

Conceptualising English Language Education in the Globalised World

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Abstract: *The emergence of English as a global language has redefined the impact of this language in the present times. Globalization and technological development have markedly transformed the ways of learning and teaching English as a second or foreign language. This paper discusses the paradigm shifts of English language education in the globalised information society.*

Keywords: *Multiliteracies ,Gloabalisation, Social Activity, Global Language, appropriateness, Information Technology,*

Introduction

The human society needs language for communication between its members as well as with other societies. As language makes it possible for individuals to live in a society, language can be regarded as a social activity rather than a means of communication. Language brings human beings into relationship with one another as well as into relationship with the external world.

People learn language for different reasons-social, cultural academic, scientific, commercial and so on. It is easy to plan a course for a learner and to teach him/her who knows exactly the purpose of learning the

language. But it is not easy to design a course and to produce satisfactory results for a group of which the majority of the learners have no better aim than the thought that the knowledge of the language is just useful.

Language Education

Knowing a language means being able to speak, read, write, and understand it when it is spoken. It is possible to learn to read, or to understand but not vice versa. It also means mastery of vocabulary both active and passive, the patterns or structures and different devices used for putting together the words and structures. Another aspect of language learning is that language cannot be divorced from situation. It is possible for a language learner to use words and structures correctly, but use them in a wrong context. Appropriateness is as important as correctness. The learner should be able to understand the relationship between situation and language. A learner in our classroom has a very little exposure to the language beyond that provided by his teachers.

Technology in Language Education

Technology is a tool for delivering and transmitting information. It is a means by which students can gain experience of formulating problems, deciding on the reasonableness of situation, communicating their thoughts, findings and interpretations, and collaborating with other students in this mission. Technology is a major partner in the process of improving the quality of education with which a student leaves the school or college. Students should walk away from the system with an education that will make them educationally and technologically competitive and capable of enjoying life to its fullest.

It is true that every technological development has been an extension of some human function. Whether man is mechanised or freed by its extension depends very much on how the technology is used. The role of technology in education and its impact to enhance the quality of education are meticulously pursued. Decisions made now will influence the ways in which it will be introduced and used in education.

The language education has taken a different turn with the arrival of new technologies. The New London Group (1996) has coined the term “Multiliteracies” and this term addresses two major changes in the concept of language education and literacy of our time. The first change is social, cultural and linguistic diversity and the second change is the emergence of new information communication technology. These two changes increasingly influence the pedagogy of English as a second or foreign language.

The first change, diversity, challenges everyone to deal with differences in the local and globally interconnected communities. The second change, which emerges from new information communication technology, is radically altering our way of making meaning. Meaning is made in interactive, multimoded ways which require today’s learner to acquire different sets of literacies like digital literacy, ICT literacy, information literacy in addition to traditional print literacy. So, in this context both language teachers and learners should be active participants showing responsibility of designing their future.

English Language Education in the age of Globalization

The emergence of English as a global language has redefined the impact of this language in the present times. Globalization and technological development have markedly transformed the ways of learning and teaching English as a second or foreign language. New technologies have dramatically increased the possibility of interaction and mobility among people around the globe overcoming many barriers of time and space. Countries are much more interdependent than ever in human history in terms of politics, business and academics, uniting themselves to various regional and international organisations: for instance the United Nations, the European Union, the Asia Pacific Economic Corporation, and the like. In this context David Crystal remarks:

There are no precedents in human history for what happens to languages in such circumstances of rapid change. There has never been a time when so many nations were needing to talk to each other so much ... And they never has been a more urgent need for a global language. (2003:14)

The political and economic changes at the international level transform English into a global language.

What makes a language global is inevitably related to the power of those who speak the language. Through a psychological approach the British had conditioned the mindset of the Indians and the inhabitants of other British colonies to equip them with a kind of glass to view the world. It was nothing other than the glass of English language. David Crystal's *English as a Global Language* is a graphic illustration of the fact that not only "children of Mecauly" in the British colonies "haunted by Mecauly's ghost" but whole of the world has now come under the magic spell of

English (Le Figaro, 1998: 7). More recently, English has promoted and maintained its dominant status all over the world through the political, economic and technological power of the United States.

The number of non-native English speakers has increased tremendously backed by the remarkable advances in information technology. Speaker of English as a second language and foreign language outnumber the first language speakers of English. According to Crystal, the estimated total of native speakers of English is approximately 400 million in the twenty first century. He also presents the estimate of the number of people speaking English as a second language to be roughly 400 million and those speaking English as a foreign language to be 600 million. In short, three out of four English users are non-native speakers (2004: 9). Thus the spread of English worldwide, backed by the global penetration of Internet, parallels the process of globalization. This trend indicates that English language, global economy and new technologies share similar parts in the process of dissemination of knowledge characterised by globalization.

Conclusion

In this globalized context, it is increasingly important to direct attention to the central shift observed in the field of second or foreign language education through technology from accuracy through accuracy plus fluency to accuracy plus fluency plus agency (Warschauer, 2004: 23). As the technology advanced from mainframe computer through personal computer to networked multimedia computer, the paradigm of the use of computers in English language education changes from tutor through tool to agency. In this regard, Warschauer's comment is noteworthy:

If English is imposing the world on our students, we can enable them through English, to impose their voices on the world. (2000: 530)

In order to achieve this end, understanding the potentials of latest technologies and sociocultural environments on the language learning process is necessary to mould the language education in the globalized information society.

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