors to discover subjects like the conflict between Western powers and the longing for Indian genuineness.

Lachman Mulchand Khubchandani (2004) in his study titled *Language, Culture and Nation Building* stresses that linguistic hybridisation breaks down class barriers, and creates space for people to engage in the public domain that crosses the barriers of class, education, etc.

Unique Lens on Identity and Belonging

Hinglish not only showcases strengthened cultural ties but also displays how a character feels at home or out of place. It is particularly important with those stories that deal with people who are living away from their hometown where characters end up finding themselves strangling between the two different cultures. In such particular situations, Hinglish helps the characters stay connected to their Indian roots even as they try to challenge foreign cultures. A study titled Writing in Many Tongues: Multilingualism in Indian Fiction published in Language in India emphasises the significance of multilingualism in literature as it holds the "migrant experience," which shows how a character can manage numerous dialects that reveal their struggle with identity and belonging.

Kwame Anthony Appiah's ideas about cosmopolitanism, as explained in his book *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* support this perspective. According to him, cosmopolitanism is about embracing and appreciating multiple cultural personalities without allowing only one to dominate. Appiah proposes that identity is supple which is formed by the blend of diverse cultural influences. Similarly, Hinglish in modern literature permits readers and the worldwide audience to discover the fluidity of identity in the world. It illustrates how individuals travel through cultural boundaries which helps in mixing elements from their natives and new cultures while still staying connected to their roots. Thus the multilingualism Appiah debates about assists as an influential way to signify the overlying cultural experiences people

navigate today.

Addressing Social Issues through Language

One of the best things about using Hinglish and other mixed languages in modern Indian literature is how they elucidate and analyse important social problems. These language choices go beyond simple dialogue; they help highlight themes such as caste discrimination, urbanisation, and globalisation, realistically reflecting India's layered social landscape. Employing this technique, language acts as a mechanism for representing various and often demoted outlooks.

In inspecting class and societal dissections, writers often use Hinglish and regional languages to underline class transformations which creates a noticeable separation and classification. For instance, characters in Vikas Swarup's *Q&A* speak Hinglish, which authentically represents the socio-economic backgrounds of lower-income communities. This makes their opinions more relevant to booklovers accustomed to related traditions of speaking and as a result, adds gravity to their social experiences.

Similarly, in novels like Khushwant Singh's "Delhi: A Novel", the theme of urbanisation is illustrated through characters who move from rural areas to the city and gradually adopt Hinglish. This blending of languages reflects the process of adapting to urban life while keeping cultural roots, symbolising the hybrid identity shaped within India's cities. Here, language becomes a metaphor for social transformation, showing how identities evolve within a larger socio-cultural context.

In the end, globalisation is also important as many characters have to balance local traditions with global ones. In *River of Smoke*, Amitav Ghosh illustrates how characters use different languages depending on the context and how that affects their identities. This constant switching, in fact, makes it an indicator of resilience where they claim that mixing allows them to remain connected to their roots in a globalised world.

The Discursive Nexus
A Scholarly Forum for English Studies and Critical Inquiry
Research Journal, Department of English, Symbiosis College of Arts and Commerce, Pune
Volume-1, Issue-2 | June, 2025 | ISSN 3107-4359

Offering Cultural Critique through Language

Offering Cultural Critique through Language By using Hinglish, Indian authors can deliver cultural critiques that are both humorous and meaningful. Hinglish captures the influence of Western culture, globalisation, and urbanisation with a playful, satirical edge. In Inglish, Can You Speak It? By G. Sampath, Hinglish humorously critiques the sometimes awkward fusion of Western and Indian traditions. This approach resonates with younger, urban readers who recognise these cultural dynamics. Scholars argue that mixing languages challenges the dominance of "pure" English in postcolonial literature, promoting multilingualism as an essential part of modern Indian identity. In *The Empire Writes Back Ashcroft*, Griffith & Tiffin indicate abrogation and appropriation as the post-colonial writer's techniques of confronting the colonial authority as well as articulating his or her cultural ownership. Abrogation means discarding the linguistic dominance of the colonising language (such as 'pure' English) while appropriation means the reconversion or reshaping of the colonising language to show the local realities. Critics note that these multilingual elements do more than enhance storytelling—they reflect India's evolving, diverse cultural landscape.

Conclusion

The use of Hinglish in recent Indian novels reflects a hybrid identity among modern Indians navigating complex urban lives, blending Indian values with modernity in contrast to the monolingual literary forms. Hinglish serves as a tool for reconciling tensions between local traditions and global influences, often highlighting the interplay between Western values and Indian identity. This bilingualism illustrates characters' varying degrees of adaptation to Western culture while using Hinglish as a means to transcend it, preserving local customs and traditions. In doing so, it safeguards India's cultural identity amid globalisation. Hinglish shapes gendered communication, especially among female characters who employ code-switching to assert autonomy and subtly challenge societal norms, embracing progressive ideas in familiar yet subversive ways. By incorporating Hinglish, authors critique the global homogenisation of culture, emphasising India's rich diversity against a backdrop of Westernised narratives.

REFERENCES

Appiah, Kwame Anthony. *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers*. W.W. Norton & Company, 2006.

Baker, Steven. "Will We All Be Speaking Hinglish One Day?" British Council, 30 Oct. 2015, https://www.britishcouncil.org/voices-magazine/will-we-all-be-speaking-hinglish-one-day.

Bhattacharya, Nandini. "Hybridity and Postcolonial India: Contemporary Indian Novels in English." *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 47, no. 4 (2011): 354-367.

Drabinski, John. "Frantz Fanon." *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward N. Zalta, Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2024, https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/frantz-fanon/.

Gupta, Suman. "Hinglish Lives: Language and Identity in Contemporary India." *Language and Literature* 25, no. 4 (2016): 329-343.

Khubchandani, Lachman Mulchand. *Language, Culture, and Nation Building*. Centre for Communication Studies, 2004

Kothari, Rita. Translating India: The Politics of Language and Culture. Routledge, 2003

Mambrol, Nasrullah. "Homi Bhabha's Concept of Hybridity." *Literary Theory and Criticism*, 8 Apr. 2016, https://literariness.org/2016/04/08/homi-bhabhas-concept-of-hybridity/.

Mesthrie, Rajend. "World English's and the Multilingual Turn." World Englishes 33, no. 3 (2014): 345-356.

Orsini, Francesca. Language in India.

Patel, Neelam. "Code-Switching and Its Effects on Narrative Structure in Indian English Fiction." *Journal of Literary Studies* 30, no. 1 (2017): 87-102.

Prasad, G. J. V. "The Other Language: English and Indian Literature." *Writing India, Writing*

English: Literature, Language, Location, Routledge India, 2011.

Sampath, G. "Inglish, Can You Speak It?" The Hindu, 2015.

Singh, Khushwant. *Delhi: A Novel*. Penguin India, 2008.

Swarup, Vikas. *Q&A.* Doubleday, 2005.