

READING

Hinglish

Have you ever listened to someone speaking an Indian language? If you have, you'll have noticed quite a few English words. A friend of mine called Yuvraj Singh does this all the time. He'll be speaking to me in Hindi, but will occasionally use an English word, such as 'job'. Now, this is strange because he could easily have given the Hindi word 'kaam' instead. The language he speaks isn't exactly Hindi or English, but appears to be the amalgam 'Hinglish'.

Borrowing words from other languages is certainly nothing new. In 1886, Henry Yule and Arthur Burnell published a guide to words from Indian languages that had passed into English, including 'shampoo' and 'bungalow'. But it has now become common for many Indian citizens to use English words while talking Hindi – or Tamil, or Bengali, etc.

What reasons could there be for the explosion of English words in modern India? One explanation is that they are considered to be badges of honour, and that dropping in the odd English word conveys prestige. Bollywood is another influence; many expressions used in Indian cities come from fashionable films, which often mix Hindi and English. For example, 'Shaadi Ke Side Effects' (marriage's side effects), 'Love Breakups Zindagi' (love, breakups, life) and 'Main Tera Hero' (I am your hero).

An example of the way in which people can be inventive with language is the word 'tension'. In India, it is used as a noun, verb and adjective. Similarly, many neologisms have emerged in India. 'Timepass' means to spend time doing nothing. An Indian teenager might respond to the question 'What are you doing?' with the flat reply 'Kuch nahin, bas timepass' ('Nothing, just timepass').

In fact, these appropriations of English words are amazingly expressive. Rather than just mixing words, people are completely reinventing them.

1 Read the article and match the words in the text (1–5) with their definitions (A–F).

- 0 explosion C
- 1 appropriation _
- 2 amalgam _
- 3 flat _
- 4 prestige _
- 5 inventive _

- A taking or making use of
- B importance
- C a large, sudden increase
- D clever and creative
- E a blend of two or more things
- F unenthusiastic

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2 Read the article again and tick (✓) or correct the sentences. Some of them are wrong.

- 0 Yuvraj and his friend can't understand each other's language.
False. They are both speaking Hindi.
- 1 There is no Hindi word for 'job'.
- 2 'Hinglish' is a combination of English and Hindi.
- 3 'Shampoo' and 'bungalow' are words that were imported into India from the English language.
- 4 Using English words is considered something to be proud of among Hindi speakers.
- 5 The Indian film industry is referred to as 'Bollywood'.
- 6 The titles of Indian language films are always in English.
- 7 The word 'tension' is used less flexibly in India than in Britain.
- 8 A 'neologism' is a newly invented word.
- 9 The word 'timepass' is an adjective.
- 10 According to the author, speakers of Indian languages are very innovative in their use of English.

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Reading total

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