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Code-switching in political news writings: A case study of three Indian English newspapers

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ABSTRACT

The research questions of this study are as follows: Why do political news writings in Indian English newspapers make use of code-mixed texts? And, what kind of linguistic material from Indian languages are likely to be interspersed in Indian English political news writings? To address these research questions, news articles from the Hyderabad edition of three Indian English newspapers, namely, *The Hindu, The Times of India,* and *The New Indian Express* were examined from February 2024 to 2025. These news articles were selected because of the political purposes that they served. A qualitative interview was designed and administered to 10 people who were working as editors or reporters in Indian English newspapers. The questions of the qualitative interview mainly elicited the motivations for using mixed codes in Indian English newspapers. The thematic findings from interviews showed that terms from Indian languages were used in Indian English political news writings for textual comprehensibility, etc., and terms that carried political connotations were more likely to appear as vernacular variants than their English equivalents (e.g., Viksit Bharat connotes nationalistic pride but not Developed India). Future research should aim at investigating the benefits of mixed codes on the readers of Indian English newspapers.

KEYWORDS

Indian English political news writings, Indian languages, bi-/multilingual discourse, bi-/multilingual reportage, sociolinguistics

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INTRODUCTION

Sociolinguistic research shows that code-switched utterances occur more frequently in spoken discourses (Pascasio, as cited in Bresnahan, 1979, p. 2) as this mode of speech is more susceptible to change (Bresnahan, 1979, p. 2). Since written language is conservative and frozen, it is assumed that it is less likely to incorporate innovative linguistic styles like code-switching in its repertoires.

The survival of a linguistic group is based on group identities that realise the distinctiveness of the group in a multilingual state. Community members depend on each other for their group to exist as a distinct entity. There are various factors that contribute to the strength 'vitality' of a language, mass media being one among them. If English is the language through which news gets disseminated in news channels and newspapers, it is said to have a high ethnolinguistic vitality (Giles, Bourhis, & Taylor, 1977, pp. 308–309, 316).

Newspapers are subsumed under formal institutional support factors within the ethnolinguistic vitality model given by Giles et al. (1977). A corollary of this is that, the use of unconventional linguistic practices such as code-switching are not acceptable in this medium. Such attempts have been labelled "language bastardisation/corruption" as they flout the norms of writing conventions (Chan, as cited in Mpofu, 2022, p. 17). Questions on whether to include code-mixed varieties in the newspapers or not have their basis in prescriptivist (norms that prescribe the use of the standard, correct, or acceptable varieties) and descriptivist (norms that describe language use as used in the community) ideologies (Mpofu, 2022, p. 18). People who believe that languages should be retained in their purest forms disapprove code-switching (Bhatia & Ritche, as cited in Foster & Welsh, 2017, p. 398).

However, recent studies show that code-mixing/-switching has also invaded written materials such as newspapers (see Mpofu, 2022; Bresnahan, 1979), newsletters (Stott, 2006), and literary texts (Torres, 2007; Chatpunnarangsee & Osatananda, 2023, p. 352). The presence of code-mixing in English newspapers indicates that it is accepted by the educated elites who speak more than one language. Therefore, mixing of codes is perceived as modern, prestigious, and as the language of the upper classes (Bresnahan, 1979, p. 3; Chatpunnarangsee & Osatananda, 2023, p. 352; Foster & Welsh, 2017, p. 404; Scotton, 1982; Chaturvedi, 2015; Thomas, 2021, p. 14). Writers resort to this linguistic strategy because it looks attractive and catches the attention of the public (Bresnahan, 1979; Mpofu, 2022).

According to Bresnahan, code-mixing is a type of variety or language register that exists in the repertoire of bilingual or multilingual speakers. It consists of borrowed material and can be likened to "the processes of creolization". The regularity and systematicity that governs languages also constrains code-mixing. Like languages, the use of this variety is context-based and it is often used with people of the same status or rank (1979, pp. 24–25).

Chandras (2018) makes a distinction between conscious and unconscious code-switching. A variety like Minglish would be an instance of unconscious code-switching. In this variety, Marathi and English words are used simultaneously in the same text, in oral and written media, by speakers of Marathi in the cities of Maharashtra. This is described as a variety that has no linguistic boundaries unlike Marathi, English, and Marathi-English mixed codes.[1] The utterance *kaay price* 'what is the cost (of X)' in place of the Marathi equivalent term *kimut* 'price' would be an instance of Minglish (pp. 13–14, 16). Thomas (2021) makes similar observations about Hinglish, a blend of Hindi and English. This code carries prestige in the northern cities of urban India and it is stratified by age (e.g., it is used by the younger population) and style (e.g., it is used in casual contexts). It is categorised as a variety of English (Mesthrie & Bhatt, 2008, p. 6).

One of the reasons to undertake a project in this area was due to lack of research on the use of code-switched or code-mixed language in political news writings in Indian English. But there are a few publications on the use of mixed codes in oral political discourses in Indian languages (e.g., Sravani, Kameswari, & Mamidi, 2021) and Indian English (e.g., Thomas, 2021; Gargesh & Sharma, 2019).

In this study, I have employed Carol Myers-Scotton and William Ury's (1977) definition of code-switching that refers to the use of multiple codes in the same discourse at the level of lexicon, syntax, or utterances dominated by a single speaker (as cited in Moody & Eslami, 2020, p. 329). In other words, the mixing of codes at different linguistic levels is labelled code-switching. In this research article, the terms code-switching and code-mixing have been used synonymously.

The research questions that drive this study are:

- Why do journalists use code-mixed texts (e.g., the use of Indian languages) in Indian English political news writings?
- What kind of linguistic material from Indian languages are likely to be interspersed in Indian English political news writings?

These research questions were investigated by looking at the Hyderabad edition of three Indian English newspapers—*The Hindu*, *The Times of India*, and *The New Indian Express*.

A review of code-switching models in sociolinguistic literature

This section is organised as follows: It will give a review of the sociolinguistic models of code-switching and analyse it in the Indian context within these theoretical frameworks.

According to Carol Myers-Scotton's markedness model (MM), speakers choose a variety or a mixture of varieties that is maximally advantageous to them. Varieties can be "marked" or "unmarked" depending on the domains of language use and the purposes for which they are employed. The choice of a variety is constrained by rights and obligations set (RO set). RO set is the social norm(s) that binds any interaction and it determines what constitutes a normative linguistic behaviour. The unmarked RO set would be what is expected in an ongoing discourse; whereas, a code or a switch categorised as a marked choice is employed consciously to achieve certain goals. A marked style would comprise a new set of RO, which once accepted by all members in an ongoing interaction, becomes the new norm (1998, pp. 19–20, 22–23, 26).

For Blom and Gumperz (2005), a variety is indexed with specific social functions. Their theoretical claim was based on the distinct social functions that were associated with Ranamål and Bokmål in Hemnesberget. Ranamål was used to realise the L functions whereas Bokmål was reserved for the H functions. The usage of the two varieties in the L and H domains, respectively, was the unmarked style for native speakers. The use of the wrong code in a setting, to discuss a topic or with an interlocutor would be perceived as marked as it breached the sociolinguistic norms of the speech community.

Auer's (1984) code-switching model uses conversation analysis to analyse the constraints operant on switches in adjacency pairs. In his study, based on the nonadult migrant population of Italian Germans, it was found that, in adjacency pairs, the speaker of the first pair redesigned the utterance (also referred to as "non-first firsts") in German or Italian, if their conversational partner did not respond to the first utterance. The switch could make the conversation an unmarked style (e.g., switching from Italian to German if the latter code was the preferred mode of communication between the speakers), motivating the conversational partner to respond to the non-first first. It could also be an instance of a marked style, if the speaker, for example, switched from Italian to German to show authority, by making the conversational partner respond to the non-first first.

Another theoretical model that can be used to analyse code-switching from a sociolinguistic perspective is the Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT). According to CAT, competent speakers of a language accommodate to the speech styles of their interlocutors. Speakers may switch to a variety to converge to, or diverge from, the speech styles of their interlocutors. They may even choose to not accommodate to the

linguistic styles of their interlocutors—a stance referred to as maintenance of one's speech style (Dragojevic, Gasiorek, & Giles, 2016).

In countries characterised by multilingualism, such as, India, code-switching is an unmarked style of discourse (Mesthrie & Bhatt, 2008, p. 149). Multilingual reporting in Indian English newspapers thus demonstrates an unmarked discourse style shared by the masses, comprising journalists and readers.

In an interesting study, it was found that, switched codes comprised the linguistic repertoires of people in Kanpur. The educated elites spoke Hinglish in most situations. For this class, switching also occurred across domains where English was the unmarked choice used on all occasions except in personal domains where Hindi or a regional variety was used. Khari Boli or Standard Hindi served as the lingua franca between the locals and the nonlocals whereas Kanpuria (a derivative of Kannauji and the native variety of the city) was used for realising local functions. In this community, a marked style would be a switch from Hindi to English or from Kannauji to Standard Hindi within a conversation as it raised the status of the speaker (Chaturvedi, 2015).

The use of mixed codes in written texts as instances of New Englishes or World Englishes[2]

The use of mixed codes in conservative written texts (e.g., Indian English newspapers) can be counted as an instance of New Englishes. New Englishes can be defined as a variety of English that subverts the mainstream varieties of English by allowing other varieties to share textual space with English (Evelyn Nien-Ming Ch'ien, as cited in Torres, 2007, pp. 75–76). Additionally, this is a version of English that is learnt in the formal domains of education, and therefore, it is used to realise the formal functions of language. Nonnative speakers of English indigenise English through code-switching, semantic shift (e.g., *hotel* Indian English 'a common area meant for eating' vs. British English 'a temporary accommodation for staying over'), etc., and this is another attribute of New Englishes (Mesthrie & Bhatt, 2008, pp. 11–12, 113–114).

The use of mixed codes in political news writings of Indian English newspapers is an instantiation of New Englishes wherein the insertion of Indian words in English texts portrays discourse styles specific to the local communities that comprise their readership. Such styles are perceived as creative as they convert the native varieties of English into indigenised versions of the language; thereby, portraying the local norms of using English, in communities that are characterised by multilingualism (Mesthrie & Bhatt, 2008, pp. 131–155).

Thus, mixed codes are instances of bilingual discourses that serve the needs of a bilingual/bicultural community. Writers use different strategies to create bilingual texts in order to cater to different types of readers. The intelligibility of foreign words in such texts depends on factors such as cultural familiarity and frequency of usage. A monolingual reader might not find it difficult or challenging to decode bilingual texts that make use of culturally-loaded foreign terms in an otherwise English text (Torres, 2007).

The use of foreign linguistic material immediately followed by the translated material or an explanation in English is a common strategy employed in bilingual texts. This textual strategy makes a bilingual text readily accessible to a monolingual reader. In fact, the inclusion of culturally familiar terms and translation of foreign languages into English caters to both monolingual and bilingual readers (Torres, 2007, p. 78). Such linguistic styles are

also used for making communication more effective and they can also be motivated by the subject of discussion or audience (Foster & Welsh, 2017, pp. 403–404).

Nonnative texts (embedded language)[3] can occur with translated texts (McClure, 1992) or without any translation in the native (matrix) language. The nonnative material can also occur without adapting to the native or ethnic language's writing conventions. In Shona news writing, for instance, English lexical items have been found to be inserted without any phonological adaptation. In "Hochekoche yeHIV nema saloon—encounter with HIV in saloons", the word *saloon* was inserted without any rephonologisation, for example, into *saruni* (Mpofu, 2022, p. 21).

McClure (1992) notes that one of the reasons for inserting lexical terms from the embedded language to the matrix language is due to the lack of equivalent terms in the latter. But this might not be always the case. Sometimes, terms and expressions from the nonnative/embedded language are inserted into the native/matrix language even if equivalent terms are available. Mpofu observes that in Kwayedza, a Shona newspaper, English lexical items were inserted even if the well-known equivalent terms were available in Shona. For instance, the term *cooking oil* was used in Shona news text "Mwana wofira cooking oil" despite the presence of the equivalent Shona word *mafuta ekubikisa* (2022, p. 21).

Sometimes, a specialised register such as a technological field necessitates the use of code-switched terminologies (see Chatpunnarangsee & Osatananda, 2023). Code-mixing is likely to occur in those sections of newspapers that are based on specific topics that require the use of jargons. These are terms or expressions that do not have similar or identical words in the matrix language. In English newspapers, news items based on ethnic communities are likely to employ community-specific terms describing the cultural and daily lives of community members whereas news articles related to a field of study (e.g., medicine) are less likely to employ code-mixed language. However, in vernacular newspapers, a reverse pattern is observed (Mpofu, 2022, pp. 21–23).

Studies that have investigated code-switching and code-mixing between the vernacular and colonial languages in newspapers have found that the use of mixed codes serves the dual purpose of language conservation and commercialisation. The use of the vernacular works as a strategy to maintain the ethnic language while the unusual, code-mixing styles get the attention of the public (Mpofu, 2022, p. 18). The use of code-switched utterances for getting the attention of the public has also been observed in the oral political speeches of politicians (see Wei, 2003).

Another reason to use mixed codes in newspapers is for replicating the language as used in real-life contexts. For instance, journalists quote respondents as it is, without translating them in the language of the newspapers. Such reporting styles are said to make the news more believable (Mpofu, 2022, p. 23; Stott, 2006). Studies on oral political discourses have shown that quotes are retained in the source language for gaining the trust of the audience (Foster & Welsh, 2017, pp. 401–402) or to adopt a stance of neutrality towards the quoted speech (Thomas, 2021, p. 36; Kuo, 2001).

In an interesting study by Stott (2006), the types of, and motivations for, code-switching between English and Japanese, in newsletter writings were investigated. These articles were written by speakers of the native varieties of English living in Japan. The articles' readership also comprised speakers of the native varieties of English living in Japan. It was found that code-switching functioned as an in-group code among community members—the Japan Exchange and Teaching Programme members in Fukuoka city and speakers of the native varieties of English in Japan. The writing styles of the articles were similar to the linguistic

styles of the readers (e.g., the insertion of Japanese words in English texts, the use of Japanese while quoting someone, and Japanese tags). The Japanese words that were inserted were done so due to their familiarity, conciseness, or because they evoked "a richer schema" than their English counterparts. The insertion of direct quotes in Japanese animated the text, making it more believable. Japanese tags, on the other hand, were used for indicating politeness. Certain themes triggered the likelihood of code-switching such as topics related to Japanese culture and lifestyle. This aspect of newspaper reporting was also attested in Mpofu's study.

Motivations for code-switching in political discourses

In political discourses, politicians have been found to employ local dialects when they address local audiences in order to connect with them. However, a nonlocal variety is used in political speeches (i.e., a standard regional dialect or English) if topics are of national relevance or the audience comprise nonlocals. In such genres, several other factors also play a role in the choice of varieties such as the ideology of the politician and the context in which the speech takes place. For example, K. Chandrashekar Rao's speeches during the Telangana movement were mainly in the local Telangana dialect and not in Modern Standard Telugu (Sravani et al., 2021, p. 4). Similarly, Timothy Michael Kaine used Spanish-English code-switched utterances in his speeches the most during the 2016 presidential elections while campaigning in Florida and Texas due to the higher population of the Latinx people in these two states thereby projecting the persona of a bilingual politician who would (also) work in the interests of the Latinx population. The use of mixed Spanish-English code was also to project a stance that was in opposition to the ideologies of the rival party and their candidate[4] (Moody & Eslami, 2020, pp. 332, 337). The use of code-switching as a strategy that transcends different ethnic groups has also been noted by Wei in the speech of Chen Shui-bian (2003).

The use of code-switched utterances in political discourses have become a norm, globally (Opeibi, as cited in Moody & Eslami, 2020, p. 327), and they are employed by politicians for various "political agendas" such as:

- to influence people into buying their perspectives (Weiss & Wodak, as cited in Moody & Eslami, 2020, p. 327) and political ideologies (Corner, as cited in Moody & Eslami, 2020, p. 327), through the use of "political metaphors" (Moody & Eslami, 2020, p. 336),
- to project personas that are advantageous to them politically (Corner, as cited in Moody & Eslami, 2020, p. 327),
- to forge relations, align with groups, (Wodak, as cited in Moody & Eslami, 2020, p. 327), show solidarity with people and treat them as in-group members (Moody & Eslami, 2020, pp. 333–334; Chatpunnarangsee & Osatananda, 2023, p. 351),
- to maintain a balance between local and nonlocal (linguistic) identities (Chatpunnarangsee & Osatananda, 2023, p. 359),
- to reiterate political slogans and schemes, and make promises about the future (Moody & Eslami, 2020, pp. 333–334),

- to exaggerate achievements about self or the political party and, at the same time, project political rivals negatively (Moody & Eslami, 2020, p. 328; Kuo, 2001), also referred to as "legitimization" (Moody & Eslami, 2020, pp. 336–337), and
- to show verbal and emotional expressiveness (Gargesh & Sharma, 2019, pp. 94–95).

Within the Indian context, the use of code-switched utterances in political discourses reflect the linguistic landscape of India, which is a representative of world Englishes. B. B. Kachru describes world Englishes as the process of adapting English into the native culture of those countries where English is not the native variety. In Indian political discourses, the use of Indian English, an instantiation of world Englishes, is employed to give an Indian flavour to discourses by inserting Indian words, utterances, and expressions (Gargesh & Sharma, 2019, pp. 97, 100, 102).

Hinglish, an example of Indian English, can be categorised into type A and type B. Type A comprises Hindi as the matrix and English as the embedded language whereas in type B, Indian English is the matrix language, and Hindi, the embedded language (D'Souza, as cited in Thomas, 2021, p. 14). This study deals with the variety of Indian English classified as type B.

Code-switching has also been found in political news writings. In a study by McClure (1992), a Mexican corpus of political news writing was analysed in which English was inserted in Spanish texts. English terms could be used in the absence of equivalent terms in Spanish (e.g., the term "name-dropping" was inserted as there was no word in Spanish that conveyed the same idea or concept) while at other places, English idioms were inserted (e.g., "American way of life", "the show must go on"), English expressions that made the Spanish text clearer (e.g., "encuentro sexual fugaz one night stand"), or to repeat Spanish texts (e.g., "un mundo o ninguno—one world or none"). Code-switching was also employed to produce sarcasm, irony, or satire (e.g., the use of English "by the way"[5] captured the apathetic attitude of the Americans towards the death of Mexicans in the Enrique Camarena case, with a journalist noting that only American lives mattered) (pp. 186–194). The motivations for code-switching in spoken and written discourses might not be different. Chatpunnarangsee and Osatananda's (2023) study identifies similar reasons for code-switching in younger Thai politicians' oral speeches. Wei (2003) also identifies similar factors accounting for code-switching between Taiwanese and Mandarin in the political speeches of Chen Shui-bian in Taiwan.

METHODOLOGY

In the present study, news articles from three of the most popular Indian English newspapers, namely, *The Hindu, The Times of India,* and *The New Indian Express* (see Parameswaran, 2025) were examined for code-switched material from February 2024 to 2025. This was the time when general elections were conducted in India, that is, from April 19 to June 1, 2024, and therefore, the use of code-switching in political news writings was anticipated, the motivations for which have been outlined in "Motivations for Code-Switching in Political Discourses". The corpus was restricted to three newspapers because similar styles of multilingual news reporting in political news were observed in them, leading to saturation of data (see "data saturation" in Rahimi & Khatooni, 2024).

The first news article, "first parliament session with no one from abroad 'stoking a fire', says PM" (Hebbar, 2025, p. 11), was based on the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's address to the media personnel on the first day of the Budget Session of Parliament held on

January 31, 2025. This was the second Union Budget presented by the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government, led by Prime Minister Modi, after their win in the general elections held in 2024. The article was selected because of the variable use of "Viksit Bharat" and "Developed India" in its content. Viksit Bharat was launched by Prime Minister Modi in December 2023. It is a plan that aims for a developed India by 2047—a year that marks the 100th anniversary of India's independence from the British. The objective of the scheme and the use of Hindi gives Viksit Bharat a nationalistic flavour. Newspaper reportage often employs Bharat, an endonym of India, in the context of nationalistic pride.[6] However, the distribution of this term cannot be predicted with 100% accuracy as its English exonym, India, has been employed in similar contexts.[7] Accordingly, the following question was asked from the participants, "in the article, 'first parliament session…', why does the journalist use Viksit Bharat and Developed India variably?"

The second, third, fourth, and fifth articles, "Phase 6 in U.P. runs through a spectrum of key constituencies and strongholds of BJP and INDIA" (Kumar, 2024, p. 9), "Defeat BJP in the 'finals' to show Telangana's vigour: CM" (Sridhar, 2024, p. 4), "I have not started revenge politics yet, says Revanth" (Reddy, 2024, p. 4), and "'Chacha' may take a big decision after June 4: Tejashwi" (Ramashankar, 2024, p. 8), were selected because they covered the political discourses that comprised code-switched texts, pertaining to the Indian general elections 2024.

Accordingly, the following questions were asked from the participants: (1) In the article, "Phase 6 in U.P. runs through a spectrum of key constituencies…", Prime Minister Modi's discourse during the campaign retains the use of Hindi words (e.g., "santushtikaran", "ghamandiya", "tushtikaran") along with translations given in English. Similarly, in "Defeat BJP in the 'finals'…", the Chief Minister of Telangana, A. Revanth Reddy, pitches Telangana with Gujarat in Telugu as "Telangana atma gauravam 'self-respect'" vs. "Gujarat pettanam 'dominance'". The terms "Telangana paurusham 'vigour'" is used as a campaigning strategy against the opponent and "gadida guddu 'donkey's egg'" is used to refer to Bharatiya Janata Party's (hereafter BJP) zero contribution to the state. All these vernacular terms have equivalents in English which have been given in the text. But what is the purpose of inserting vernacular terms in an English newspaper?; (2) We also see address terms or kinship terms like chacha 'uncle' for Nitish Kumar and bade bhai, chhote bhai 'big brother, small brother',[8] being used in newspapers instead of their English equivalents. What motivates journalists to use Indian address terms in place of their English equivalents?

The five newspaper articles formed a "representative sample" (the application of the term as defined in Buchstaller & Khattab, 2013, p. 74) of the larger corpus of code-switched material on political news writings in Indian English newspapers.

A semi-structured qualitative interview was designed to elicit the motivations for code-switching in political news writings of Indian English newspapers, since qualitative interviews are the best methods to collect data on investigating the choices exercised by people, to understand people's perspectives, and reasons for engaging in certain practices (Hennink, Hutter, & Bailey, as cited in Harding, 2013, p. 22). Therefore, qualitative approaches give deeper insights into the motivations for code-switching (Lin; Buell; Gumperz; as cited in Jones, 2023, p. 56) as this method of data collection centres on the subjective interpretations of the respondents (see, for example, hermeneutic phenomenology for understanding code-switching, Kafle, as cited in Jones, 2023, p. 57).

Only 10 news reporters/editors who worked for Indian English newspapers were interviewed, as qualitative (Harding, 2013, p. 8) and sociolinguistic studies depend on a

smaller number of respondents, with the aim of collecting maximum linguistic data per respondent (Buchstaller & Khattab, 2013, p. 83).

The audio recordings of the interviews were transcribed and subject to thematic analysis. After a thorough examination of the transcripts, the codes for each question from the interview "apriori codes" were generated. Each code summarised, selected, and interpreted the dominant themes of a narrative, in one or two lines as comments in Word. The initial list of codes was reviewed and revised for obtaining reliability. Only those codes were included in the findings that appeared on more than two occasions. These adhered to the coding procedure used in thematic analysis (Harding, 2013, pp. 82–85, 92–93, 98).

A qualitative analysis of participants' responses

This section presents the thematic findings from interviews administered to the participants of the study.

For the first question, "In the article, 'First parliament session with no one from abroad "stoking a fire", says PM', why does the journalist use Viksit Bharat and Developed India variably?", the responses were as follows:

Three participants said that terminologies or slogans in Indian languages carried connotations that their English equivalents did not carry. For example, the translation of Viksit Bharat into English would drain the slogan of its meanings (i.e., the BJP-led government's ambition of making India a developed country by the 100th year of its independence from colonial rule). At the same time, using the Hindi term would make the text redundant, so the English translation was also used. This point is illustrated in example (1) that presents the responses of two participants.

(1) According to a participant, "Viksit Bharat is a slogan with its connotations. The term Developed India has zero connotations. The term Bharat connotes nationalistic pride; India carries no connotations". In order to account for the variation between Viksit Bharat and Developed India, another participant said that, "using Bharat all the time would make the text redundant. Therefore, we use Bharat sometimes, and on other occasions, India".

Another reason, given by three participants, for the variable use of Hindi and English terms, was the influence of the BJP-led Union Government of India that advocates the end of linguistic subordination of Indian languages, especially Hindi, by English.[9] Example (2) is a response given by a participant that illustrates this point.

(2) The focus of the Union Government has been to use more of Devanagari Lipi or Hindi. Many schemes have been given Hindi names, and official titles that had English names have been renamed to Hindi. Of late, it has become a must for journalists to use Hindi words along with meanings in English.

However, five participants felt that the use of Hindi words along with English translations was to make the text intelligible to readers who were not familiar with Hindi. A summary of participants' responses for this point has been given in example (3).

(3) A participant commented that "English and Hindi terms are used interchangeably so that the reader understands what these terms are. This is done to make sure that the reader gets what the story is". For another participant, multilingual reporting enabled "readers from all over the country to understand news reports in vernacular languages".

The responses for the second question, namely, what is the purpose of inserting terms from Indian languages in political news writings when their English equivalents should suffice?, have been presented below.

Five respondents felt that terms such as gadida guddu, santushtikaran, ghamandiya, etc., were embedded in English news because the journalists were reporting political campaigns and the use of these words made reportage authentic and objective, as they replicated the language of oral political discourses. Example (4) summarises participants' responses that illustrate this point.

(4) The participants commented that "such words are used in political campaigning and you are telling people what things look like, giving them an accurate picture of the political events". By using words like santushtikaran, ghamandiya and tushtikaran, "the journalist is not being judgemental but merely quoting the Prime Minister" because "the job of a journalist is to report factually what the politician said".

Half of the participants also felt that terms from Indian languages were used to connect with the audience. Example (5) is a summary of a participant's response that illustrates this point.

(5) Colloquial terms add "regional flavour" and convey emotions. They express the implied meanings through puns, ironies, and metaphors. "The local language always resonates with the locals; it is close to their heart. The translation is for the bigger audience who do not understand the local terms and the colloquial undertones that come with it".

According to three participants, Indian terms were also inserted as they represented a political scheme or idea; see example (6).

(6) Political slogans in Indian languages functioned like proper names with a set of connotations that did not require an explanation every time they appeared in news articles. In the words of one of the participants: "gadida guddu refers to the restrictions posed by the Central Government on Telangana Government".

And finally, for three respondents, the use of local words made English news more attractive. Example (7) presents a participant's response that illustrates this point.

(7) The use of Hindi or Telugu words is a strategy to draw the reader's attention. The newspaper does it to appeal to the internet readers who do not have linguistic boundaries. English newspapers are in competition with newspapers published in

Indian languages or vernacular newspapers in which these terms will appear on the cover page. Therefore, the need to use local words is a marketing strategy employed by English newspapers who are in competition with vernacular newspapers and other English newspapers that also employ words from local languages.

Responses to the third question, "what motivates journalists to use address terms from Indian languages in place of their English equivalents?", are as follows:

Seven participants felt that the use of kinship or address terms in Indian languages was common in political discourses and had reference to specific individuals. The English equivalents of these terms were not used as they gave a generic sense. Example (8) is a response of a participant that illustrates this point.

(8) With respect to kinship terms, these are very specific references. In a meeting, the Telangana Chief Minister said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi is like my bade bhai. Since then, the usage of the word has been retained. In North Indian politics, such kin relations are very common: Chacha-bhatija, didi, behen, babu, etc. It attracts people. If one uses uncle, people will say which uncle? In Bihar politics, chacha-bhatija refers to Nitish Kumar and Tejashwi Prasad Yadav's relation. It is easy to identify politicians through such kin relations, once they become popular.

According to three participants, another reason for using kinship terms in Indian languages was because they conveyed a political agenda. This point is illustrated in example (9), in the words of a participant.

(9) The use of bade bhai and chhote bhai should be understood within the context of Telangana's relation with the Central government. During K. Chandrashekar Rao's rule, the State's relations were not that good with the Centre. Always, they opposed the BJP government. The current Chief Minister is trying to build a congenial and cordial atmosphere with the Centre, so that the state is not neglected. Through the bade bhai, chhote bhai narrative, the Chief Minister is addressing the north Indian politicians.

DISCUSSION

This section addresses the research questions of the study. The first research question was as follows: Why do journalists use code-mixed texts (e.g., the use of Indian languages) in Indian English political news writings?

One of the reasons for using Indian terms and expressions in English political news writings was because they carried connotations that their English equivalents might not connote. This point was illustrated in examples (1), (6), and (9). In example (1), the respondent clarified that the Hindi term Viksit Bharat evoked nationalistic pride but not its English equivalent Developed India. Similarly, in example (6), it has been argued that the Telugu term gadida guddu conveyed the information of the Central Government imposing restrictions on Telangana and that such terms functioned like names that carried connotations of their own and did not require translation because of their familiarity with the readers. In example (9), the use of the Hindi address terms bade bhai, chhote bhai again

carried a set of connotations such as Telangana's relations with the Central government and Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy's attempts through such terms in maintaining good relations with the Central Government and the north Indian politicians in general. This finding is consistent with Stott's (2006) study on the use of mixed Japanese-English codes in which Japanese terms were inserted in English newsletter writings as they carried connotations or implied meanings (e.g., political, nationalistic) that their English equivalents did not carry.

Political discourse can be understood as a distinct style characterised as "institutional talk". It disseminates the ideology of the political party in the form of catchphrases, manifestos, plans, etc. (Furko, 2017, p. 3). The increasing use of Hindi in English reportage can be attributed to the ruling, BJP at the Centre. This was identified as another reason for the increasing use of Hindi in English political news writings (see example 2). Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the BJP have been trying to make Hindi the national language of India, promoting its use in various ways such as by issuing orders that it should be the medium of official communication on all social media platforms for the Central Government of India and the non-Hindi speaking states as well (Ganguly & Menon, 2018, p. 19), by using the endonym in Hindi, Bharat, instead of the exonym in English, India (Leidig & Mudde, 2023, p. 366). This reflects the ideology of the BJP who have been trying to nativise the country through various policies and schemes aimed at homogenisation, especially after its victory in the 2014 elections (Ganguly & Menon, 2018, pp. 19–20; Leidig & Mudde, 2023, p. 366).

Another reason for employing local words and expressions was to make the text comprehensible (example 3). Written texts often resort to such strategies (i.e., the use of words from local or vernacular languages followed by translation and explanation in English) to cater to monolingual readers or bilingual readers of varying degrees of proficiencies in the two languages (see Torres, 2007). Switching between the vernacular and English in political discourses was done to cater to multiple audiences. In oral discourses, politicians have been found to translate English speeches to the vernacular for intelligibility, to ensure that their addressees understand them. This discursive strategy has been referred to as "repetition-for-clarification strategy" (Chatpunnarangsee & Osatananda, 2023, pp. 359–360). In news reporting, the translation often accompanies the text given in the vernacular language.

Writers are also found to use a contrasting strategy of using foreign linguistic material as unmarked where the linguistic items are not translated[10] or marked as foreign through italicisation (Torres, 2007). This writing style could be seen in examples (8) and (9) where the use of vernacular kinship and/or address terms were not followed by translations in English.

The unmarked choice of nonnative linguistic material without translation in English employed in bilingual texts primarily serve the bilingual readers. Through code-mixing strategies, the writers or journalists represented what constituted an Indian style of being in an English discourse. Such texts reflect the multilingual realities of India. Torres (2007) observes similar functions of code-mixing in Spanish-English written texts in America.

Torres discussed that the writers in her study used Spanish in English texts to revitalise the mother tongue among the Hispanics or Latino/as who used English as their primary language in America (Torres, 2007). A similar reason was given by a participant for using words from Indian languages in Indian English news articles: "Words like tushtikaran by repeated usage become familiar to the common readers. When I use it for the first time, the reader looks for the word's translation. The newspaper does that for them. The journalist has served a higher purpose than just reporting, by translating it for the readers … So, when

the journalist uses the term tushtikaran, with the translation, the reader knows the meaning of the word and the next time when they come across the word, they are already familiar with its usage and context. So, I am doing a service to my reader by explaining it and the next time the word is used, the reader readily understands it. I have brought the word into common parlance thereby adding to the vocabulary which is my duty. English is a living language and I am contributing to it".

Bilingual texts can also favour bilingual readers over monolinguals because the latter might require a dictionary to understand the linguistic material from the other language or the use of foreign vocabulary items cushioned in an English text which sometimes cannot be understood within a context. There are different strategies that writers may use to gratify a bilingual reader: the use of formal or informal linguistic material in the other code, the use of the other code without translation, an equal representation of both codes in written texts, etc. By using the other language as unmarked, writers seem to make a "political move". In cases where the other language is not a minority language (e.g., Spanish in America or Hindi in India), writers make an attempt to treat it on par with English. Bilingual writers who use such strategies believe in the fact that languages are bound to change and they also change each other. By using both codes in mainstream writing, the writer is trying to gratify the bilingual reader who is competent in both languages (e.g., in texts that make extensive use of the other language, without translations in English, along with English to cater to a monolingual reader) (Torres, 2007, pp. 83–85).

The diffusion of English as a global language has led to the customisation of the variety wherever it is used (Meyerhoff, 2006, p. 245). Therefore, the insertion of Indian words in Indian English political reportage represents the speech styles of educated Indians wherein Indian words convey political meanings more effectively. These texts represent the language of the educated elites; their unmarked speech styles as used in daily interactions. As one of the participants noted, "we are in a society where the usage of pure English does not exist. When you are trying to write, you have to understand that you have to be with the people. You cannot have a colonial mindset of being a superior. You have to communicate in 'your' language. The oral discourse is not separate from the written discourse. What happens in the oral tradition is the same thing people want to read. The English newspapers cannot isolate themselves from the reader. A reportage is an active event. So, it has to transmit what actually happened. At the same time, I cannot always translate because the meaning gets lost".

Other reasons for using vernacular texts were to make political reportage authentic, objective (see example 4) and marketable (see example 7). Such findings have also been reported in other studies (see Mpofu, 2022; Thomas, 2021; Stott, 2006).

The next research question of the study was: What kind of linguistic material from vernacular languages are likely to be interspersed in Indian English political news writings?

It can be argued that the reasons for code-switching in oral and written discourses might not differ (Chatpunnarangsee & Osatananda, 2023; Wei, 2003). Indian words were likely to be used for political metaphors (e.g., the use of gadida guddu campaign by the Indian National Congress in Telangana), legitimisation (e.g., the use of ghamandiya by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to refer to the opposition while using santushtikaran to refer to the Modi-led BJP government, the use of Telangana atma gauravam vs. Gujarat pettanam by Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy in an election meeting that preceded the Parliamentary elections in Telangana, etc.), reiterating political schemes (e.g., Viksit Bharat), quoting politicians during political campaigns, and for referring to the popular monickers of political leaders (e.g., chacha, bhatija 'Nitish Kumar, Tejashwi Yadav').

CONCLUSION

This study has investigated the reasons for code-switching in Indian English political news writings. It has also looked at the type of linguistic material that is likely to be code-switched in political reportage in Indian English newspapers. It was found that textual comprehension, political factors, the implied meanings conveyed through Indian words, replication of the original Indian-styled discourse, fostering connection with the readers, making the text attractive for increasing sales, etc., were a few factors that motivated the use of code-mixed texts in Indian English political news writings.

The type of linguistic material that was code-switched was also influenced by the reasons for code-switching in Indian English newspapers. For example, words for political metaphors, schemes, kinship terms with implied political meanings, etc., were more likely to be retained in Indian languages.

This study makes original contribution to media linguistics by pursuing research in code-switching in political news writings within the Indian context, an area which lacks published material. Some probing questions of this study are: What motivates journalists to use terms from Indian languages in political news writings in Indian English newspapers? Is this phenomenon driven by pragmatic factors, or the linguistic styles of the audience for whom political stories are written, or the writing genre? Since this project was not funded, qualitative data from a diverse group of journalists could not be elicited. Future research in this line of study should aim at eliciting qualitative data to find answers to these questions, from a diverse group of news reporters and editors.

Future research should also focus on interactions between code-switching and the masses for whom newspaper articles are written. For example, what would constitute marked linguistic styles in news articles? Preliminary observations suggest that terms from Indian languages that are italicised and appear without translations are marked as they are written for a select audience and not general readership. In an article on Bonalu festival by Singh (2025), for example, theertha prasadam and Poornakumbham were italicised without translation, certain words such as bonams were italicised with translations in English, whereas the borrowed word darshan[11] was not italicised and appeared without translation. More corpus would be required to prove this hypothesis.

NOTES

1. According to Chandras, in code-switching/-mixing, the switch indicates a social attribute of the speaker such as class, ethnic identity, etc., and it is done consciously to project an identity. On the other hand, Minglish can be treated as a variety in itself that speakers acquire as their first language, and which is employed as one of the vernacular languages that comes to speakers naturally (2018).
2. New Englishes and world Englishes are seen as similar entities (e.g., Guerra, 2014, pp. 26–27) and they broadly refer to the varieties of English used as a second language (Mesthrie & Bhatt, 2008, pp. 3, 12).
3. In general, matrix language is the language that dominates in mixed codes by providing the sentence structure whereas the embedded language provides, for example, lexical resources into the dominant or matrix language (Auer & Muhamedova, 2005).

4. Donald John Trump's party, the Republican Party, has always been against illegal immigration whereas the Democratic Party adopts a contrary stance, conveyed through Spanish-English mixed codes by Senator Tim Kaine (Moody & Eslami, 2020, p. 338).
5. "By the way" is often used as a passing reference, not directly connected to the subject of conversation. When applied to the political context, the death of non-Americans/Mexicans does not concern the Americans and the use of the English phrase captures this attitude.
6. See, for example, "Nation mourns former PM Manmohan Singh, the economist-ruler credited with liberalisation" (Phukan, 2024) and "New sankalps from the sadhana in Kanyakumari" (Modi, 2024), where Bharat is used in the context of nationalistic pride.
7. See, for example, "PM Modi hails 35 million diaspora as India's pride" (Bhattacherjee, 2025) in which the placename India has been used in the context of nationalistic pride.
8. A. Revanth Reddy addressed Narendra Modi as bade bhai in a public address in Adilabad in March 2024 in which the two politicians had come together for the first time (Daijiworld Media, 2024).
9. See "Mentality of slavery: Amit Shah reiterates call to embrace Indian languages" (Sinha, 2025).
10. In Nicholasa Mohr's writing, Spanish terms are italicised and are not translated especially if their meanings are apparent due to the context in which they appear. In other bilingual texts, for example, by Ortiz Cofer, Spanish reiterated the message signalled by English texts that preceded the former (Torres, 2007, p. 80).
11. The word darshan is borrowed from Sanskrit into English ("darshan", 2025). This is a typical case of words of Indian-origin pertaining to philosophy being borrowed into English (Sailaja, 2009, p. 71).

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