



DISMANTLING COLONIAL HEGEMONIES IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE ACQUISITION: IMPERIALISM TO THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

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Abstract :

Language and Communication is ever evolving. From the mere acquisition of language and interacting in a particular language today, effective communication includes difference processes of communication. The English language has acquired an omniscient presence, thanks to colonization. But it also has been pivotal and used with great innovation. In India, particularly, as a doubled edged sword, by the native writers. Postcolonial writers have adopted the traditional English language of the colonizer to write back and expose the colonial experience.

The beginnings of the twenty-first century, saw the English language being exported not through colonizers but through the computers and the internet. Colonial subjects continue to have access to English and all information due to internet and artificial intelligence. While the present-day students master the English language, how can they dismantle the colonial power construct? This paper studies the growing impact of English and suggests new ways to uphold Indian culture and knowledge systems.

IndexTerms - Hegemony, Globalization, Postcolonialism, Indian Knowledge system

I. INTRODUCTION

Naom Chomsky, an American professor has worked extensively on linguistics and political activism in order to critique social structures. He is called "the father of modern linguistics". Chomsky is also a major figure in analytic philosophy and one of the founders of the field of cognitive science. He is one of the most influential political commentators. In context to power structures, he emphasises Edward Said theory of orientalism is based on his premise that Colonial powers are not only ruling the territory but they are ruling the minds and ideology of the colonized. He states, "Edward Said helps us to understand who we are and what we must do if we are to aspire to be moral agents, not servants of power" Noam Chomsky (pg 3, Cultural Imperialism). These academicians are warning us of the effects of imperialism on the cultures of the third world nations. They are able to see through the power constructs that cripple the colonized nations. Twenty Twenty-seven will mark eighty years since independence. How much has India dismantled itself from the colonial impositions? This paper studies specifically the language imposition and critiques the hegemony of English on Indian society.

The 20th and 21st century are the ages of globalization. Exploration began in the 15th and sixteenth century. Exploration led to colonization and the increased movement of people. This movement continues through the ages and reached its peak post the world wars and post-colonization. People realized the existence of a vast world and that greener pastures are available elsewhere. They boldly took a step towards a better future, away from political strife, religious battles, poverty, and unemployment. Thus, mass migration gained momentum. National boundaries faded as people adopted new nations and new cultures. Globalization was born.

II. ENGLISH LANGUAGE AS A GLOBAL FORCE

Theodore Levitt, a professor at the Harvard Business School is credited with coining the term "globalization". He used this term when championing the undervalued role of marketing in defining what businesses should make and sell. Though he used the term in relation to commercial enterprise, the term Globalization now covers a wide range of concepts.

Globalization is a term used to describe the spread of connectivity and integration of the world. This has been made possible through air travel, migration, trade and technology. Globalization is an integration on a global scale. Globalization has made the world a more connected and interdependent place. The term 'Globalization' also captures in its scope the economic, cultural and social changes that have coloured the world in contemporary times.

It is colonization and subsequent mass migrations has insured not only movement of peoples but an exchange of ideas, cultures, and traditions. This accelerated the growth of globalization and marred the definitions of identity and nationalism.

Globalization affects economy and culture, and has a lasting and dynamic effect on languages. "For a century and a half English has been called a world language, used in different forms for different purposes: and the number of people who now speak some form of it as their 'mother tongue' is estimated at between 300 and 400 million, some seven times the population of modern Britain; and that is still about half the number of those who use it". (Walder 44)

As English grew to be an international language, English acquired a new status. It was the language adopted for commerce and business. Acquisition of English became a necessity for success on the business front. This led to the death of indigenous languages. Katalina Toth In the Harvard International Review claims, "Every two weeks, an Indigenous language dies. Some of the languages that have already disappeared were Inuit languages, spoken in the far reaches of the Arctic". (<https://hir.harvard.edu/the-death-and-revival-of-indigenous-languages/#>)

III. COSMOPOLITANISM OF ENGLISH

Globalization had a definite hand in the growth of English and its influence over world languages. This fact also creates a site of contestation and debate. Across the world, it is English that has gained superiority. This has caused irreparable harm and had been the cause for the death of unaccountable native languages. Why and how did English gain this supremacy? Let us examine the reason for this.

Walder quotes Fanon, "As Fanon describes it, colonialism was a denial of all culture, history and value outside the colonizer's frame: in short, 'a systematic negation of the other person'" (40). The colonizer in his mission of gaining control of a territory, imposed his culture and language on the natives. As a result of Colonization, English, Spanish, Dutch, Portuguese, French etcetera began to spread and dominate as the medium of expression.

From among the colonizers' languages, English gained predominance. The simple reason being post 16th century, the rise of England as a maritime power. Over the centuries, right up to the beginning of the 20th century, England ruled over three thirds of the world. Hence it was said that, "The sun never sets on the British Empire." This saying has its origin, due to the vastness of the British Empire. At any given time of the day, East to West, at least one part or the other of the vast British Empire, spreading across the globe, was invariably experiencing day. The British came, ruled and left.

Though the British have left, the residue left behind has been impacting. The most important effect of English colonization is the colonization of world languages and the wide usage of English. This has resulted in English becoming the dominant chosen medium for global expression.

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Over the past couple of centuries, the English language has left its shores and spread over the globe. Thanks to colonialism, it has conquered spatial and temporal chasms. But as the twentieth century witnessed the end of colonialism, it also witnessed, contrarily, the growth of the English language. English as a language proved to be uncontained and irrepressible. Its growth increased even in countries gaining independence. The widespread usage of English caused its domination in Post-colonial times.

Though the seed for the growth of English language was sown during British colonization, its widespread growth and domination began after colonization. It can be said that English is indeed the Post-colonial language of many countries. Today, everyone has access to the computer. This has further accelerated the usage of English. English is the language of the internet and Artificial Intelligence.

This process began when native writers began to adopt English as a medium of literary expression.

IV. POST-COLONIAL DISMANTLING OF IMPERIAL ENGLISH

It is observed that while Post-colonialism aims at dismantling the hegemony of domination and submission between the colonizer and the colonized. Yet English- the colonizer's language has witnessed irreversible growth. Post-colonialism interrogates this phenomenon extensively. Is it possible in the face of colonization and globalization for native writers to express their identity in the colonizer's language?

Why do native writers write in English? Ashcroft et al maintain, Post-colonialism "stems from a grounding, in the material, and historical experience, of colonialism" (Ashcroft et al. 196) This is the reason why Post-colonial writings are in the Eurocentric medium- English. Native writers are not negating the colonial experience, but rather re-writing the truths by adopting the colonizer's language.

Chinua Achebe was the first to theorize the post colonialism of the English language. He famously stated, "I feel that the English language will be able to carry the weight of my African experience. But it will have to be a new English, still in full communion with its anhttps://edsitement.neh.gov/lesson-plans/new-english-chinua-achebes-things-fall- (<https://www.jstor.org/stable/2935429>)

Post-colonial literature is a product of the third world intellectuals. While empowering the colonized margins to write back, they write back in the rulers' language. Decolonization has given voice to the people inhabiting the margins of society. But while writing back, the colonial mindset has not changed. The indigenous writings are in the colonizer's language.

There has been an explosion of literature in the erstwhile colonized countries, and this literature, while speaking of native experiences, is written in English. Post-colonial literature is the product of histories recorded by writers from different cultures and ethnic backgrounds. "Though Post-colonialism began as an analysis of culture formations, within conditions of unequal positions, and of the resistance offered therein, it is increasingly being confined to its relationship to the West, seeking accommodation and an audience there." (Jain 31)

Realist Literary writings, are grounded in true representation, sans any nationalist prejudice. Even while, Post-colonial writers are concerned with the 'decolonizing the mind', they have to recognize the location of English in Commonwealth and literary writings.

English has undergone Diachronic (temporal), and synchronic (spatial and geographical) changes. Native writers use English, but, with an infusion of their own indigenous language.

V. FIRST STEP OF DISMANTLING: INDIAN LITERATURE IN EXPRESSING TRADITION

Let us see how this consciousness of our native culture grew. It took its infant steps through literature written by Indians. Globalization is present in Indian literature. Indian writers in their writings have been faithful to reflect their lives and the lived reality. Their works reflect the native idiom and tradition. Indian writers living in the Diaspora have also been able to express the Indian tradition and culture.

English has also come to dominate the Post-colonial writings in India. Though India is a seat of great cultures, and languages, pre and post-independence, its educated and well informed writers adopted English for their Post-colonial manifestations. The widespread use of English by native writers had political implications. Native writers realized that cultural texts written in English could be an act of retaliation. Writing in English- the language of the imperialists, was in resistance to imperial domination. The acquisition and use of English, by native writers, meant pen power in the hands of the native.

5.1 Dismantling through Writings based on Native Consciousness

The English Indian writings was pioneered by the great trio of Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao and R. K. Narayan. The great duo of R. K. Narayan and Mulk Raj Anand began writing in English during colonial times. Raja Rao, published his first stories in English and French; but he also contributed articles in Kannada, his regional language. Mulk Raj Anand is considered one of the pioneers of Indo-Anglian fiction; he together with R. K. Narayan, Ahmad Ali and Raja Rao, was one of the first India-based writers in English to gain an International readership.

Indian born V.S. Naipaul in 1971 won the Booker Prize, the Booker prize, an annual prize instituted by the British for the best novel written in English, published in The UK or Ireland then Salman Rushdie who grew up in Mumbai, then Bombay, studied in Cambridge and went on to win. In essence these authors proved that Indians could reign supreme in writing in English. Again, Arundhati Roy won the Booker for her novel *The God of Small Things* (1997), Kiran Desai won this prestigious prize for her novel *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006), Aravind Adiga for *The White Tiger* (2008). These writers have provided an international platform for the ethos of India. Through their writings they have transported and exported their joy of their Indianess.

English has come for a blessing to many in Indian society acts. For the elite it secured for them education abroad to become leaders. Due to an English Education in the UK, Independent India had an erudite government. Unlike many Asian and African states, India was steered by powerful and educated leaders. Seventy-five years post-Independence Indian is on its way to be a super power.

For the middle classes, acquisition of the English language proved a powerful tool for social mobility. When the world was experiencing economic recession, Indians could still find jobs in the world. As soon as travel began in the early Twentieth century, Indian have been migrating all over the world establishing brilliant careers.

Proficiency in English has ensured global connectivity, and economic opportunity, opening doors in business, and technology. English has proved to be a colonial language representing modernization and equality. It was provided opportunity to the marginalized and outcast of Indian society to shine and be leaders. The leading example is Dr. Ambedkar. A Dalit by birth, he scaled the walls of discrimination to become a lawyer. He went to study abroad and then returned and drafted the Indian Constitution.

6. CONCRETE DISMANTLING THROUGH EDUCATION : POST INDEPENDENCE PERIOD

The newly appointed government to India at independence under Jawaharlal Nehru, understood that an enlightened society is possible only through education.

When India gained independence, India had an approximate population between 330 to 340 million. (The definite population figure of 361 million was received only in 1951, when the first census was done). The government of India had a monumental task of education the masses.

"Our country and our world are more illiterate in 1970 and 1971 than in 1960. India's illiterates have increased from 330 million in 1961 to 382 million in 1971" (11, Adiseshiah)

With a population estimate of 1.46 billion, India has surpassed China as the most populous state. In an article "India's Literacy Rate: Insights" for 2025, January 17, 2026 India Maps "India's literacy rate is projected to reach 77.7% by 2025, yet disparities among states highlight significant educational challenges and advancements." (India Data Map)

Media and Technology has transformed the process of language acquisition. Over the past couple of centuries, the English language has left its shores and spread over the globe due to colonialism. As the twentieth century witnessed the end of colonialism, it also witnessed contrarily, the growth of the English language. English as a language began its domination in Post-colonial times. But due to the internet and cyberspace, communication and the English language has conquered spatial and temporal chasms. Education is available even in rural areas.

The Ministry of Education has a monumental task of bringing Education to the Masses. An assessment of the past progress of institutions, gaps in the system. Government has begun to ensure that school education is available to the vast population of children.

The answer is technology. The government has taken the great onus of bringing connectivity to the most remote parts of India. The call of the hour is encouragement towards funding technology accessibility to everyone, especially the economic weaker sections in Indian society.

7. CONCLUSION

Pre-colonization, India had a very rich culture and one of the most advanced education system. The education system was based on the premise of the Gurukul Parampara. While modern education is profession based, meaning education has become competitive for the sole reason to secure a good job. But the Gurukul Parampara aimed as transforming individuals to a higher consciousness of morality and ethics, in order to survive and uphold a superior society. The twenty first century with NEP is truly working to dismantle the hegemonic power of English. With the evolution of globalization in employment, Indians have used English to secure the best employment opportunities. better

To conclude this study, the Indian education system under NEP 2020, envisages a balance between competitive knowledge and Indian Knowledge system. If all adopt the smooth functioning of NEP 2020 directives, the colonial hegemony through language will be dismantled concretely.

Acknowledgment

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