

Language and its Role in Bridging International Communication

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Abstract: The English language is in a continuous process of advancement as society evolves and people make distance irrelevant by communicating with each other in various ways. It is unquestionable that the development of technology has substantially improved the English language. Not only was it enriched, but it also became the official donor for many languages around the world. Words changed both their meaning and their grammatical category. A simple noun as *text* became the verb *to text* with the development of mobile phones. The word “google” started from the name of the search engine and developed into a transitive verb. The name of a company also converted into a verb and even more a concept *uberization*. Moreover, the association of two basic words such as *face* and *book* created a word that began to be used worldwide.

Keywords: language; technology; advancement; influence; semantic expansion

1. Introduction

The interactive world we live in embodies an indisputable power source for the language we use every day in order to communicate. The unstoppable evolution of technology retains a substantial influence on languages around the world. In this respect, English expanded its area of influence worldwide. The English vocabulary developed with a speed that nobody could have ever imagined. But the English language itself was flooded with new words and also with words that extended or completely changed their meaning. Words which were unfamiliar to native speakers until a couple of decades ago, appeared and gained different meanings and connotations.

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It is widely acknowledged that the English language dates back to the 5th century AD when the Germanic tribes (Angles, Saxons and Jutes) came to England and replaced the Celtic language used by the inhabitants. The process of evolution continued with the invasion of the Vikings and, although their number was not very large, the effect of their settlement was highly significant. Much of the basic vocabulary of modern English, simple words such as eye, bread or sky betray Scandinavian origin. An important step in the evolution of the language we speak today was the Roman influence. Latin was not only the language of the conquerors, but also the language of a superior civilization which the Anglo-Saxons had a lot to learn from. The first connections with Latin were commercial and military and, only later, religious and intellectual. These connections contributed significantly to the amount of vocabulary we use today. Another vital moment in the formation of the English language was marked by William Duke of Normandy's conquest of Britain (1066). Traces can be found in legal vocabulary and the appearance of The Domesday Book led to standard English nomenclature. People started using French vocabulary intensively and even created new words with French affixes and roots.

For the following centuries, English assimilated words from languages all around the world and extended to cover the needs of a developing society. The vocabulary expanded with the Industrial Revolution to define words, expressions and ideas that never existed before. The expanding British Empire enriched the vocabulary with several new words and made them part of its cultural heritage. Also, the socio-cultural development of the modern society facilitated the recognition of English as a world language. The invention of the printing press led to the appearance of books, and newspapers, which contributed to the standard methods of spelling English words. New forms of punctuation were created in order to make printed texts easier to read. Another major impact on the language was the fact that it helped specialists all over the country to agree on certain aspects of English grammar. The invention of the telegraph, radio and, later, the television had a "term paper writing effect". New words started to be used to better describe the emerging technologies. For mass media, new styles of speech were developed by broadcasters to have a powerful impact on the audience.

2. Technology and language in an interactive world

The innovative technologies which replaced the traditional ones had an important influence on the spread of the English language and its use as a second language worldwide (Dejica et al. 2016, Dejica et al. 2020). As such, the advancement in technology is regarded by specialists as the climax in the evolution of the English Language. The current change is unique in its speed. It has reached all levels of society around the world. It has influenced culture and education and the consequences will also be seen on the long run. With this expansion, English became and established its leading position as the *official language of the internet*. Due to its rapid development, people started using the internet on a regular basis. E-mailing became a part of our daily life and later instant messaging changed drastically the

way we communicate. In this fast-evolving society governed by a single word (*efficiency*), the language underwent adjustments based on the growing speed of communication. In order to be time-efficient, people needed short phrases to encode a lot of meaning and, consequently, users started employing *acronyms* and *abbreviations*. In this respect, abbreviations such as *brb* or *lol* quickly became words in dictionaries and everybody used them across the world.

Still, vocabulary enriched significantly with the use of technical abbreviations connected to computers and technology. *FTP* (File Transfer Protocol) is a commonly used protocol for exchanging files over a network. Files stored on an FTP server can be accessed using an FTP client, such as a web browser or even an FTP software programme. The standard FTP protocol is not encrypted, meaning it is vulnerable and it can be an easy target for computer viruses. Due to the advancements in technology, a new word was devised to match the programme. A *codec* (compressor/decompressor) is used by all computer owners today. It is that piece of technology employed to compress or decompress data and it can be introduced in software or hardware. The need of file transfer added new words to the English vocabulary. Most of the speakers today use *CCTV* (Closed Circuit Television) when we refer to video surveillance and the term became extremely used with the development of fixed cameras to monitor different everyday activities.

Language continued to define terms connected to computer technology. Everybody today uses a *CD* (Compact Disc), a device that was proposed by Sony and Philips and which replaced the old tape. At that time the advantages were very impressive starting from quality, endurance and storage. Technology continued to evolve and a *CD-R* (Compact Disk Recordable) was essential in order to record data. These types of CDs are also known as *writable CDs*. The data written on this CD is permanent and it cannot be altered or erased. Once it is written the users will not be able to record any more data. In order to make the information more accessible by adding more data to the existing material or erasing any unnecessary information, a *CD-RW* (Compact Disc Re-Writable) was created. Unlike a CD-R, a CD-RW can be written multiple times. The data written on a CD-RW cannot be modified, but files can be deleted or added which turns it into a reliable solution for making backups. But the evolution continued because the quantity of information to be stored expanded and new devices were necessary. A *DVD* (Digital Versatile Disc), looking almost like a CD, took over the gaps of an ordinary CD. The problem of storage was solved because a standard DVD can store 4.7 GB of data and also provides a way to distribute large programmes on a single disc. *DVD-Rs* (Digital Versatile Disc Recordable) are used to record data. Single-sided, single-layer DVD+R discs have the capacity of storing 4.7 GB, while double-layer discs store up to 8.5 GB. Double-sided DVD-Rs are able to store up to 9.4 GB. The DVD+R format is not quite as widespread as the DVD-R format. As CDs, DVDs had to be written, erased and written again so *DVD-RW* (Digital Versatile Disk Rewritable) were introduced.

With this unstoppable development of the internet, language connected to networking also appeared. We are all connected to a *LAN* (Local Area Network)

which supplies connectivity to a group of computers in close proximity to each other such as an office building, school or a home. The technology evolved and it required a *VLAN* (Virtual Local Area Networks), a logical subgroup within a local area network that is created via software rather than manually moving cables in the wiring closet. And the complexity to networking extended to *WAN* (Wide Area Network) which spans over a large geographic area like a country or even multiple countries. A *WAN* usually connects multiple *LANs* and other smaller-scale area networks. There are several key differences between a *LAN* and a *WAN* without referring to costs because it implies a lot of equipment and infrastructure. The amount of data transported is significantly different and also the complexity. The internet developed and the number of users rapidly increased, so communication had to become more accessible. That is why *WLAN* (Wireless Local Area Network) expanded with enormous speed. Its main purpose is to link devices without using wires and to provide a connection through an access point to the wider internet. An extremely important advantage of using *WLAN* is the fact that it offers its users mobility together with a coverage area and the possibility of being connected to the internet. As all these new discoveries had to bear a name and the language required a term to define a family of radio technologies mostly used for wireless local area networking, the term used all over the world was acknowledged as *Wi-Fi*.

However, the evolution of the internet extended the list of terms required to identify the discoveries of new technology. *IP* supports a common set of rules for sending and receiving data over the Internet. It is used by devices which employ different platforms to communicate with each other through the Internet. The Internet Protocol also provides basic instructions in order to transfer data between devices. As it can be noticed judging by its designation, the global internet is constructed using the *IP* network protocol. *HTTP* (Hyper Text Transfer Protocol) was initially designed to provide a way to publish and receive *HTML* pages. But later it became a primary method used to convey information on the World Wide Web. *HTTP* uses a server-client model. *HTML* (Hyper Text Markup Language) is a markup language used for the creation of webpages and its main purpose is to structure information and also to define the semantics of a document. Its main purpose is to ease access to different files. Moreover, a term that became familiar even to the inexperienced computer users is *IP* (Internet Protocol).

Indisputably, technology has moulded the language over the past decades especially by increasing the meanings and the appearance of new vocabulary adapted to the needs of a rapidly changing society. Computer users do not fear *bugs*, those creepy insects that crawl in our kitchen, nowadays they are afraid of that incorrect or unwanted pieces of code that stop a program working properly. Nowadays, a *cloud* is no longer associated only with that fluffy white rain producing mass in the sky that generates very small drops of water. It is a computer server accessed over the internet with its programmes, software and database that run on that server. By using a cloud, users do not have to run the application on their computer. It is *up* there in the virtual sky. Even when you think of a *cookie*, that small baked treat, often with chocolate,

your mouth should not water anymore. For computer users, it refers to small pieces of data sent from a web browser and stored while you browse.

Another word that has enriched its meaning is *drone*. This is not just a mere annoying noise anymore, it is a known flying object or, to be more precise, a UAV (unmanned aerial vehicle) that is controlled by someone on the ground. Originally employed in the military and especially in very dangerous missions for human beings, a drone is used today in commercial activities, as well as scientific, recreational or agricultural fields, and its applications are expanding daily. Another example is *lurking*, a term that suffered semantic expansion. Its original meaning was, according to the Cambridge Dictionary, *to wait or move in a secret way so that you cannot be seen, especially because you are about to attack someone or do something wrong*. But computer users employ it to refer to someone who watches an online conversation without contributing. The concept is used even in real life for someone who is part of a group but does not participate in the conversation. There are few people (if any) worldwide who cannot tell what a *mouse* is. To most of them, when you say the word *mouse* the brain instantly links the neurons which automatically leads to the device you use with your computer. Rarely, the word is associated with the animal. Even if some languages tried to replace a word such as *mouse* (French *souris*), every computer user will think of one thing. The word *spam* is rarely (if ever) associated with food. Hardly ever does someone associate it with that strange, tinned meat product. Most of the speakers relate the term with unwanted mails or messages, which fits the definition inspired by Monty Python.

Stream, a term used for water or any other liquid that flows naturally, is now frequently associated with the online flow of information. The term *traffic* expanded its original meaning if we take into consideration the one referring to all the vehicles driving along a certain road. Nowadays, it refers to the number of the people who visit a certain website or log in to a certain online platform. Today, young children are no longer afraid of a *troll* because they do not associate it with that ugly cave-dwelling creature and it is rarely used to describe the way fish grab bait. Internet users are afraid of *trolls* now because they do not want to interact with those individuals who make intentionally offensive posts online to gain a reaction. Words that were initially used in science fiction literature were adopted by internet users. *Virtual* refers to a world that exists or occurs on computers or on the internet. A *virus* used to be a micro-organism that caused diseases to humans and animals. These days, a virus is a computer programme that prevents the proper function of the computer software. As any virus, it spreads across the internet. A *wall* is not anymore made of concrete and bricks, it is a virtual place where people expose their experiences. It is specific to social network users.

More than any other influences, technology has been shaping the English vocabulary for the last couple of decades and it will probably continue to do it for many years. Words not only changed and expanded their meaning, but they also shifted their grammatical category. A new word, that was introduced for the first time in the Oxford Dictionary, was soon after declared *word of the year* by the American

Dialect Society in 2002 and, later, in 2009 the *word of the decade* was born from the name of a company. Starting from a proper noun, *Google* became later a verb. Its generic meaning, according to the Cambridge Dictionary, is *to search for something on the internet using the Google search engine*. Speakers today use *to google* rather than going to search something on the internet and this new function illustrates the supremacy of the company on the market although there are many other search engines. *Google* not only reached our vocabulary, but also our consciousness. We are perfectly aware that it is there with its vast data base, which is continuously growing and, not to mention, its ease to access it.

Another example is the verb *stream* which extended its meaning and for computer users, according to the Cambridge Dictionary, means *to listen to or watch sound or video on a computer directly from the internet rather than downloading it and saving it first*. With the clear advancement of social networking, vocabulary changed. The noun *friend* with its original meaning (that of a person you enjoy talking to and spending time with) added a new grammatical category. The term became a verb with a clear meaning generated by its use on social sites. The informal verb *to friend* refers to the action on inviting someone to be your friend on a social networking website. It is used in contexts like: *She friended me*, or *I am going to friend her*.

3. Conclusion

Although the internet appeared a few decades ago, its impact on the language we use today can be compared to Middle English. However, it is certain that the amount of vocabulary developed by the influence of technology on the English language is unparalleled to Middle English. It is too soon to state exactly how permanent the effect of the internet vocabulary on the language will be, but its impact on how people speak will certainly last for hundreds of years. For the future of the language, it is possible that new technologies will appear and replace the internet. There are voices stating that this development of social media and also the internet have led to a lower level of intelligence, but there are others who claim that this evolution and these influences have helped to spread the English language across the world. No matter what side you choose to believe, one thing cannot be questioned: but for technology, English would not be as widespread as it is today around the world. Consequently, as society evolves, language is continuing its process of development and judging by the pace of its evolution, in one hundred years, people will most likely have difficulties in understanding the language we use today.

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