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THE TIMES OF INDIA The Times of India -Breaking news, views, reviews, cricket from across India**SWAMINOMICS****Why Hinglish will beat Chinglish**

31 Aug 2008, 0127 hrs IST, Swaminathan S Anklesaria Aiyar

Thanks to its English language advantage, India has become world leader in call centres and back office outsourcing. China cannot compete because very few Chinese speak English. To rectify this, China has made English compulsory in schools. Will it soon give India tough competition in outsourcing?

I doubt it. I was asked once by a Chinese magazine for a 'short' article of 3,000 words on the Indian economy. I protested that 3,000 words was much too long. "No," said the Chinese editor, "when translated, 3000 English words will shrink to just 800 Mandarin words."

Every letter in Mandarin is a full concept. That gives Mandarin a totally different structure. So, it is truly difficult for the Chinese to master English, and for the British to master Mandarin. For similar reasons, the Japanese remain weak in English. Some Chinese speak excellent English, but they are so few that they command salaries of \$100,000/year, too high for call centres.

It's much easier for Indians to learn English. Sanskrit (the root of Indian languages) and Latin (the root of European languages) belong to the same group of ancient Indo-European languages. When a Swaminomics column of 800 words is translated into Hindi, the translation is also around 800 words.

Only a tiny fraction of Indians speak high quality English. Most speak halting or pidgin English that can sound comic. Jug Suraiya has pointed out that the Indian phrase "with folded hands" is an anatomical impossibility. So is "my head is eating circles," a direct translation of "mera sir chakkar kha raha hai." Malcolm Muggeridge once said that he realised, whenever an Indian spoke English, that the days of the white man's burden were not over.

We now have Hinglish, which does not even attempt translation but mixes English and Hindi words. It has become the lingua franca of Bollywood movies. But it is unsuitable for call centres, which require good English and an American accent. BPO companies now hold English training classes.

Many Indians instinctively translate Indian phrases into English, with comic results. But the Chinese are even funnier. Signs for visitors to China — given high priority in the run-up to the Olympics — leave one in splits of laughter. Consider this signboard at a toilet.

- Go Into the Toilet Beard Know
- The service object of this toilet is limited by a person only.
- The toilet provides only into the toilet place, the dissatisfied foot goes into the toilet to have a bowel movement outside of other request.
- The one who go into toilet want to take good care of toilet facilities, strictly forbid to move this toilet tool to did it touse.
- Go into the toilet beard to place excrement the tool is intestablishment inside, cannot spread to leak.
- The one who go into toilet cannot clamour loudly. The in order to prevent make other go into toilet is frighten.
- Go into toilet and cannot will boil to make food to take isedible into this toilet, the in order to prevent break good go into toilenvironment.
- Can not move bowels in the urine the pond.
- Please read this beard to know hard into the toilet and act according to carry on.

Here are some more examples, from english.com.

- Sign at a counter of China Eastern Airlines. Check in animals and alcoholics, passengers may carry 2 bottles wine.
- Sign in a garden. Little grass is having rest, don't disturb them.
- Sign in a garage. If you are stolen, call the police at once.
- Sign at a river. Take the child, fall into water carefully.
- Space for rent: Please inform office if you are interesting.
- Sign at a cliff. Be careful the safe. No jumping.

- Sign at river. Take care to fall into water.
- Sign at a clothes shop. Kids swear.
- Sign on a wall. Dying right here is strictly prohibited.
- Sign in East China Hotel, regarding stoppage of water in taps. We are awfully sorry for the convenience to you. Thank you for your uncooperation.
- Sign at cliff: Care for life, do not fun.
- Sign near a low roof. Bump the head care sully
- Sign at a railway platform. Please don't cross any railings lest suddenness happens.
- Sign at an airport. Pregnant woman over 70 and disabled people lounge.
- Sign at a hotel. Please present your voucher before breakfast.

Some signboards have inadvertent sexual connotations.

- Poster for body cream: Whitening peeling cream, removes horniness.
- Sign at a pond. Please do not feed the fish with your privates.
- Poster outside a shop. Pleasanty surprise of groping.
- Sign in a store. May your satisfaction sincerely aroused by me.
- Piano teaching manual. Piano Teachers' Intercourse Book.
- Sign at a park. No kicking of balls.
- Sign in a store. Please don't touch yourself. Let us help you try out.
- Sign in a department store. Rear-service Department.

Many signs in India, too, can be hilarious, but China is in a league of its own. In the foreseeable future, it cannot become proficient enough in English to compete in call-centres. Hinglish may have its problems, but will always beat Chinglish.

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