

Hyper-centrality of English Language in the World of Globalization: A Socio-linguistic Study

Suheel Rasool Mir*

*Research Scholar, at Department of Sociology,
University of Kashmir.*

** Email: mirsuhailscholar@gmail.com*

Syededa Nousheen Fatima**

*Research Scholar, Department of Sociology,
University of Kashmir.*

***Email: nousheen_fatima@hotmail.com*

Muzamil Wali***

*Research Scholar, Department of Sociology,
University of Kashmir.*

****Email: muzamil.wali@gmail.com*

Mansoor Ahmad****

*Research Scholar, at Department of Sociology,
University of Kashmir.*

*****Email: darmansoor2224@gmail.com*

Abstract:

Globalization is increasing rapidly in the contemporary world; this increase in globalization has affected language. One way through which globalization has affected language is by spreading one language globally, where that language is considered as the dominant language, it tend to over shadow other native languages. English language has emerged as the dominant language due to the onslaught of globalization which has connected every part of the world into a global village. As a result, this dominant language has penetrated into the indigenous cultures of the various societies thus threatening the very existence of native languages of indigenous people and by implication their social fabric because language is an important component of any social system. In the era of globalization, English language is used globally in almost all domains of national life like business, media and internet. This language has assumed the character of an international language with dominant factors. As this dominant language is being rapidly spread over the globe, the dominant culture that it represents is also gaining currency. On global scale it has led to extinction of other languages and culture, thus endangering them. It is evident from the secondary sources that almost 5000-6000 languages have been endangered due to globalization. In today's globalized world English is perceived as an advantaged language and many parents push their children to learn English language over their native language in order to bring them at par with global developments.

In the light of above mentioned context the present paper entitled '*Hypercentrality of English language in the world of Globalization: A socio-linguistic study*' will try to explore the impact of globalization on culture of languages and will also critically analyze how English language has emerged as the dominant language due to the onslaught of globalization.

Keywords: *Globalization, English language, Indigenous languages, Social fabric, Extinction.*

Introduction:

The Enlightenment and its avatars like modernity, post-modernity and globalization have 'invaded' all arenas of the world known to man. It has affected all arenas of society differently. Like everyone else, languages which are considered to be one of the components that constitute the identity too have been caught up in the effects of what we call globalization. In this borderless world, indigenous languages have been confronted by many post-enlightenment challenges (Crystal, 2001). Even indigenous languages are no more immune to globalization. The processes of globalization thereby erode the social foundations of socio-linguistic fabric (David, 1998). It poses threats in the wake of a strong emphasis on economic values

inherent in globalization processes, and through the dominance of certain languages and cultural practices, implying an accelerated trend towards a loss of languages (especially among indigenous communities), and the extinction of certain practices. All these trends favour the emergence of a uniformity of expressions (but not necessarily of identities) and approaches, impinging on (especially the more intangible aspects of) cultural diversity. Does globalization heighten or diminish “our aesthetic awareness or are we drowning in a tidal wave of superficial, global pop culture easily sold and instantly digestible everywhere”? (Richard Tomkins, Financial Times, 23 April 2004) Globalization is increasing rapidly in the contemporary world; this increase in globalization has affected language. This impact in turn affects the culture of the language. One way through which globalization has affected language is by spreading one language globally, where that language is considered as the dominant language, it tend to over shadow other native languages. English language has emerged as the dominant language due to the onslaught of globalization which has connected every part of the world into a global village. As a result, this dominant language has penetrated into the indigenous cultures of the various societies thus threatening the very existence of native languages of indigenous people and by implication their social fabric because language is an important component of any social system (Meredith, 2010). With the rapid advancement of science and technology, the world is gradually losing its diversity. It is getting globalized. People's attitudes, the way they dress, their foods the way they eat, the way they do their daily chores, the way they travel, the way they enjoy and get entertained and etc are getting globalized (Edward, 1978). The diversity, the traditions, rituals, customs are getting drifted away. Does not this impact on language and communication? Of course it does, language too is getting globalized gradually (Donna, 2005). Language is changing into a simpler, faster communication mode that fits with the electronic communication methods and dissemination of information. Facebook English, SMS English are getting popularized among the new generation, especially because it is free of many complicated grammar rules and spelling rules, thereby people can easily grasp it and they will like it absolutely (Erik 2001).

In the era of globalization, English language is used globally in almost all domains of national life like business, media and internet. This language has assumed the character of an international language with dominant factors. As this dominant language is being rapidly spread over the globe, the dominant culture that it represents is also gaining currency. Thus the world's native languages are fast disappearing and the dominant one is rampant across the globe (Aitchison, 2000). English language can be rightly regarded as the key to the store house of production and productivity. We can make use of this language to promote our world view and spiritual heritage and promote cultural and traditional aspects across the globe (Deborah 1992). Globalization has brought English language into limelight. The scenario of the usage of the language has changed drastically. The Queen's language has become a common man's curriculum. The language has become a silver bowl to earn one's bread and butter. Globalization leaves no stone unturned. As current globalization seems to demand comprehensive transformation of a society, its impact on language and culture can be detected in every facet of life (Cooke, 1988)

On global scale it has led to extinction of other languages and culture, thus endangering them. Endangered languages are no longer spoken by children. Only few elders speak it and extinction occurs when the language is no more spoken as a result of globalization. It is evident from the secondary sources that almost 5000-6000 languages have been endangered due to globalization (Kachru & Nelson, 1996). In today's globalized world English is perceived as an advantaged language and many parents push their children to learn English language over their native language in order to bring them at par with global developments (Lowenberg, 2000).

Globalization:

Globalization is a buzzword of the moment, within universities, government and society. The power of the word itself, and all that it brings with it, is immense (e.g. Bourdieu 1999). Some tell us that globalization is inevitable, that it entails specific events and others that it is something that should be defeated. In academic circles, there are many definitions of and approaches to globalization simply because it is not a field of study that is restricted to any one discipline (Xavier, 2002). Globalization scholars belong to fields as diverse as cultural studies, sociology, economics, international relations, political theory, art and linguistics. This cross-disciplinary nature of globalization is perhaps one of its defining features. Hence, it is a field that borrows a significant number of terms and concepts from existing lexicons. The result is that what globalization means is always in dispute. In the end, globalization concerns a field of inquiry defined more by the questions it asks and its object of study: the world as a whole and parts of it in relation to this whole.

Global English:

Global English refers to both a collection of varieties of English (often called Global Englishes or International Englishes) and a phenomenon (the global spread of English). While the term "global English" may suggest a new variety of English which is used globally, such a variety does not yet exist. The growing widespread usage of the English language creates a variety of debates, most importantly those about language rights (e.g. Minority language maintenance, official languages, language education) and cultural loss. Because of the growing number of speakers of English as a first or additional language, many perceive the status of English as hegemonic (or the language of linguistic imperialism) because, as the argument goes, as more people learn/speak English, the less other languages are learned/spoken. Debates about the hegemony of English often take place as though English itself were the enemy. It is important to remember that the current status of the English language arises from the politics, economic status, and etc. of those who use English rather than the language itself. Language policy, education and attitudes have to be monitored to stop other languages being marginalized, but, more importantly, to stop speakers of languages other than English from being marginalized. Whether there is a variety that has emerged as "standard global English" is a complex issue without a clear answer because it relies on the perceived status of a particular variety and the purpose for which it issued. While it is safe to say that certain varieties of English are preferred for certain purposes (see Evans 2005), though not due to their inherent superiority but to the value assigned to

them by people. Because there are so many varieties of English spoken in the world (see Crystal 1997) it is impossible to say that only one of those is the “standard” global variety.

Impact of globalization on indigenous languages:

Language reflects culture, and in this case the power of English reflects the power of certain countries. Until relatively recently, the United Kingdom held the reins to the world’s largest empire, with colonies scattered across the globe (Domke & Darla, 2001). Their superior industrial capacity meant that they were able to conquer new territories and impose their own cultural norms, laws, religion and language. As a result, English found its way into nearly every corner of the earth (Matthew, 2004). Although some are arguing that globalization is positive for language and people, there are some that are arguing it will have negative effects on language. The biggest argument is that globalization and the dominance of a few languages will force some languages into extinction (Malloy & Thomas, 2006). The Endangered Languages Project reports that 40% of world’s languages will disappear, directly related to globalization and its effects. To elaborate more, Ethnologies suggests that 25 percent of the world’s languages are in danger of permanently disappearing in the near future, Indigenous people’s today stand at the crossroads of globalization (Richard, 2006). In many ways, indigenous peoples challenge the fundamental assumptions of globalization. They do not accept the assumption that humanity will benefit from the construction of a world culture of consumerism. Indigenous peoples are acutely aware, from their own tragic experience over the past 500 years, that consumer societies grow and prosper at the expense of other peoples and the environment (Meredith, 2010). Today, with the rapid advance of globalization, the loss of intangible cultural heritage once seen in Japan can now be observed throughout the world. The threat of extinction to intangible cultural heritage is particularly noticeable in developing countries in Asia, Africa and the Middle East, today. Therefore, while modernization and industrialization remain urgent issues, it is at the same time essential to preserve and transmit these traditional cultures. The various ways in which intangible cultural heritage is being preserved and transmitted require special attention. The disappearance of languages as a result of the impact of globalization is bound to have negative effects, both direct and indirect, on identities and intangible cultural heritage – especially as these languages are vectors of traditional manifestations and celebrations of community life. The term globalization of languages is also defined by Steger (2003) as “the process of the spread of some languages that are used as international languages, and the disappearance of other languages that lack speakers”

Man has been using language as a medium of communication for the ages, today due to Globalization English language has become the most prized possession of communication. In this Global village, English language acts as a repository of wisdom and wit. English language is a propeller for advancement of career and a machine to mint money. And it is a telescope to view the vision of future (Aliester, 1994). In this Global world, communication in English is now recognized as an inseparable part rather the life blood of every activity which occurs in our day to day life. Now a day’s every organization functions through a communication process, wherein mutually independent persons create and exchange messages to articulate

and achieve commonly held objectives and goals. Frankly speaking, globalization is nothing but another form of colonization. I state this fact because it is true as far as indigenous peoples are concerned (Wallerstein, 1989). In general, the relationship of indigenous peoples to their ancestral lands forms the basis for culture, social institutions, and the daily work practices in indigenous economies. It goes almost without saying that the notion of globalization is neither value-free nor clinical, as we witness the shrinking of ancestral lands and territories worldwide (Peter, 1996).

World languages through colonization, more powerful, industrialized countries were able to force their languages on weaker populations (Alastair, 1994). Since these countries were dictating the terms of any potential economic exchange, it was necessary for traders in other less-powerful regions to learn more widely-spoken languages like English or French in order to communicate and participate in this exchange. While this inevitably led to the loss of much smaller, regional dialects, colonization kicked off the start of the globalization process (Malcom, 1993).

English: The official language of Globalization:

English is the official language of globalization. In the global market of linguistic goods English becomes the language of global modernity. The users of vernacular and national language are continuing to decrease (Vellenga, 2004). The various ways in which intangible cultural heritage is being preserved and transmitted require special attention. The disappearance of languages as a result of the impact of globalization is bound to have negative effects, both direct and indirect, on identities and intangible cultural heritage – especially as these languages are vectors of traditional manifestations and celebrations of community life. English competence is a powerful tool to survive the age of the globalization (Yamada, 2005). English has become the second language of everybody. Globalization and English language are said to work as pull factors for one another. English language plays a major role in the progress of Globalization. Globalization of trade and commerce, increasing diversities of work force with different setup values have increased the importance of English language usage. In other words, English has power: financial power, political power, and cultural power (Pennycook, 1995). Across the world, people who speak it often enjoy greater opportunities and options than those who do not. Companies who utilize it are able to expand internationally to an extent that might not otherwise be possible. We could spend hours discussing the advantages and disadvantages of this reality. But the fact is that right now English is arguably the most powerful language in the world (Phillipson, 1995). Nettle and Romaine (2000) claim that nearly half of the existing 5,000-6,000 languages will be extinct in the next 100 years. They argued that languages become endangered as a response to different pressures acting on a community, including social, cultural, economic, and military demands. The extinction occurs when the endangered language is replaced by another language and takes over its functions in the community (Nettle & Romaine, 2000). Similarly, Crystal believes that global lingua francas put pressures on minority languages, resulting in language death or extinction (Crystal, 2000). Clearly, one consequence of the globalization of the English language is an increased amount of endangered languages throughout the world.

English rules” is an old phrase, “English language rules” is the new phrase emerged out of Globalization. Knowledge of English is very essential because countries are becoming globally integrated and coupled with each other in all aspects in terms of culture, economy, trade and commerce

Linguistic Globalization and Linguistic Imperialism:

Communicating ideas is not the only function of a language. Rather, language can be considered a powerful source of setting up and preserving social relationships in speech communities. Power can be established by the use of language. Accordingly, language highlights the truth of the superior, and deemphasizes the truth of the inferior to a large extent (Thomas & Wareing, 1999). Generally, English users' ideas are not the same and direct. Some believe to mix tradition and modernity. However, some pay attention to negative effects of English. Some believe that English can give them power. Actually, this perspective does not belong to all learners of English who are in different countries. In fact, as we are thinking about the importance of English as a universal language, we understand that English native speakers tend to protect their language. English is recognized as the international language for communication all over the world because of its position and uses in the world today. It can be used among the people of the same country, e.g. India and thus, it can be considered an international language locally and globally (McKay, 2002). In fact, only English has contained the military and economic power needed for making the international language among other colonial languages (McArthur, 1998). In particular, the domination of countries that speak English in several areas provides English with an upper rank, and contributes to making English a principal language among other languages. Among different types of globalization, cultural globalization is being argued among intellectuals of a variety of disciplines. However, it is difficult to satisfy applied linguists completely. Based on the critical analysis of the present literature in the fields of sociology and culture, there are three corresponding schools of thought. The first group members are signified by authors like Ritzer (1993) who believed that some sort of cultural homogenization, which is holding the American culture at the center is apparent. These authors believe in an easy and clear equation: "Globalization" means “Westernization” means “Americanization” and ”McDonaldization”. According to this equation, globalization is mainly considered a process of Westernization which to a large extent is the same as Americanization which can be considered McDonaldization. Secondly, globalization affects political activities, which has an important effect on the world. E.g., financial activities, technological industry and global economy can lead basically to interaction and media. Thus, globalization can transform circumstances and conditions in ELT (Block & Cameron, 2002). As the final point, ELT settings have different contexts in several countries all over the world Block and Cameron (2002) observed some of these changes based on economy and technology. There is a question here to see if globalization contains good or bad effects on ELT with regard to the profession, teachers, activities, learners, methodologies, and course books, etc.

Conclusion:

When a culture dies along with a language, the connection between perception and action is forever changed. Using our native language is a very important way to protect it from extermination. But usage of the

language is not only about speaking it. There is no doubt that Globalization has changed the life style of human beings altogether, the English language has given a new life to the modern man. Because of Globalization Communication in English is the major requirement in the day-to-day selection process. “English” is a language before Globalization and “English” is the language after globalization .English and Globalization are inseparable, living one on another in the present day world like body and soul of a human being. To make the richness of the language survive, it must be used in literature as poetry, dramas, films and so on. In Greenlandic society, as well as in many other indigenous societies, many words in the language are related to the way people lived traditionally, and therefore, the language is in danger of diminishing in modern society. Globalization phenomena will continue to stride into the future; it is our urgent task to examine the checks and balances of the globalization process, and find a way to promote both regional cultures and global values. Today, globalization has had and will continue to have effects on many aspects of society, including language .As globalization has increased the spread of world languages like English, and another consequence is that many other languages are becoming endangered and ultimately extinct.

References:

- Aitchison, J. (2000). *Language change: Progress or decay?* (Cambridge Approaches to Linguistics). C.U.P.: Cambridge.
- Albo, X. (2002). *Educando en la diferencia*, La Paz: Ministerio de Educación, UNICEF, CIPCA.
- Armstrong, D. (1998). Globalization and the social state. *Review of International Studies*.
- Bock, R. (1986). *Hegemony*. Chichester. UK: Ellis Horwood, Ltd.
- Bolton, K. (2000). 'The sociolinguistics of Hong Kong and the space for Hong Kong English'. *World Englishes*, 19(3), 265-285.
- Calvet, Luis-Jean. (1994). “Les politiques de diffusion des langues en Afrique francophone”. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*.
- Crystal, D. (2001). *Language and the Internet*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Giddens, A. (1990). *The consequences of modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Graddol, D. (1998). *The Future of English*. London: The British Council
- Graddol, D. (1997). *The Future of English?* London: The British Council.
- Hagège, Claude. (2000). *Halte a la mort des langues*. Paris: Éditions Odile Jacob
- Holm, E. (2001). *The European anarchy. Europe's hard road into high politics*. Copenhagen: Copenhagen Business School Press.
- Kaldor, S. & Malcolm, I.G. (1991). 'Aboriginal English - an overview', in *Language in Australia*, S. Romaine (ed.), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Lowenberg, P. (2000). 'Assessing English proficiency in the global context: The significance on non-native norms', in H. W. Kam & C. Ward, (eds), *Language in the Global context: Implications for Language Classrooms*, Anthology series 41, SEAMED RELC, Singapore
- Muhlhausler, P. (1996). *Linguistic ecology: Language change and linguistic imperialism in the Pacific region*. London: Routledge.
- Pennycook, A. (1994). *The cultural politics of English as an international language*. London, New York: Longman.
- Phillipson, R. (1992). *Linguistic imperialism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Risto, Donna, A. (2005). "Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics." *American Economist*.
- Said, Edward W. (1978). *Orientalism*. New York, Toronto: Random House.

- Stephens, M. (2010). "Speaking Japanese in Japan: Issues for English Speakers." Babel.
- Zimmerman, D. H. (1978). *Ethnomethodology*. American Sociologist

