

Technology- Enabled Communication and its Role in Evolving New Paradigms of Language Usage

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Short Abstract:

Language is a potent tool of cultural expression. Both, language and culture are inextricably interwoven. Language is a dynamic phenomenon. It evolves and moulds itself according to the needs of its users. The innovations in the technological world have ushered in an era of digitization. This is its wake has changed forever the ways in which we communicate.

Long Abstract:

Language is a potent tool of cultural expression and has undergone sea changes. New words/neologisms have become the order of the day. As the use of social networking sites and mobile applications show an upward trend, new words come into play. Our everyday language comprises of usages like downloading from the internet or uploading on a social networking site or tweeting. We talk of a digital ecosystem, just as we talk of biomimicry and stem cell banks.

New concepts mean new words to express the meaning and extricate sense out of those phenomena. That means the human race is in constant need to new words to cope up with the ever increasing, ever multiplying, inter-disciplinary areas of study and development. The present study attempts to throw light on these changes, their correlation with the changes in inter-personal communication among youngsters and its impact on their cultural milieu.

Key words: Neologisms, evolving language, cultural expression, social changes, technological advancements, overlapping disciplines.

"A new word," said philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein, "is like a fresh seed sown on the ground of the discussion." (1929).

Language is a potent identity marker. It is also a symbol of power and authority. In the novel 'Disgrace' by JM Coetzee, there is a scene in which the protagonists Lucy, David and Petrus are in a party which has been hosted by Petrus, with the setting being post-apartheid Africa. David and Lucy are the only Whites among them all. While Lucy chooses to speak in the native language Xhosa in order to belong, Petrus's wife responds to her in English, the language of the colonizers, the language of authority. The scene has lingered on in my memory long after having read the novel.

In the current scenario, with the digital divide playing a pivotal role in shaping our social positions, language has become an interesting and rapidly changing phenomenon. New words are being coined and added to the English language more frequently now. Neologisms as we call them are not new. We have had them with us for centuries now. Only now technology has come in to play a major role in their evolution.

Neologisms or coining and usage of new words have always been in practice. A *neology* is, according to Webster's Dictionary, the use of a new word or the use of an existing word but given a new meaning. A neologism is the name for a newly coined term, word, or phrase that may be in the process of entering common use, but has not yet been accepted into mainstream language. Their use in English is recorded at the end of the eighteenth century.

The broad thrust area of the panel has a very interesting aspect. It includes the word creative. Creativity encompasses imagination, inventiveness and originality in its fold. When we talk of emerging trends in communication and combine the same with creativity, we broaden its interpretation and application. When we add to it the technology aspect we take it a step

further. Language has truly become a combination of ingenuity and imagination with the advent of technological wave.

Rapidly advancing areas of knowledge is bringing in more and more neologisms into usage. Technology has further expedited this occurrence. As communication becomes technology enabled need for new words and phrases is felt all the more. Neologisms would seem to occur at a greater rate in cultures with rapidly changing technologies and with greater means for information dispersal. Similarly as disciplines intermingle and overlap new words are coined with ever increasing pace. Mutation is inevitable.

With 24x7 media availability and internet accessibility the change cannot be prevented and accepting these changes is one important characteristics of language. It's a sign of its vitality and flexibility. Though the conflict between upholders of tradition and the new wave riders is bound to continue, for the former would stand for the chastity of expression going by the law of the book, while the latter would raise the cry of novelty and change and validate their viewpoint. The fact however remains that a living language is fluid; it cannot be fixed or petrified. Nor does any language belong solely to scholars; it is also for the common man, for the man on the street. So instead of regarding them as invasions over the English language they should be ushered in with openness. Thomas Jefferson said, "I am a friend to neology. It is the only way to give to a language, copiousness and euphony."

Internet, social networking sites and mobile phone applications on mobile phones such as Instagram and Whats app and television channels have played a significant role in popularizing neologisms. Google is often used as a verb to search on the World Wide Web, just as Photoshop comes into play for digital manipulation of photographs. And unbelievably, we place our data on the 'cloud' with the advent of cloud computing!

Among recent writers Salman Rushdie and JM Coetzee also have taken recourse to neologisms. Neologisms may come from popular literature in different forms. Sometimes, they are simply taken from a word used in the narrative of a book like for example 'grok' meaning to achieve complete intuitive understanding, from *Stranger in a Strange Land* by Robert A.

Heinlein. Alternatively, the author's name may become the neologism. This includes such words as "Orwellian" from George Orwell and "Kafkaesque" from Franz Kafka, author and philosopher. Another category is words derived from famous characters in literature, such as *quixotic* referring to Don Quixote by Cervantes.

New expressions as 'murky markets' used in CNN business report give language a new dimension. New words and phrases are adding to the existing wealth of language. In the glamour world we have such expressions as 'wardrobe malfunction' and 'Brangelina' used to refer to super couple Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie.

Emma Brockes article in *The Guardian* carried the headline "How you strike a selfie pose says a lot about you". Selfie, the word that rocked in 2013, is the baby of cell phones with cameras. When we did not have Facebook and Instagram we looked into the camera and smiled to be clicked. Now we pop out cheekbones or pout our lips to strike the best effect, perfected over thousands of self-taken photographs. Justin Bieber has gone a step ahead and has started an app Shots For Me for taking and exchanging selfies. And with US President Barack Obama taking a selfie with the English and Dutch prime ministers during Nelson Mandela's funeral service, the word sky-rocketed to fame. Who could have thought of such words as twerking hitting headlines in the year that just passed and even find way into the Oxford online dictionary? American pop star Miley Cyrus popularized twerking with her stage performance last year. And that's not all. Swag, which according to sources, either is an acronym for 'secretly we are gay' or for the style quotient of a person, hashtag signifying a trending term or concept on social media` and yolo which stands for 'you only live once' have become a rage among social media users.

Abbreviations such as PFA for 'please find attachment' have come into usage. Facebook users use the abbreviation RIP 'rest in peace' for condolences. Others include SOD for segregation of duties, ASAP and ATAP for as soon as possible and as timely as possible. One often comes across references to PwDs or persons with disabilities.

Why is language usage undergoing these changes? The reasons can be more than one. Life today is moving at a pace faster than ever before. Shortened versions for expressions have

therefore gained precedence. Another reason is not to sound obsolete. Professionals and youngsters use them for this reason. Society picks up changes in language and by using them repeatedly the usages gain acceptance. This is what is happening in case of such words and phrases. At the same time society around the world is witnessing a shift in choices and preferences and also the need to voice them. Whereas no one spoke of the rights of gays and lesbians or trans sexual a few decades earlier, such terms as LGBT [Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual and Transgender] identities and rights now find frequent expression.

It is interesting to note how particular groups adapt themselves to new words and phrases based on their requirement or the use of a particular media. For instance social media users are fairly accustomed to such terms as twittering on twitter or those using the internet are familiar with the use of Google as a verb to search for something on the internet. In a way this is a kind of homogenizing effect in which groups become interconnected through words. This is all the more true in case of technology enabled communication as these users have been able to create a identity for themselves by using new words and phrases. It's as though we have two sets of people depending on the ability to adapt to neologisms.

With more and more areas of research and studies over-lapping and knowledge becoming interdisciplinary, need for new coinages is also showing a rise. For instance the expression carbon footprints used for emission of carbon vs. a vs. global warming which combines words from two disciplines with footprints having nothing to do with carbon emission. In Australia the word 'solastalgia' is often used for the loss of familiar plants and birds around or any change of landscape and lost environment. It's a blend of 'solacium' [comfort] and 'algia'[pain]. Recent researches in the fields of scientific disciplines have added to our existing wealth of knowledge and systems. To express these concepts new words have come into being, cloud computing and stem cell research, cyberspace and robotics are some examples.

Media is a medium that thrives on innovativeness. In February 2014 CNN broadcast a documentary titled 'Cocoa-Nomics' [a synthesis of cocoa and economics]. If that's not enough there are words like 'yankers' and 'flabbygasted'. Slangs don't lag behind either. 'Hinky' is a police slang for being nervous and uneasy.

Linguistics has its own set of neologisms. Different words have come into use to distinguish between different categories of neologisms. For instance there are snowclones. A snowclone is a neologism for a phrasal template originally defined as "a multi-use, customizable, instantly recognizable, time-worn, quoted or misquoted phrase or sentence that can be used in an entirely open array of different variants." A snowclone conveys information by using a familiar verbal formula and the cultural knowledge of the audience. A variant snowclone may refer to completely different things from the original. The original and the variant express similar relationships and can be understood using the same trope.

A protologism is a newly coined word or phrase possibly in narrow use but not yet acknowledged, while a retronym is a type of neologism that provides a new name for something to differentiate the original from a more recent version. Advances in technology are often responsible for retronym coinage.

Typoglycemia is a neologism given to a recent discovery about the cognitive processes behind reading written text. It is an urban legend/Internet meme that appears to have an element of truth to it.

A neologism may also be a new usage of an existing word, sometimes called a semantic extension. This is distinct from a person's idiolect, their unique patterns of vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation.

Susie Dent in her book *The Language Report* refers to such new words as 'intextication' to 'sexiles' and 'gangmasters. She goes on to say, "Very roughly speaking, there are five primary contributors to the survival of a new word: usefulness, user-friendliness, exposure, the durability of the subject it describes, and its potential associations or extensions. If a new word fulfils these robust criteria it stands a very good chance of inclusion in the modern lexicon."

In any case when using neologisms one needs to be wary for in the enthusiasm to use a new word one may over state and sound ludicrous or may forget that the word is already cliché. The use of neologisms is the question of conformity and individualism. A particular new word may not be used in everyday parlance or its usage confined to a small group of people, but even then it makes an interesting study. Sociolinguistics studies language in relation to society. And "the individual speaker is important in sociolinguistics in much the same way that the

individual cell is important in biology: if we don't understand how the individual works, to that extent we shan't be able to understand how collections of individuals behave either.”[Hudson, 10].

Citations:

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