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A Study of Transformation in English with Special Reference to Characteristics of Language in the Technology Driven Globalized World

Dr. Jagdish S. Joshi

Professor and Director,
UGC-HRDC,
Gujarat University,
Ahmedabad, Gujarat.

&

Dr. Rajani Suthar

Assistant Professor,
Gujarat National Law University,
Gandhinagar, Gujarat.

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Abstract:

The world is ever-changing and fast-paced. The change of the present world is faster. It is globalized and notably different from the one which existed just a few decades ago. It is no longer confined by the boundaries of space and time. In addition to this, technology is making progress at phenomenal speed. In such a scenario, how can English language, the most widely used language for communication via the e-mode be left behind? With the emergence of new technology, communication has not only become fast paced but also instantaneous. At the click of a button, a message can be communicated almost instantly to anywhere and everywhere which was not possible in the past. Previously, human communication was tedious and time-consuming; but present day communication is fast paced and comparatively less laborious. This change in scenario has also affected the English language. The English used in communication via the e-mode displays a marked diversion from the traditional English. The present paper is an attempt to study the change in English because of its widespread use in technology enabled communication.

Keywords: Communication, English, globalized, language, technology world

1. Introduction

Human civilization has grown and flourished on this earth and has also been able to navigate in space via various inventions and discoveries and due to constant communication of humans among themselves. Time, space and distance can no longer be considered as barrier in communication. Similarly, though times have changed yet the need to communicate has remained unchanged. The modes and methods have changed yet the motive and intention still remains the same, namely, to interact with other humans and to exchange information. While discussing the current scenario of communication, Vajpeyi points out,

Advances in science and technology have revolutionized the nature and scope of communication in today's world. The entire face of the earth comprising distant continent, separated from one another by a vast expanse of seas and oceans has become the defining feature of the evolving global village (37).

2. Research Methodology

The researchers have decided to intertwine in the exploratory form both critical and qualitative methods to provide a more comprehensive and multi-sided analysis of the problem at hand. The researchers have collected language samples or primary data from actual sources of e-communication, i.e., email, blog, Facebook and Whats app (approximately thousand words) and has tried to analysis them from the point of view of characteristics Non-probability convenience method has been used and after thorough investigation the conclusions have been presented in the latter part of the paper. In addition to this, certain transformations in meaning of words and phrases which are of common knowledge have also been included with the help of interview.

3. Eminence of English in the Technology Driven Globalized World

In present time, this phenomenon of 'globalization' has been largely possible due to increased popularity of e-communication and digitization of information. Also, the ready availability of computers and internet has contributed in 'linking' the world together into a single whole. It has transformed human life and environment; and has fulfilled the innate human desire for speed. And by using various e-tools, such as emails, social networking sites, mobiles, blogs and others, fast paced communication has been made possible. Within minimum of time, data or information can be transferred from one place to another. These factors have played a vital role in the establishment of English as a 'world language'.

Also, with communication becoming fast paced and accessible to all- the modern scenario has changed forever. It has helped in improving the standard of living and has enabled faster, clearer and more accurate outcome to the designated tasks. As Creeber puts it,

Increased and improved communication across the globe – through satellite technology, digital television, improved telephone links and the Internet – certainly means that we are now in touch with people and events internationally with a frequency, speed, quality and affordability never imaginable in the analogue age. This has seemingly resulted in an increasing 'globalization'...This brings with it a different conception of the world we live in; altering our notions of time, space and identity and taking us even nearer to realizing Marshall McLuhan's notion of a 'global village' (Creeber 5).

4. Brief History of Evolution of English Language

Over the years the place of English in India has evolved from the much hated language of the Oppressors to, as Nehru calls it, "the window to the world". With the changing times, English has undeniably emerged as a truly international language, spoken in many countries both as a

native and as a second or foreign language. It is the associate official language of India; and with the onset of globalization, its popularity has soared new heights.

4.1. Origin of English

The Celts were the oldest known residents of the British Isles, and spoke the Celtic language which belongs to the Indo-European family tree. With the passage of time, it was invaded by a variety of settlers who propagated their respective customs and languages. One such settlers were that of north old Germany-Anglia. Therefore, “Angle Land” and consequently “England”. English belongs to the West-Germanic family of languages.

4.2. Evolution of English

The evolution of English can be classified into three phases:

- Old English Period
- Middle English Period
- Modern English Period.

Over the years, English has emerged as a prolific, popular and powerful language. It has become one of the most used languages of the world and has been tagged by many as the most preferred language among all. English occupies the remarkable place of an ‘International’ language. It is used by the maximum number of people across the globe.

4. Transformation in Characteristics of English Language in Technology Driven Globalized World

Nearly all European languages, some languages spoken in the middle East and northern India, and the ancient tongues of Greek, Latin and Sanskrit a number of striking similarities which point to a common pre-historic source. This is assumed to be a language spoken thousands of years ago, possibly in central Europe, which is now referred to as Proto-Indo-European (Linda vii).

As stated above, it is believed that all languages used for communication by humans have originated from a single language or mother language and all languages possess striking similarities, especially, in terms of characteristics.

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All languages depict certain common characteristics and so does English. These characteristics are unique to human communication and are not as prominently found in animal communication. Some of the characteristics are as follows:

5.1. Arbitrary

The term, ‘arbitrary’ means that there is no relation between the word and the object it denotes. Language is, essentially, a socially share code of communication accepted by a group of people using it. The words used for communication are, therefore, decided and

standardized and used by this group. For example, humans understand the word 'chair' as an object which has four legs and a back rest and is meant for sitting. If it would have been called by any other name, they would have known it by that word.

In the present technology driven world, words have new meanings and sometimes ones which one could hardly have imagined in the past. For e.g. the word 'mouse' no longer only signifies a pest but also a computer peripheral device. Or 'Java' not only means an island but also a programming language.

5.2. Artificial

Language is artificial, in the sense that, it is created by humans and used by them as they like. All objects created by humans are considered as unnatural or artificial. In language, words have been assigned to denote objects and these words are called 'referents'. Language, like all the advancements in science and technology is man-made, and therefore, it can rightly be termed as artificial. With the wide-spread use of language via e-mode new possibilities of word usage have come-up and will continue to do so in the future. For example the names of different games played on mobiles and computers, such as, 'Angry Birds' and 'Candy Crush' are known world-wide and their usage is no longer restricted to the games alone.

5.3. Creative and Productive

Aitchison rightly points out, "Most animals have a very limited number of messages they can send and receive...This type of restriction is not found in human language. Humans can produce novel utterances whenever they want to(17). Language is not a stagnant entity. Over the passage of time, it constantly evolves. Words are constantly being added to language depending on influence of variety of factors. New words are created by fusion or diffusion or by borrowing from other languages. New words are included ever year and as per requirement, new words are also created. For instance, words like 'infotainment' and 'fantabulous' etc. evolved only in the last few years. They have been formed by the fusion of two words: 'info(information)' + 'tainment(entertainment)' and 'fanta(fantastic)' + 'bulous(fabulous)' This tendency of language makes it productive and creative and ever-growing.

5.4. Restricted

During the conversion of thoughts into words, it can happen that some meaning is lost in the process. It must be kept in mind that it is very difficult to describe the exact reality by means of words or symbols; some loss of meaning or inconsistency in interpretation always occurs. Because language is restricted, it sometimes becomes difficult for humans to express their feelings in words. This is especially visible in SMS and Whatsapp texts because of excessive use of abbreviations and acronyms.

5.5. Recursive

It is this characteristic of language, which allows humans to create infinite number of sentences using the same basic grammar format. It makes language an effective medium of communication and increases its efficiency. Recursiveness makes language flexible, in the sense that there is no limit to the length of any sentence, it can go on and on.

5.6. Repetitive

Language has a tendency to become repetitive or redundant. This repetitiveness of language can act as a double-edged sword; in the sense; it can prove to be helpful in effective communication- if used in moderation. At the same time, it can prove to monotonous and uninteresting if used in excess. Thus, a balance needs to be maintained, at all times, while using the language. The element of repetition can be seen in the inappropriate or excessive use of punctuation marks. Either wrong punctuation marks are used or they are all together missing or multiple punctuations are used where only one is required.

6. Conclusion

English language, like any other language for that matter is bound to change its course from time to time. With the extensive use of English language for technology enabled communication the course of language is bound to change in the future. As per the law of evolution, the elements which are used extensively will be retained and even amplified and those which are no longer on use will become extinct. Since language is a living organism and the user of the language is its owner; English is definitely going to evolve over the years. In addition this, the technological boon and its extensive use for communication via e-mode is going to bring about transformation in its essential characteristics. Though the purpose behind usage of English remains the same or universal i.e. to connect with other human beings; yet remarkable transformation can be noticed in the language from the point of view of its characteristics.

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