



GLOBALIZATION AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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ABSTRACT

English language has played an integral role in the globalization. Not a single domain of life has escaped from the influence of English. The English language is the second most widely spoken tongue in the world today. Due to globalization, it seems that the English language more than any other is having a most pronounced and lasting impact on the collective networks of the world mind. English as the global lingua franca has played a positive role in the interaction between different cultures. It has played an integral role in bringing the myriad cultures together (acculturation) which create unity in diversity.

Keywords: Globalization, Language, Lingua Franca, Hybrid, Colonial

Introduction

To indicate a holistic view of human experience in education, a publication titled "Towards New Education" has first used the term "globalization" in 1952. Globalization was described as early as in 1897 by Charles Taze Russell, the founder of the Bible Student movement, by coining the term "corporate giants", although not until the 1960s that the word began to be used widely by economists and other social scientists. The term has since then achieved widespread use in the mainstream press by the latter half of the 1980s.

The concept of globalization has inspired numerous competing definitions and interpretations, starting from its inception, i.e., from 15th century onwards, with its past history dating back to trade and nations across Asia and the Indian Ocean. In the present time, globalization can be described as the process of integration of regional economies, societies, and cultures through communication, transportation, and trade by a network of political ideas globally. The word globalization is mostly associated with economic globalization: i.e., the integration of economies of various nations into international economy through spread of technology, trade, foreign direct investments, capital flows, migration, military

presence etc. Globalization also refers to circulation of ideas, languages, popular culture etc., among the nations through acculturation. An aspect of the world which has gone through the process can be said to be globalized. English language has played an integral role in the globalization. Not a single domain of life has escaped from the influence of English. This paper will analyze the indelible impact of English in terms of linguistic and cultural changes at global level.

Today, English is the second most widely spoken language in the world. After the Chinese, most people speak English and it is the most popular second language as well as foreign language pupils learn in school/college. Being a global language, English is spoken in most parts of the world, like in Great Britain, the USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and in many more countries. The global role of English is clear in the following words, "English is now the language most widely taught as a foreign language in over 100 countries, such as China, Russia, Germany, Spain, Egypt and Brazil and in most of these countries it is emerging as the chief foreign language to be encountered in schools, often displacing another language in the process" (Crystal 1997:4).

Spread of English

The spread of English has been described as three circles:

- a) **The inner circle:** It includes the native speakers, whose mother tongue or first language is English, as in England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland, USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa,
- b) **The outer circle:** Here English is the official or public or second language, as in countries of Asia, Africa and India. In the African countries English serves as the main form of communication.
- c) **The expanding circle:** It includes countries and speakers who use English to communicate with people with whom they do not share another common language. It includes China, Japan, Greece, Poland and a steadily increasing number of other states. In these areas, English is taught as a foreign language.

English language is becoming popular not only because of its linguistic properties, but it is also being made popular through conscious and coordinated promotion programmes. In today's media and economy, English language is being used exclusively and often wipes out smaller languages and their cultures. English language has become the global de facto standard used in business, cultural and political exchange and hence seems to be having a bigger impact on the world as a whole. It has been observed that the global changes are bound to be affected by the shift in usage of language, demarcations in language and the integration or coming together of the world's cultures and economies. This shift in international trends affects the languages we speak, and thus have a marked effect on the function and organization of our brains and influence the way that we think. The English language, due to globalization, seems to have a most pronounced and lasting impact on the collective networks of the world mind. "A stripped-down English of catchphrases and trite idioms, light on richness, is becoming the true global language." (Giridharadas 2010).

Another major factor that had a huge impact on the global evolution of English language is the birth of the Internet, where in an English

speaking country, almost 80% of the world's digital information now stored in English. The Internet is basically English oriented, as most of the large search engines are based in the USA and the major computer languages themselves are a kind of sub set of the English language. This alone has been a huge effect on globalization and has meant that English speaking countries are at a definite advantage when it comes to communicating with the world as a whole. English continues to be the chief lingua franca of the Internet a position which is now beginning to be acknowledged in the popular media. For example, in April 1996 The New York Times carried an article by Specter headed, "World, Wide, Web: 3 English Words", in which the role of English was highlighted.

The global value of English infinite and hence it cannot be estimated. In order to get into Harvard University library, or the medical library at Sweden's Karolinska Institute and study the molecular genetics, all that is needed is a phone line, a computer and a solid command of the English language. Because whether you are a French intellectual pursuing the cutting edge of international film theory, a Japanese paleobotanist curious about a newly discovered set of primordial fossils, or an American teenager concerned about Magic Johnson's jump shot, the Internet and world wide web work as great unifiers if you speak English (Crystal 1997:107). If one wants to take full advantage of the Internet there is only one way to do it: learn English, which has more than ever become America's greatest and most effective export.

The one reason why the English language has become such an international force is because of its ability to adapt and mutate in the face of change, an open ended philosophy that has certainly served it well. English as a means of communication is good at incorporating the "other" into its own language as can be seen with the many words and phrases originally from other languages that most people would now consider authentically English. The strength of the English language is that it accepts these variations and integrates them into itself effectively. There is a huge cultural uptake of English as the people world over have shaped the English language with their own cultural conditioning with dozens of variations on the

language coming into existence. These differing versions of the language are still understandable as English, and also helped it to evolve and grow at a rapid rate. English has a fairly open ended linguistic structure and is able to be understood in a wide variety of circumstances and thus has become a sort of common denominator in international affairs. The status of English shifts from foreign-language to second-language for an increasing number of people; and it is also expected to see English develop a larger number of local varieties. English has two main functions in the world: acts as a vehicular language for international communication and also forms the basis for constructing cultural identities. The former function requires common standards and mutual intelligibility, while the latter encourages the development of local forms and hybrid varieties. As English language plays an ever more important role in the first of these functions, it simultaneously finds itself acting as a language of identity for larger number of people across the globe (D. Graddol 2001: np).

According to Graddol, this is the reason why we have large number of English speakers and different varieties of English. The question which emerges in this context is that, why the English language is acting as an identity for a number of people around the world? In order to answer this, we need to look at the language policy but from the post-colonial prism. Because of the imperialist powers in the 19th and 20th century, there are a lot of colonial states with multilingual characters. In Africa, for example, the African languages are not even taught in schools and there are no attempts to use them in high-status functions. In the world's history, the period of colonialism has changed the people's lives in many ways. Colonialism only make us think about cheap raw materials and workers the imperialist powers wanted to gain, but we often forget that the real aim of colonialism was to control the people's wealth. But economic and political control can never be complete or effective without mental control. To control a people's culture is to control their tools of self-definition in relationship to others. For colonialism, this meant two faces of the same coin.

The post-colonial and post-communist worlds and the European Union reveal increasing corporate involvement in education, and World

Bank policies favour European languages. "Studies of global English range from those that uncritically endorse global English to those which see it as reflecting a post-imperial but essentially capitalist agenda" (Online). Many of the contemporary trends are captured in two competing language policy paradigms that situate English in broader economic, political and cultural facets of globalization, the Diffusion of English paradigm, and the Ecology of Languages paradigm. A number of studies of various dimensions of linguistic and professional imperialism in the teaching of English to Asians reveal the persistence of western agenda in education. There is also increasing documentation of resistance to this, both at the level of awareness of the need to anchor English more firmly in local cultural systems, and at classroom level. Language pedagogy needs to ensure that English is not learned subtractively.

Only in this way can globalization be made more accountable and locally relevant. Globalization has turned the world in to a global village is heard quite often and English language is surely to be accredited for this grand achievement. But despite language change, which is the result of cultural change, how English resists the onslaught of time is debatable. Before, plunging in that debate, we will look at the factors responsible for language change. Language change or the evolution of language is the phenomenon whereby phonetic, morphological, semantic, syntactic, and other features of language vary over time. The effect on language over time is known as diachronic change. Two linguistic disciplines, historical linguistics and sociolinguistics, in particular concern themselves with studying language change. Historical linguists examine how people used language in the past and seek to determine how subsequent languages derive from previous ones and relate to one another. Sociolinguists study the origins of language changes and explain how the society and changes in society influence language. English as the global lingua franca has played a positive role in the interaction between different cultures. It has played an integral role in bringing the myriad cultures together (acculturation) which create unity in diversity.

Conclusion

To conclude, the dynamic role of English in shrinking the world to an enticing global village is noteworthy. The antagonism and ambivalence

about English saying that it gets a privileged position is obsolete in the postmodern era where the post of post-colonial is answered by writing back to centre and that too in the colonizers language ("You taught me language; and my profit on't Is, I know how to curse: the red plague rid you, For learning me your language."). Now even the empire need not write back as it has sufficiently done so.

Though we have writers like NgugiWaThiong, who chose to reject English as the medium of expression in his book *Decolonising the Mind* (1986) saying Africa needs look back its economy, its politics, its culture, its languages and all its patriotic writers". But we do have a renowned writer like Arundati Roy who once remarked unequivocally that, "I love English. It is the skin of my thought" or BapsiSidwa's words forceful words are equally resonant, "They are condemned to write in English, but I don't think this is such a bad thing because English is a rich language." (Gaur 2004:206).

Therefore, English is contained with linguistic hybridity but it is this variation within the language which lends it the credibility to hold the different cultures together in a unique and extraordinary way.

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