



## THE CULTURAL EFFECTS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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### ABSTRACT

Language and culture are inseparable. The cultural background of a language and the social and geographical peculiarities of the speakers always remain intertwined. English being the world language a lot many accents and vocabulary exist among the native and non native speakers. A disquieting impact of the English language on culture is the prevalent Anglo centric inclination existing in many non native speakers of English. The massive influence of English language on international culture, through internet and television, typified by globalization is accountable for the apparent surrender of some languages and their culture to the dominance of English. The chance of cultural influence of English on other societies have lead to the opinion that an ideologically, politically, socially and culturally neutral form of English should be promoted in the teaching learning process. A cross cultural approach while teaching the English language will naturally force the students to acquire knowledge about the cultural systems existing in the world.

**Key Words:** English, Language, Culture, Teaching, Learning

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### INTRODUCTION

Language is a social, cultural and geographical phenomenon. English being used in the world for international trade, education and research has acquired the status of universal language. People all around the world learn and teach English for various purposes. Language and culture are inseparable, therefore, language cannot be taught without its culture. The question of transformation of 'culture' along with English language teaching and learning has been discussed by various researchers for the last few decades. Majority of the English books published in the early days focus on British culture norms and values. However, the present day textbooks provide readers the awareness of the large number of English

varieties, such as US English, New Zealand English, Indian English and Australian English. The present study aims to investigate the cultural effects of English language during the teaching learning process.

Language is the set of sounds and symbols by which two or more individuals communicate each other. As Edward Sapir defined "language is purely human and non instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions and desires by means of a system of voluntarily produced symbols" (7). These ideas, emotions and desires are shaped by society and culture thus language profoundly influences the way people see the entire world. Language of a particular community is also a part of their culture. Languages do

not differ only in pronunciation, vocabulary, or grammar, but also in the culture of speaking it. Several different ways of using the language exists even among speakers of the same language. Language is subject to many variations both monolingual and multilingual. Linguists and anthropologists, now days specialize in understanding the differences in the ways of speaking between communities. Along with speaking, the use of language in writing has made the process of communication more sophisticated. It makes it possible to store large amounts of information in print and web and retrieve it again, and it allows easy communication across the globe. Most often languages employ different genres and styles in its written and spoken forms, and in some cases the written language is entirely different from the spoken one. Writing the language also helps in the cognitive development of humans beings.

The Collins English Dictionary explains culture as the artistic and social pursuits, expression, and tastes valued by a society or class, as in the arts, manners, dress, etc. Adaskou *et al.* (3-4), divided culture into three different subcategories for the purposes of language teaching. Sardi, C summarized it as follows:

1. Culture involves literature, music, films and the fine arts:- aesthetic sense.
2. Culture refers to the way of life in a community:- sociological sense.
3. Culture refers to the social skills, which make it possible for learners to communicate successfully with other members:- pragmatic sense (101).

Culture is defined by anthropologists in a different way. The definition usually includes values, beliefs, mores, taboos, expectations, customs and rituals all of which plays pivotal role in conditioning the language.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Language is dynamic and the variations of a language take place diachronically and synchronically. Diachronic variations occur to a language through passage of time, whereas the synchronic variations take place at a particular point of time. Synchronic variations are of two types i.e. dialect and register.

Dialect means language according to the user where the language of an individual is conditioned by the social and geographical background of the speaker. So it is assumed that no two speakers speak exactly alike. The second variation, register, is language according to the use. The same individual may use different varieties of language depending upon the situation i.e. the language one uses in the family and work place may differ. The subject matter, the medium used, the relation between the addresser and the addressee all these determines the register. These monolingual changes are resulted by the strong undercurrents of culture.

Sapir-Whorf hypothesis states that both language and culture determines each other. This concept is popularly known as Whorfianism which has basically two principles. The first principle termed "Linguistic Determinism" stipulates that the way one thinks is determined by the language one speaks. The second principle named "Linguistic Relativism" illustrates that differences among various languages are due to the culture of its speakers (Salzmann , 46-47). In the early days, while learning a new language people didn't pay much attention to the cultural aspects of the people using that language. Nowadays, the language courses also look at the cultural aspects of a given country while teaching their language. If one teaches language without explaining the culture in which it operates, the student may absorb incorrect meaning to some words in certain usages. In such instances the students may use the language inappropriately or within the wrong cultural context, thus makes the purpose of learning that language meaningless. Therefore, while framing policies for language teaching one must encompass and include the cultural values of the societies from which the languages are derived, as well as the culture in which the target language is being taught. Combining the teaching of culture into the language curriculum may enhance understanding and acceptance of differences between people, cultures and ideologies

Societies may include a number of cultures and languages. English is used by both native and non native speakers for communication purpose. Even among the English speakers, accents and vocabularies

differ from country to country and even from region to region. Among non native speakers of English, the language has a status of associate language, and it is most often used in official communications, research, education, legal aspects and trade. English in such nations will be used not only for communicating with the foreign countries, but also for internal communication to a certain extent. English often mingle with the local languages in their conversation and most often people abruptly move to speak English in the middle of their conversations. This is a multilingual situation which further leads to inter language variations namely "pidgin" and "creole". A "pidgin" is a system of communication which has grown up among people who do not share a common language which is characterized by limited vocabulary, reduced grammatical structures and narrow range of functions. A "creole" is a pidgin language which has become the mother tongue of a community. Pidgins and creoles thus acts as two stages in linguistic development which has helped English to spread all over the world either as a second language or an auxiliary language. In most of the nation's English act as the second language and hence non native English users outnumber the first language users, and hence it is logical to assume that in this era of globalization the future of English will be determined by non native English speakers (Graddol, 11). The extent and quantum of English loan words in other languages is probably an index of the intensity of contact of the two cultures. Some of the integrated loan words actually have their counter parts in the native language, but they are preferred in usage because they appear simpler than their native equivalents. The copious existence of English loan words in other languages is a measure of the impact of the English language on their cultures.

A disquieting impact of the English language on culture is the prevalent Anglocentric inclination existing in many non native speakers of English. Therefore it is a trend even in the illiterate society to expose the children to English language right from childhood. In some cases, parents speak even non-standard variety of the language to the children in the name of English. The impact of the English language

on the culture appears somewhat threatening to the existence of some indigenous languages generally, since young generation are now less proficient in their mother tongue than in English. The massive influence of English language on international culture, through internet and television, typified by globalization is accountable for the apparent surrender of some languages and their culture to the dominance of English.

The chance of cultural influence of English on other societies have lead to the opinion that an ideologically, politically, socially and culturally neutral form of English should be promoted in the teaching learning process. Another suggestion is that, instead of focusing entirely on the culture of the target language, it is more beneficial to take a cross-cultural approach while teaching the language. The development of cross cultural awareness will naturally force the students to acquire knowledge about the cultural systems existing in the world.

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