

The Role of Interactive Media in the Spread of English Language in the World: A Language Policy Perspective

Sabreena Shah, M.A. (English Literature) MS (Applied Linguistics)
MS Scholar in Linguistics

Shoukat A. Lohar, M.A. (English Literature) MS (Linguistics)

=====

Abstract

English has become a global language of communication. In human history English is the fastest spreading language. English is spoken at useful level by approximately around 4 to 6 billion people worldwide. In 21st century Social media is playing a great role in spread of English. This is the reason this study took place. Therefore, this paper is going to explore certain areas which define the role of social media in spreading English and secondly it discusses about the positive and negative impacts of social media on skeleton of English Language. Usage of words on face book like “unfriend” and “selfie” is the new addition to the dictionary of English. On the other hand, people are writing their languages’ words in format of English alphabets like “Main parh raha hu” (I am studying) here alphabets used are English letters but words are of Urdu. By critically analyzing the role of social media in spread of English it could be said that spread of English through social media is obvious but on other hand it is damaging the purity of English language or in good words it is bringing changes in English. However, the spread of English through social media is uncontrollably questionable

Keywords: social media spread of English, Language, social networking sites.

The Spread of English Language

Language has existed since time immemorial, either in the form of cues or in the shape of verbal communication. It is basically the method of human communication, either spoken or written, consisting of the use of words in a structured and conventional way. [1] Language is not confined in its domain but it encompasses extensive realms way beyond the horizon. Evidently, each habitat, tribe, clan, community, country, etc., adopts a specific language for the purpose of communication. This clearly indicates that there are many languages in the world but the most significant and foremost of all languages is English language. English is an international language which is spoken and understood in almost every part of the world. It has become the

key instrument of globalization. It is highly used all over the globe for transaction of international trade and has become exceedingly essential for the advancement of knowledge.

Apart from this, the spread of English language is the outcome of its assimilation in every field of life: be it education, politics, economics, society, media etc. Certainly media has played the most significant role in the dissemination of English language across the globe.

Media is considered as fourth pillar of state it is the eyes and ears of society. For spread of any language two things are required people and passage through which people can communicate. In 21st century social media is the most important medium via which people can communicate express ideas, share their knowledge, and ponder over any issue, show unity or concern for the welfare of society. “New online media are helping to transform language and literature and it has important consequences on language teaching” (Mark Warchauer: AMID EAST, Cairo Egypt), (millennialism and media language, literacy and technology in 21st century).

Research Questions

Now here the point of concern is how far people use English language to communicate on social media? If yes then, is it due to social media that English is becoming a powerful language and vast spreading language? Is social media resulting in mushroom growth of English speakers? Owing to social media what changes are taking place in English language? How social media is affecting structure of English? What positive or negative impacts social media has on English? This paper will attempt to answer these questions.

Literature Review

Spread of English through social has remained a hot topic. People have been discussing it in the researches, thesis and blogs.

According to Mallory Jean Tenore, technology has dumbed down English language. Phrases have been reduced to letters for example: “see you” as “cu”, due to texting. Tweets have gifted lots of abbreviation and hash tags which are barely legible. Basically she has focused on strengthening of English language. She has enlightened five ways that social media having positive effects on written English language. Following are her five ways:

1. Awareness of mistakes helps to prevent them: The panelists say there are two ways to look at the mistakes done. That is “social media as sites for making mistakes” and “social media as sites for catching mistakes”. According to them, social media should be thought of as a platform for catching mistakes. Whenever we misspell anything, people will let us know. Like fast company readers point out errors while social media whenever errors meet their eyes.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 16:6 June 2016

Sabreena Shah, M.A. (English Literature) MS (Applied Linguistics), MS Scholar in Linguistics and Shoukat A. Lohar

The Role of Interactive Media in the Spread of English Language in the World: A Language Policy Perspective

2. Social media differentiates writers.
3. Social media enlightens the value of short story telling. How social media does that? As a text message contains only one sixty character. Tweets one forty-character limit and makes every word count important. “Shorter is better if you can do it well” said by Marrie to SXSW crowd.
4. According to her social media reminds us that change is necessary. Explains it by Socrates concerned that invention of writing would make people forgetful, today people are worried about degree to which we are permanently shaped by digital technologies.
5. Social media creates new words and meanings. She has mentioned sites like wordnik and urban dictionaries contain misspelled words like “dunno”, “l8r” and “aight”. Marrie said “friending” is a transitive word since 13th century. Then we used to use befriend instead. Now Facebook is not using “friends” in traditional sense.” [14]

Braj B. Kachru has discussed in his book “the Alchemy of English: The spread, Functions and models of non-native Englishes” about the expansion, spread, and extension of English. “Alchemy” that is changes variations or evolution taking place in English. As per Kachru English internationalizes one’s outlook. Kachru has given a classical model containing three concentric circles of English. Inner circle contains US, UK, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Outer circle consists of post-colonial English using countries such as Kenya, Philippines or Nigeria. Other than inner and outer circle, there is an expanding circle containing rest of the world. The term “English using speech fellows” and “world English’s” are introduced by Kachru. [11] [5] [7]

According to British Council English is:

1. It is the world’s common language.
2. It gives UK the competitive edge.
3. It drives international development and growth.
4. It changes life. [13]

According to Harvard business reviews by Ted Neeley, global business speaks English. As per his research one point seven five billion people worldwide speak English at useful level. Thus English has become a global language. This is why multinational companies are making English as common corporate language. People from different locations are gathered for a meeting say business meeting then there must be a common mode of speech. That’s why companies adopting English as corporate language, to deal with customers and partners worldwide. No matter where the companies headquarter is and whatever the native language, all

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 16:6 June 2016

Sabreena Shah, M.A. (English Literature) MS (Applied Linguistics), MS Scholar in Linguistics and Shoukat A. Lohar

The Role of Interactive Media in the Spread of English Language in the World: A Language Policy Perspective

the employs learn English as pre-requisite. And this is one of the reason English is spreading quickly. [2]

“A topic-focused trust model for Twitter” a research paper by Liang Zhao, Chang Tien Lu and Ing-Ray Chen specifically focuses on Twitter. They have called twitter as a crucial platform because it’s the platform to access information, updates and breaking timely and most importantly they have talked about tweets consisting of unstructured language. [10]

Kachru mentions that English internationalizes one’s outlook but he hasn’t talked about how English internationalizes outlook. Here through this research paper it could be added in this study that English internationalizes outlook via social media. This way the gap in previous study could be filled.

Likewise, while talking about business corporate language, there is need to make it clear that why English is chosen as business corporate language why not any other language and how social media has helped English to reach every corner of world which in result has made it a corporate language.

However, much of the research work is done to prove English as global language but not too much of work is done on the role of social media in spread of English and making it a global language. Therefore, there is dire need to do some research on the relation between social media and spread of English.

Spread of English through Social Media Questionable?

Frank Smith, a psycholinguist known for his essential contributions in linguistics and cognitive psychology, once said “One language sets you in a corridor for life. Two languages open every door along the way.”

In the recent past technology has affected our lives to an immeasurable extent, mostly in a good way. It has brought people closer and eliminated distances. Through technology people have opportunities to discover different cultures and societies, it has helped us broaden our horizon and look way beyond the limits of our societies and culture.

The Internet in particular has played a vital part in bringing about this global change. People soon realized the capabilities of internet and they used it to fulfill their urge of being social able beyond the boundaries of their own society or culture and thus the social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and many more were such a success.

But if we think about it all social media did was provide us with a stage to get connected but LANGUAGE still stood as a strong barrier in taking the complete advantage of these social media apps as well as of internet. Human kind has a great ability to adapt to the surrounding

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 16:6 June 2016

Sabreena Shah, M.A. (English Literature) MS (Applied Linguistics), MS Scholar in Linguistics and Shoukat A. Lohar

The Role of Interactive Media in the Spread of English Language in the World: A Language Policy Perspective

changes and thus it is observed that people have brought about a few changes in themselves to adapt to this ever changing world of technology. Moreover it raises a question: Has social media really influenced our language and the way we communicate? And the answer to this would be yes it has, in a lot many ways.

Truly we have realized the importance of a global language. To break the barriers of language and fully utilize the capabilities of social media people felt a necessity to learn English. It is observed that spread of English language has impacted our lives in a very positive way. Not only through it we have come closer but also it has helped us improve our skills and knowledge, as Internet has proved to be an infinite source of information and with the help of English language anyone can access that information and benefit from it. If we look at the facts about 55% of information present over internet is in English, a lot more than Russian which is the second highest language used over Internet and covers only 5.9% of information available over Internet.

Surely this change and adaption of language has faced a lot of criticism as well. Many people think through this wide spread of English language we are losing our cultural and social values. One of the India's national leaders Ranjath Singh who is the president of nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) denounced the spread of English language by claiming the language is responsible for 'Anglicizing' Indian youth and made claims that people are moving away from their cultural identity and forgetting their religious values. Throughout human history there have always been people who have resisted change and stood against it but that doesn't necessarily mean change is a bad thing, change is what makes us progress without change we would have stayed stuck in the stone ages and in gloom. Change is what makes us human. But how we bring about change in ourselves is what is important, learning a new language in order to communicate and gain knowledge doesn't seem harmless at all but when we indulge ourselves in a different culture so much that we start forgetting about our own roots that is where the problem lies, adopting a new culture isn't really a bad thing either it is more of a personal decision of how one chooses to live their life but one should never forget about their roots and should always respect their cultural and social values no matter what.

When one looks at one's own surroundings through the perspective of Ranjath Singh, one could find some serious flaws within the society and surely people do seem to forget about their own cultural and social values, but one cannot blame English language for that. As previously mentioned, it is in human nature to change and adapt to surroundings and many people who do so seem to lose the importance of their own cultural values, what needs to be done is to educate people and remind of the importance of their own cultural and social values rather than opposing the spread of English language as Gandhi himself said "I do not want my house to be walled in on all sides and my windows to be stifled. I want all the cultures of all lands to be blown about

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 16:6 June 2016

Sabreena Shah, M.A. (English Literature) MS (Applied Linguistics), MS Scholar in Linguistics and Shoukat A. Lohar

The Role of Interactive Media in the Spread of English Language in the World: A Language Policy Perspective

my house as freely as possible.” So one should encourage the spread of English language but one shouldn’t also forget about one’s own history and culture.

If we look at the history English language spread globally through British Colonialism and imperialism. In the words of Kachru (1986 & 1992), the very first exodus of English started in the 19th century when English settlers invaded North America, South Africa and some other Caribbean countries bringing English language with them. English in these countries is considered as primary language. Then due to British colonial power, English spread from Inner Circle countries to some of Outer circle countries as well mainly in Africa and Asia such as Kenya, Nigeria, Tanzania, India, Pakistan, the Philippines, Malaysia and Pakistan. English in these countries has been used as secondary language and is practiced in the fields of education, offices, law, commerce and judiciary. Later English extended from inner and outer circles to countries like China, Russia, Germany and Japan as foreign language to be used as medium for international communication. In the 21st century, English was considered to be the best taught monolingual language; a language mostly suitable for international business, education, science, travel and mail correspondence and thus it has been recognized as an international language.

With the help of social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter people were given opportunities to explore other cultures and communities online and to share their own views in local varieties of English. From around 2005 networking sites started to flourish around the globe and thus have become very popular in the spread of English via the 'democratization of information'.

How Far People Use English Language to Communicate on Social Media?

English language has universal use and appeals as a language of science and technology. It is an important language of the world and is being spoken by half of the population of the world at present. With the advent of modern civilization it has gained the status of international language and has become the language of international communication. The importance of English language can be gauged from the fact that it is the sole language which is not only adopted by social media but also it has compelled people to communicate via English while using and indulging in social networking all across the globe. It is evident that most of the content produced on the internet is visibly in English which indicates that even a mere comprehension of English language will allow one to access an incredible amount of information on the internet which can be utilized in a variety of ways.

Social media entail websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking. In the contemporary world social media has played a vital role in replacing not only the conventional methods of communication but it has also adapted an avant-garde approach in various walks of life such as in education, politics, medical, economic

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 16:6 June 2016

Sabreena Shah, M.A. (English Literature) MS (Applied Linguistics), MS Scholar in Linguistics and Shoukat A. Lohar

The Role of Interactive Media in the Spread of English Language in the World: A Language Policy Perspective

and social activities and above all in progression and development of technology. This clearly depicts that English language has become a prerequisite in order to achieve the pinnacle of success.

Clearly English language is extensively used for the purpose of communication on social media. Basically social media acts as a rebound in a way that it not only demands the usage of English language but it also virtually improves English skills. People are exceedingly interacting through a wide range of social networking sites since these are convenient and time-saving devices that make communication and deliberations possible irrespective of time and place anywhere around the globe. Following are the most popular social networking sites that require the usage of English for communication. [15]

- Twitter
- Face book
- LinkedIn
- YouTube
- Flickr
- Google+
- Forums and Message Boards

Apart from the aforementioned social networking sites, the internet encompasses infinite websites, a meager number of these might be in other languages but since English has attained the status of an international language, a pop up window appear for websites in foreign languages to be translated into English.

English Is Becoming a Powerful and Vast Spreading Language

Few centuries ago, meager number of people belonging from British Isles, conversed in English Language but with the passage of time people using English as a medium of communication not only inflated but also spread across the world making this language the most powerful of all.

History unveils that the spread of English language basically occurred due to politics. This language gained recognition when it was taken to various parts of the world by soldiers,

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 16:6 June 2016

Sabreena Shah, M.A. (English Literature) MS (Applied Linguistics), MS Scholar in Linguistics and Shoukat A. Lohar

The Role of Interactive Media in the Spread of English Language in the World: A Language Policy Perspective

sailors, pilgrims and missionaries of British Empire. In addition to this British colonization further assisted in its spread especially in the Indian subcontinent. [16]

Moreover, with the dawn of 21st century, the world was hit with dot com boom which vividly choose English Language for technological revolution. The proliferation of English can be gauged through the widespread use of social media. It basically “pulls” the people towards learning English language because in contemporary times English is regarded as a status symbol which ultimately motivates people to acquaint themselves with this “lofty” language.

Social media has heavily promoted English language in past few years and its efforts can be marked as commendable. The modern civilization – the world of the 21st Century has become so interconnected that the phrase "the global village" has become acceptable as a term to describe modern society. Today information technology links people and places from all civilizations, and national economies have become increasingly interconnected. Whether it is commerce or media, manufacturing or agriculture, the advancing globalization of human activity would be unthinkable without the development of science and technology and of course social media. It is notable that in this process of evolution English language has played a vital role. It is widely used for the purpose of communication between people belonging to various nationalities.

English language is not only popular among communication but its domain encompasses diverse dimensions.

Education is the backbone of a progressive nation. For a country to achieve the zenith of success it is mandatory that education should be assimilated within a nation at grass root level. It is the panacea to all ills that may include political disharmony, faltering economy and ubiquitous social disorders. Schools, colleges and universities mostly choose English as their medium for the dissemination of education. In this era, majority of people have access to internet and social media. Students, while conducting research related to their studies are greatly assisted by social media. For example they may take help from Google while conducting research on a particular topic. Apparently and consequently such activities indirectly strengthens and broaden the horizon of English Language because this is the fundamental language of social media.

There are many individuals, mostly those belonging to South Asian region, who were keen to learn English language but due to inaccessibility to institutions or because of personal issues, they were initially held back from learning. But with the advancement and progression in social media, virtual learning has been made convenient and possible thereby giving this language supremacy over others and consequently spreading it.

In addition to this everyday activities like online banking/transactions, online shopping, travelling, online gaming, medical and other services are majorly utilized by people all across the globe via social media thus further promoting this Language.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 16:6 June 2016

Sabreena Shah, M.A. (English Literature) MS (Applied Linguistics), MS Scholar in Linguistics and Shoukat A. Lohar

The Role of Interactive Media in the Spread of English Language in the World: A Language Policy Perspective

It basically reveals that English language has become imperative if one is to lead a healthy successful life in today's era.

Owing to Social Media What Changes Are Taking Place in English Language? How Social Media Is Affecting Structure of English?

Evolution and change is part of life. Everything evolves in its own realm. Similarly, languages also evolve with the passage of time. English language manifests immense changes in structure over time. One is absolutely mind blown if one compares the English Language used in the plays of Shakespeare with contemporary times. It unveils how tremendously languages change. This revolutionary change is basically the outcome of modern civilization. The dawn of social media has altered the very structure and dialect of English language. It all initiated in with the emergence of oldest, now obsolete, messaging application like MSN messenger, hi5 etc. for the purpose of communicating through text messages people tend to use abbreviations and acronyms especially when they are in rush. As time lapsed, these acronyms made their place in English language, thereby compelling dictionaries to enter these worlds into their word list. For example modern social networking and messaging apps like twitter, face book, messenger, whatsapp etc. allows people to use acronyms and emoticons for the sake of communicating. Twitter allows 140 characters to be posted. So when people tweet, they mostly use acronyms like LOL for “laughing out loud or OMG for “oh my God”, etc.

It is mandatory for the marketers to learn the new trend in order to build their clientele. In fact learning the new “fashion” is pertinent for everyone if they are to “survive” in this era. With the escalating advancement in social networking and technology, wide generation gaps are being created between parents and children. In order to bridge this gap it is imperative to acquaint oneself with the changes in English Language. Currently, the smart thing that someone can do is to learn the emerging acronyms in order to be the part of the modern society.

Undoubtedly social media is one of the greatest influences on the ever changing English language. A few years ago no one would have heard the words “unfriend” and “selfie”. The emergence of new words, new meanings for conventional words and alteration in the way one communicates demonstrates the significance of social media and the stamp it's making on the English language. Social media has contributed immensely to evolution of language. Diverse ranges of words are frequently added to Oxford Dictionary with the major chunk coming from social networking platform. [17]

What Positive or Negative Impact Social Media Has on English?

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 **16:6 June 2016**

Sabreena Shah, M.A. (English Literature) MS (Applied Linguistics), MS Scholar in Linguistics and Shoukat A. Lohar

The Role of Interactive Media in the Spread of English Language in the World: A Language Policy Perspective

The pros and cons of social media and its effect on English language are discussed as follows: [18]

Positive Impact

- Increases awareness of mistakes and helps prevent them.

It is apparent that when one posts on social media, if there are any spelling mistakes or grammatical errors, people may correct them. Likewise, if one is doubtful regarding the veracity of a particular sentence or its usage, one can always use the search engines for verification. This way social media acts as a blessing in disguise.

- It promotes short writing.

Social networking sites like “twitter” promotes the art of precise and short writing. It makes one capable of expressing oneself within a few words hence enhancing and polishing their English skills.

- Creates new words and meanings.

It is evident that language is in a state of evolution. With the passage of time change penetrates deep into culture, norms and traditions. Conventional methods are replaced with new modern facets. Similarly, lately the influence of social media has enabled people to coin new words or associate new meanings to existing words that are also considered by Oxford dictionaries.

- Social media has increased speed of spread of English around the world.

Negative Impact

- Change in structure of English Language.

Social media has a negative impact on the structure of languages. In order to communicate rapidly, people coin acronyms thereby sabotaging the essence language.

Conclusion

After all the immense study it is crystal clear that social media is playing an important role in spread of English language. However social media is not only spreading English but it is also bringing changes in English, English has been a global language English has been a lingua franca and now English has become a social networking language. It is due to social media that English is approaching towards every corner of the world, less or more English is being spoken almost in majority of countries on the globe. If social media is correctly used for the benefit or

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 16:6 June 2016

Sabreena Shah, M.A. (English Literature) MS (Applied Linguistics), MS Scholar in Linguistics and Shoukat A. Lohar

The Role of Interactive Media in the Spread of English Language in the World: A Language Policy Perspective

spread of English, English teaching and learning then it is going to increase importance of English for every individual. Therefore the growth of social media and spread of English are directly proportional to each other.

References

1.
https://www.google.com.pk/?gws_rd=cr,ssl&ei=eluLVqGRKsPvugSW_JPgDA#q=what+is+language
2. <https://hbr.org/2012/05/global-business-speaks-english>
3.
<http://www.degruyter.com/view/j/jhsem.2009.6.1/jhsem.2009.6.1.1601/jhsem.2009.6.1.1601.xml>
4.
http://www.criticalglobalisation.com/Issue7/122_142_SIMULATION_SOCIALITY_JCGS7.pdf
5. <http://spichtinger.net/Uni/sp-dipl3.pdf>
6.
<https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/Journalism%20in%20the%20Age%20of%20Social%20Media.pdf>
7. <http://spichtinger.net/Uni/sp-dipl3.pdf>
8. <http://blog.oxforddictionaries.com/2014/06/social-media-changing-language/>
9. <http://blog.oxforddictionaries.com/2014/06/social-media-changing-language/>
10. <http://people.cs.vt.edu>
11. Book: The Alchemy of English: The Spread, functions, and models of non-native Englishes by BRAJ B. KACHRU
13. British council website: www.britishcouncil.org
14. <http://www.poynter.org/news/mediawire/206598/5-ways-that-social-media-benefits-writing-the-english-language/>
15. <http://www.learnenglish.de/improveenglish/socialnetworks.html>

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 16:6 June 2016

Sabreena Shah, M.A. (English Literature) MS (Applied Linguistics), MS Scholar in Linguistics and Shoukat A. Lohar

The Role of Interactive Media in the Spread of English Language in the World: A Language Policy Perspective

16. <http://blog.esl-languages.com/blog/learn-languages/english/english-language-global-number-one/>

17. (<http://www.foreigntongues.eu/how-is-social-media-changing-the-english-language/>)

18. <http://www.poynter.org/news/mediawire/206598/5-ways-that-social-media-benefits-writing-the-english-language/>

=====

Sabreena Shah, M.A. (English Literature) MS (Applied Linguistics)
MS Scholar In Linguistics
English Language Development Centre
Mehran University of Engineering and Technology
Jamshoro
Sindh
Pakistan
sabreenatheshah@gmail.com

Shoukat A. Lohar
Assistant Professor at English Language Development Centre
Mehran University of Engineering and Technology
Jamshoro
Sindh
Pakistan
shoukat.ali@faculty.muet.edu.pk

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 **16:6 June 2016**

Sabreena Shah, M.A. (English Literature) MS (Applied Linguistics), MS Scholar in Linguistics and Shoukat A. Lohar

The Role of Interactive Media in the Spread of English Language in the World: A Language Policy Perspective