

## Varieties of Kashmiri English

Sobial Jahane Gazzalie, Ph.D. Scholar

=====

### Abstract

English is one of the largest spoken languages in the world. It is also widely spoken in India with the influence of different 'variety' of Indian languages which ultimately results a variety known as 'Indian English'. *Indian English* is serried phrase that refers to variety (various forms) of English used in different states of India. The term 'variety' is used to refer to any variant of a language which can be sufficiently delimited from another variant. In general term it is any distinctive form of language or linguistic expression. Linguists commonly use language variety (or simply variety) as a cover term for any of the overlapping subcategories of a language including dialect, idiolect, register and social dialect. In this paper we will discuss one of the varieties of Indian English which is called as 'Kashmiri English'. This paper will highlight the conditions and main functions of English in Kashmir. It will focus on the sub-varieties of Kashmiri English.

**Keywords:** Variety, Sub-variety, Indian English, Dialect, Idiolect, Kashmiri English, Boatman English, Shawl, Kangiri, Code-switching, Code-mixing, Educated English, Standard Variety, Received Pronunciation, Vocabulary, Native, Non-Native, Kashmiri English, Sanskritized Variety, Persianized Variety.

### Introduction

In *The Oxford Companion to the English Language* (1992), Tom McArthur identifies two broad types of language variety: "(1) user-related varieties, associated with particular people and often places and (2) use-related varieties, associated with function, such as legal English (the

language of courts, contracts, etc.) and literary English (the typical usage of literary texts, conversations, etc.)."

A 'variety' can be regarded as a 'dialect' for some purposes and a 'language' for others, and casual ambivalence about such matters is common worldwide. Language scholars have in recent decades used the term *variety* to label a subdivision within a language. Varieties may relate to a place or community such as Indian English, African English, Australian English, American English, British English, Spanish English, and German English etc. Sub-varieties of all the above English varieties are also present, e.g. in Indian English we have South Indian English, Babu English, Kashmiri English, Gujarati English, Marathi English, etc.

If we talk about Kashmiri English let's start with Kashmiri language first. Kashmiri, also known as Keshur or Koshur, belongs to the Northwestern group of the Indo-Aryan branch of the Indo-European language family. It is the largest of the Dardic languages, and the only language in the Dardic group that boasts an early literary tradition. It is primarily spoken in the Kashmir valley of the state of Jammu and Kashmir in India, and also parts of Kashmir occupied by Pakistan. Kashmiri is also spoken in other parts of India, and in many other parts of the world by Kashmiri immigrants. According to the 2001 census, it has 5.4 million speakers in India, with a total of about 5.6 million speakers worldwide. Though Urdu is the official language of the multilingual and multi-ethnic state of Jammu and Kashmir, Kashmiri is the majority language used as a medium of instruction in primary and middle schools. It serves as the medium of much of mass communication, such as newspapers, radio programs, and films. Most speakers of Kashmiri are fluent in a second language, typically Hindi/Urdu. Many Kashmiris also speak English.

### **Kashmiri Dialects**

Kashmiri dialects have been broadly divided into regional and social dialect. In regional we have three dialects like:

- i. *Mara:z* - spoken in the southern and southeastern region.
- ii. *Kamra* - spoken in the northern and northwestern region.
- iii. *Yamra:z* - the dialect of Srinagar and its neighboring areas in the center.

And when we talk about social dialects we have two varieties of dialect like

- i. Sanskritized variety: which is spoken by Kashmiri pundits.
- ii. Persianized variety: which is spoken by Kashmiri Muslims.

### **English and Kashmiri**

All these dialects of Kashmiri language have great influence on English which is spoken by Kashmiri people and results in Kashmiri English. English has extraordinary receptive and adoptable heterogeneousness. Kashmiri has taken material from almost everywhere in the world and has made new elements of languages on its own with varied ease and readiness. English, after Anglo - Saxons conquered England, was almost a pure form of language. It could make new words from its own compounded elements and had a few foreign words. Today it is the most mixed of languages, having received through its history all kinds of foreign elements with ease and has assimilated them all to its own character. Its amazing variety and heterogeneousness and general receptiveness of new elements has contributed to making it a suitable and attractive vehicle in so many parts of the world as well in Kashmir.

English as a most important language is spoken by maximum number of people of the world, as it is a language of commerce and industry, tourism, world politics, diplomatic negotiations and international communications. It has ability to express the multiplicity of ideas and the refinements of thought that demand expression in the modern era. For this purpose English has developed and possesses further capacity to develop a cosmopolitan vocabulary. Prominent among the assets of the English language is the mixed character of its vocabulary.

### **Kashmiri English**

As English spread around the world, it is influenced and altered by the new environments to which it spreads. Taking Kashmiri English (KE) into account, it is a variety of English spoken/used by people of Kashmir with linguistically and culturally Kashmiri background and which exhibits Kashmiri features. It is a non-native sub-regional variety (dialect) of English based on Standard English but with uniquely Kashmiri features in pronunciation, vocabulary,

syntax and discourse patterns. It is one of these sub-regional variety like that of Tamil English, Bengali English, Sindhi English, Punjabi English and so on, (the sub-regional varieties of Indian English). In Kashmir, it is actually English that functions as the language of the state government. The official correspondences, courts of law, higher educational and commercial institutes, use only English. All administrative, technical, science (and non-science) publications are brought out in English. In fact it is compulsory right from the primary level to college education. KE does not differ from non-native or native English in grammar and vocabulary. It is in the pronunciation that it is different from other varieties of non-natives and natives.

Undoubtedly KE is a type of English influenced by the phonology and phonetic color of Kashmiri. For example consider the following observations:

1. A Kashmiri speaker often breaks the consonant cluster by inserting a vowel sound in it; as in English words: *blood* [b→lad], *constitution* [kə-n↔s-tI-tʃ u-ʃ↔n/], *school* [s↔ku:l], *sports* [s↔p↔t↔s], *texts* [te-k↔s-t↔s].
2. Speakers of Kashmiri English tend to pronounce the sound /t/ as /T/ in words like many speakers pronounce English word ‘Thomas’ as /Tmas/ instead of /tmas/.
3. Bilabial voiced /ɟ/ of Kashmiri replaces the labio-dental voiced fricative /v/ of English. E.g. in words like watch, web and water the sound/w/ is replaced by sound /v/ as /va: tʃ/, /veb/ and va:t↔/ etc.
4. Aspirated bilabial plosive /pʰ/ replaces its English counterpart voiceless labio-dental fricative /f/. (However, now it has been observed that in educated Kashmiri /f/ is also used).
5. Dental stops /tʃH/ and /dʃH/ replace English fricatives /T,Δ/
6. Front half open long vowel / eI/ is used for the English /æ/, as in *black*, *catch*.
7. English back open rounded long vowel /ɔ:/ is replaced by / a:/, as in *ball*, *call*.

### **The Condition of English Language in Kashmir**

In the late 19th century English was introduced with the flow of missionaries in Kashmir and started being taught in the missionary schools. The government followed this practice by incorporating English as a subject. Later, English was made the medium of instruction at the

Undergraduate and Post-graduate levels. The government run schools had Urdu as the medium of instruction till the 10th standard. However, the privately run schools including both the public schools and the missionary schools had English as the medium of instruction right from the elementary level. In 2003, the Jammu and Kashmir Board of School Education implemented English as the medium of instruction from the elementary level onwards in the government schools as well. However, the official language of Jammu and Kashmir is Urdu.

As English has a marked tendency to go outside its linguistic resources, similarly in our part of Kashmir there is a fast-increasing tendency to develop and speak English language. It is spoken probably by 18% of the population in Kashmir and more and more people are becoming more interested in using English particularly youth. It is spoken in schools, colleges, universities, offices, tourist spots and other institutions of learning. Many scholars, teachers, government/private sector employees, common people are trying hard to develop accuracy and fluency in speaking English. It has been seen that in our colleges and schools, subjects like Functional English have been introduced to assist students to speak fluent and correct pronunciation of English language. Presently in Kashmir, English holds the most prestigious position followed by Urdu and other languages. This also has, to a great extent, altered the mindset of the average Kashmiri, and his socio-psychological profile also indicates a leaning towards English.

### **Major Functions of English in Kashmir**

Language plays a very important role in human lives. It is a social phenomenon. One of the main goals of language is to communicate with people and to understand them. When someone speaks, he intends a specific purpose. He wants to convey a message through that language. A person uses his language for many different purposes for example, to express his feelings, to ask for help and to apologize. In fact, we use language in many different ways. We use language and that language is a part of society. Actually, any language varies according to, the nature of the society, what kind of people, and their attitudes. People use language according to their situation. The social background of any person can play an important role in the kind of language he has.

English in Kashmir is used in various domains of the society such as education, business, media, tourism and government. Its use by Kashmiri native speakers performs various function which we will discuss below:

1. **Instrumental function:** it is a linguistic function in which one uses \*language to satisfy basic material needs, to manipulate the environment, and to accomplish things. For example, 'I want some juice'. It also refers to the use of English as the medium of learning at various stages of educational system. The formal and informal education systems are the primary places where a Kashmiri learns and comes into contact with English.
2. **Regulative function:** As the language of legal system as well as Kashmiri administration system English performs the Regulative function. This is where language is used to tell others what to do (e.g. "Go away").
3. **Interpersonal function:** The most important interpersonal function of English is, however, to provide a code of communication to linguistically and culturally diverse groups for communication. In this capacity, English has aided regional, national and international mobility for a certain stratum of society. This is the use of language to express feelings, opinions, and individual identity also. In Kashmir it also symbolizes modernity and prestige. It also includes science, technology and research, the media, business and tourism.
4. **Innovative/ Imaginative function/Creative function:** The Innovative function refers to the use of English that has also been resulted in the development of writing in various genres. It is used to express a variety of plans, concepts and opinions in Kashmir. These often differ from the cultural norms of western societies. There is also a considerable amount of fictional and autobiographical literature written in English by Kashmiri writers. A more recent trend is song writing in English with few rapping bands, such as, MC Kash, Alif, etc. certain local comedians have started joking in English to entertain people or relieve tension during times of stress. It is also the use of language for the sake of the linguistic artifact itself, and for no purpose. This function is also called aesthetic function which has at least as much to do with conceptual as with affective meaning.

5. **Informative/Representational/Referential function:** it refers the use of language to convey the facts and information. E.g. the exam has been postponed. It can also take the informative function of a command or directive, as in, ‘close that door’. It can also take the form of a question, as in, ‘why did Rahil hang himself?’.

### **Sub-Varieties of Kashmiri English**

Language variety is a general term for any distinctive form of a language or linguistic expression. This term is to label a subdivision within a language and may relate to a place or community. In this part only the Kashmiri sub-varieties of English are highlighted. The Existing and Non-existing sub-varieties of Kashmiri English are:

#### **1. Educated English**

Educated English is the usage of speakers and writers of English, who have been educated at least to the end of secondary level. The ‘term’ is sometimes used as a synonym for ‘Standard English’. Social levels of English shade gradually into one another. We can recognize three main levels. At the top is educated or Standard English, at the bottom is uneducated English, and between them comes what H. L. Mencken called the ‘vernacular’ (W. Nelson Francis, *The English language: An Introduction*, 1967). He adds: ‘uneducated English is that naturally used by people whose schooling is limited and who perform the unskilled labor in country and city. As English has a unique importance in the present scenario. It has played a crucial role in building modern world as well as Kashmir. There is very little amount of people in Kashmir who know about educated English in other words standard dialect of English or RP (Received Pronunciation). These people are either language students (linguistics or English literature) or have studied outside Kashmir or are the products of good private schools. Maximum educated people like professional students, engineering, medicine, computer, commerce, management professionals and people who work in different departments other than educational institutions are unaware about the standard dialect of English.

## 2. Boatman English

Kashmiri boatmen are the traditional boatmen who live and make a living from the lakes of Kashmir. They are most often the people with whom the tourists or visitors to the valley generally come in close contact. The tourist gets to interact a lot with these boatmen as they are the ones who take around the tourists on a scenic trip of the valley in their *Shikaras* (similar to a broad, wood plank canoe which is called *Naav* in Kashmiri language). D.L.R Loriner says in one of his review work named as *“The pronunciation of Kashmiri: Kashmiri sounds, how to make them and how to transcribe them”* by T. Grahame Bailey, that “personally in the improbable event of my ever again hearing the intriguing vowel-sounds of Kashmiri boatman, shikaris and villagers, which disturb the peace of the traveler in Kashmir and go on echoing, no doubt incorrectly, in the memory”. Most of boatmen are uneducated or very less educated, but they speak English and know exactly how to respond to every objection or excuse with tourists. Here’s a typical conversation between a tourist and one of the boatman, who takes the tourist on a ride and wants to sell some Kashmiri traditional products to him?

*Boatman: “Hello, my friends.”*

*Tourist: “Salaam Alaikum,”* I respond, touching my right hand to my chest.

*Boatman: “Walaikum salaam. This scene very beautiful.”*

*Tourist: Yes, it is very beautiful scene.*

*Boatman: The lakes beautiful.*

*Tourist: Yes, the lake is very beautiful.*

*Boatman: You like to see some of my beautiful things?”*

*Tourist: “What you got with you, brother?”*



*Boatman: "Oh, some beautiful thing my friends, wonderful. All locally made, by hand. My family has a small workshop."*

*Boatman: "You see my friends? Many beautiful shawls. All one hundred percent local Pashmina wool. Kashmir wool, you know? Very famous, very expensive except in Kashmir."*

*Tourist: "Oh, I'm not a big shawl guy, brother."*

*Boatman: "Yes, but your mother would like? Your girlfriend would be very happy with these yes?"*

*Tourist: "I don't have a girlfriend, brother."*

*Boatman: "Perhaps if you bought some shawls, you then, yes?"*

The above conversation results a variety different from educated variety in terms of lacking Auxiliary verbs, modals, Noun phrases and sometimes subjects or objects in interrogative sentences. In this variety there is no proper general agreement/usage of singular or plurals.

### **3. English Used in the Standard English News Papers of Kashmir**

There are several newspapers in English language which are read by people of Kashmir. Eg. *Greater Kashmir, Kashmir Times, Rising Kashmir, Kashmir Observer, State Times*, etc. Many of these are printed daily from the summer capital of J & K, Srinagar. Eg. *Greater Kashmir* is the most widely read English daily newspaper in the state. Standard English is mostly used in the above newspapers but experts from the standard newspapers have their own register and idiom:

"... Coming to personal heating, Kashmiris have a unique system. We have mobile heaters called "*Kangris*". It is an earthen pot in a wicker frame in which burning coals with ash on top are carried. This earthen fire pot is carried under a robe called '*Pheran*'. ... The best and the long-lasting fire is from the coal made from dried *Chinar* leaves

which are in abundance all over Kashmir in autumn. Even though the ‘Kangri’ is very versatile and convenient, it has its hazards too. There are cases of developing cancer in thighs and stomach by close contact with the hot fire pot under the ‘Pheran’...” (*Greater Kashmir*, 25 Oct. 2017).

“... the civil secretariat and other offices will reopen in Jammu on Monday after a ten day break owing to the pre-independence practice of “*Darbar move*” under which ... the “*Bandh call*” was given ... markets association also distanced themselves from the strike call terming the “*Bandh*” as unjustified ... the seat of Jammu and Kashmir govt. ... and “*Raj Bhavan*” in Jammu.....” (*Rising Kashmir*, 5 Nov. 2017).

#### 4. Code-Mixed Varieties of Kashmiri English

In the discussion of the varieties within the different forms of English used in Kashmir, the development of code-mixed varieties of Kashmir English must not be ignored. Code-mixing is the result of language contact and codeswitching, and has to be distinguished from just lexical borrowings. Code Switching entails the ability to switch from code A to code B. “There are two categories of Code Switching - Code Mixing and Code Shifting.” Code Mixing refers to the transferring of the elements or units of one language into another or we can say Code-mixing refers to the mixing of two or more languages or language varieties in speech. E.g.

*“As I said, every Angrez is considered to be a genius in Kashmir.”*

*“My Abu will deposit my fee kal.”*

*“I have a bad sirdard, I will take kuch medicin tablets”.*

*“To open a bank account address proof dena hoga.”*

Code Shifting denotes the functional contact in which a multi-lingual person makes alternate use of two or more codes according to situation, topic or domain. In the case of Urdu or Kashmiri and English code switching we have:

*I am afraid of nobody. Is waqat mujhe ruhi ki fikr hai.*

*Give me my book back, nati gasini jaan.*

*Madam can I go out, muje boht headach ha.*

Such a transfer results in developing a new restricted or not so restricted code of linguistic interaction. We find such code switching/ code mixing in most of Kashmiri English.

In addition to this, some of the varieties on the lexical level are also found in English—such as in Standard English the word ‘Aunt’ is a common noun but in Kashmiri English ‘Aunt’ is categorized as ‘maternal aunt’ for mother’s sister and ‘paternal aunt’ for father’s sister. Similarly, in Standard English the word ‘expire’ is mostly used in the meaning of ‘to dispatch’ or ‘to send something’ but in Kashmiri English the word ‘expire’ is also used in the meaning for ‘death’; e.g. Rahul’s uncle expired“ yesterday.

Some Kashmiri cultural terms which cannot be translated into English, are also used by many famous writers, in their original form, i.e. mother tongue, and they gave their meaning and explanation at footnotes. E.g the word ‘kangri’, ‘pheran’, ‘kashmiriyat’, ‘hartal’, ‘samavor’, ‘shawl’, ‘kebab’, ‘rista’ etc.

## **5. English Used by Artisans of Kashmir**

Kashmiri handicraft is known throughout the world for their artistic work and grandeur. The vast cultural and ethnic diversity of Kashmir has enabled a variety of motifs and techniques and crafts to flourish on this land. Kashmir represents a manufacturing class of Kashmiri handicrafts. People who are involved in it are always moving from one place to another for their trade/business and in between they need to interact with non native speakers of Kashmiri. There are also different categories involved in it, people who are well educated they use educated English, but people who are less educated or uneducated they use different variety than ‘Educated English’. Here is a conversation between a

handicraft artist who sells handloom things on his shop and a foreign tourist who want to buy certain handmade things from him.

*“Shopkeeper: Hello madam you like to see these.”*

*“Tourist: Yes, what are these things called?”*

*“Shopkeeper: Pheran, scarf, rings, bangles all handmade.”*

*“Tourist: Okay good. Can you please show me more.”*

*“Shopkeeper: Oh why not madam. See these bangles only siliver, pure silver, no combination.”*

*“Tourist: great. What are these called?”*

*“Shopkeeper: Pheran pure pashmina, hand work. No machine work.”*

*“Tourist: Ohh these are lovely. Can you please show me more beautiful designs?”*

*“Shopkeeper: Yes madam. Look madam beautiful scarfs, very beautiful, all woolen very hot in winter.”*

*“Tourist: How much it costs?”*

*“Shopkeeper: Only 200 rupees.”*

*“Tourist: I will give you 150 rupees. Is it ok?”*

*“Shopkeeper: No madam, not less than 200 rupees, no profit.”*

*“Tourist: Ok take 200 rupees.”*

*“Shopkeeper: Thank you madam.”*

The above conversation results in a variety different from the educated variety, Boatman’s variety, variety use in newspapers and code-mixed variety in terms of lacking of pronouns, demonstrative/determiners, Auxiliary verbs, modals, Noun phrases and sometimes subjects or objects in interrogative sentences. In this variety there is also no proper general agreement/usage of singular or plurals also.

## **Conclusion**

As the Kashmiri society has been changing and globalised, more attention has been drawn to English in different areas of society including education, economy, tourism and media.

The above content reveals the range and depth of English in Kashmir. It also shows the importance or characteristics of English in Kashmir.

Although English was considered as a major foreign language in Kashmir, Kashmiris in different contexts are more likely to have witnessed, or experienced benefits of having English competence than before. These changes in the functions and benefits have brought about change in the status of English from as a foreign language to a global language.

English neutralizes the difference in terms of identity. It has an advantage over Indian languages like Kashmiri, Hindi, and Tamil etc. Kachru elaborates: whereas native codes are functionally marked in terms of caste, religion, region and so forth, English has no such markers at least in the nonnative context.

Language has been changed and will be changed. English is not an exception. Old English was changed into Shakespeare's Middle English and then changed into Modern English. It is still changing. One of the noticeable and fascinating aspects of English in the 20th and 21st century is that it represents different cultural contexts. Terms like English as an international language, English as a global language, English as a lingua franca and World Englishes all represent these aspects of English.

---

### References

- Dar, B.A. *A Comparative Acoustic Analysis of the Duration of Vowels of English and Kashmiri*, PhD Thesis EFL-University, Hyderabad, 2007.
- Dar, M. Bashir. *A Text book of Phonetics Pronunciation and Spoken English*. Anmol Publications Private Limited, 2012.
- D.L.R Loriner. *The pronunciation of Kashmiri sounds: how to make them and how to transcribe them*. Review by T. Grahme Bailey, Royal Asiatic society journal of Great Britain and Ireland, No. 4 (oct 1938), pp. 587-588, Cambridge UP.
- Kak, A.A. "Globalisation of English and its Reflection on Kashmiri". South Asian Language Review, Vol.15, No. 1, January 2005.

- McArthur, Tom. *The Oxford Companion to English Language*. Oxford University Press, 1992.
- Sethi, J and P.V. Dhamija. *A Course in Phonetics and Spoken English*, New Delhi: Prentice Hall of India., 1999.

=====

Sobial Jahane Gazzalie, Ph.D. Scholar  
Gujarat University  
Navrangpura  
Ahmedabad 380009  
Gujarat  
India  
[sjgazzalie@gmail.com](mailto:sjgazzalie@gmail.com)