

ENGLISH (INDIAN ENGLISH) AND AMERICAN ENGLISH

BY THAYUMANASAMY SOMASUNDARAM | TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA, USA

WWW.SOMASUNDARAM.NAME

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On my very first trip to the United States more than two decades ago, I ran into a small problem at the London Heathrow airport. Instead of directly flying to Boston, Massachusetts, USA, I wanted to break my journey and stay in London for few days. But the airline luggage handlers thought otherwise and almost loaded my luggage into the next flight to Boston. So, when I didn't find my suitcase at the appropriate luggage carrousel, I approached the airline staff and inquired about my missing suitcase. They asked me to describe the suitcase and I told them, "It is a cement-colored VIP case" (*By the way, VIP stands for a brand of luggage made in India*). None of them understood what I was talking about. Then I realized that I am no longer in rural India but in a Western country's airline counter. Then, I told them that "It is a gray suitcase". Soon they were able to identify and bring my suitcase. This incident shows how some English words commonly used in India (Indian English; here I refer to it as **Inglish**) don't make any sense to a Westerner; occasionally may even refer to different a meaning in America where the Queen's English is not spoken widely. So, here I have compiled some words and phrases that I frequently used and show them in a context as used in India and their rough equivalent in America. As you see, many of them refer to the same object, action, or procedure but the words used to express the meaning are different. Enjoy!

In the following table, the part that is *italicized and under-lined* are words or phrases that *are different* in India and America but refer to the *same thing*.

ENGLISH (INDIAN ENGLISH)	AMERICAN
<u>Over-take</u> a vehicle	<u>Pass</u> a vehicle
<u>Dickey</u> of a car	<u>Trunk</u> of a car
Close van's <u>bonnet</u>	Close van's <u>engine compartment</u>
<u>Post</u> a <u>cover</u>	<u>Mail</u> an <u>envelope</u>
I like my <u>cycle</u>	I like my <u>bike</u>
The <u>aero plane</u> came late	The <u>flight</u> arrived late
There was a big <u>queue</u> at the movie theater	There was a big <u>line</u> at the movie theater
He <u>threatened</u> his neighbour	He <u>intimidated</u> his neighbor
She was sent to <u>jail</u>	She was <u>incarcerated</u>
Can you give me your <u>mobile</u> number?	Can you give me your <u>cell phone</u> number?
How many <u>marks</u> did you get in science?	What <u>grade</u> did you get in science?
She <u>passed first class</u> in math and <u>distinction</u> in science.	She got all <u>A's</u> in math and was in <u>honor-roll</u> in science.
The <u>lift</u> didn't stop on the fifth floor.	The <u>elevator</u> didn't stop on the fifth floor.

My eye doctor asked me to get new <u>specs</u> .	My eye doctor asked me to get new <u>pair of glasses</u> .
My <u>elder</u> sister is going to a city.	My <u>older</u> sister is moving to a city.
Common usage: " <u>Pardon me!</u> "	Common usage: " <u>Excuse me!</u> "
Common usage after a "Thanks!"; " <u>No mention</u> "	Common usage after a "Thanks!"; " <u>You are welcome</u> "
The <u>petrol</u> station was crowded.	The <u>gas</u> station was crowded.
He made a <u>trunk-call</u> to his cousin.	She made a <u>long-distance</u> call to her cousin.
Tamil is my <u>mother tongue</u> .	Tamil is <u>first language</u> .
He used a <u>torch light</u> since it was dark	He used a <u>flash light</u> since it was dark
Wear <u>cooling glasses</u> during sunny days	Wear <u>sun glasses</u> during sunny days
They elected a new <u>Principal</u> for the college	They elected a new <u>President</u> for the college

Table 1 Words that are different but convey the same meaning

In the following table the part that is italicized and under-lined are words or phrases that are same in India and America but refer to the different thing.

USAGE IN INDIA	DIFFERENT MEANING IN AMERICA
<u>Ground-floor</u> of a building	Possibly a <u>basement</u> of a building
<u>First-floor</u> of a shopping mall	<u>Second-floor</u> of a shopping mall
Switch flipped <u>down</u> is in "ON" position	Switch flipped <u>up</u> is in "ON" position
Cut portion of a key faces the <u>ground</u> inside a lock	Cut portion of the key faces <u>sky</u> inside a lock
People drive to the <u>left</u> in India	People drive to the <u>right</u> in America
In India you can take a <u>free-left</u> , almost any time!	In America, you can take a <u>free-right</u> , if safe
<u>Coffee</u> usually refers to coffee + milk + sugar	Coffee means <u>black coffee</u> (nothing added)
"Lady's finger" is a vegetable (Okra)	A lady's finger
"Drum stick" is a vegetable (<i>Moringa Oleifera</i>)	The stick used to beat a drum
Cousin brother / Cousin sister	Cousins
Father's/Mother's older or younger brothers (two separate names)	Uncles
Father's/Mother's older or younger sisters (two separate names)	Aunts

Table 2 Words that are same but may convey different meaning or action

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