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**Englishes of the World: A Critical Study of Ethnography of Communication**

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**Abstract**

Dell Hymes' promotion of an ethnography of speaking in 1962, subsequently termed the ethnography of communication, established a novel discipline that amalgamated anthropology and linguistics, significantly transforming the study of language, culture, and human interaction. The Ethnography of Communication examines the significance of communicative activities within their cultural systems, operating within the comprehensive context of a culture and interrelated with other community patterns. This ethnographic approach enables researchers to collect and analyse descriptive data regarding conveying, forming, and negotiating social meanings (Saville-Troike, 1995, 351). The methodology is descriptive and founded on the premise that comprehending diverse "modes of discourse" within civilisations enhances our understanding of knowledge. The importance of the ethnography of communication extends beyond the mere documentation of communicative phenomena. The approaches and outcomes are essential for developing a comprehensive theory regarding language, human behaviour, and their interplay with culture. Language, culture, ethnicity, class, gender, and race are interrelated; our communication reflects the socio-cultural groups we identify with. The study "Englishes of the World: A Critical Study of Ethnography of Communication" examines the relationship between various global English variants and their cultural contexts. Examining the cultural subtleties of English variations reveals the language's diversity and depth and the cultures that have shaped it. It is imperative to recognise that no variant is preferable; each form of English encapsulates its cultural significance, authenticity, and individuality. Whether we consider Queen's English, Australian English, Indian English, or American English, each possesses a distinct identity and holds equal significance.

**Keywords**

Colonialism, Communication, Culture, Englishes, Ethnography.

Dell Hymes' call for an ethnography of speaking (1962; later, the ethnography of communication) led to a fresh subdiscipline derived from anthropology and linguistics that revolutionised the study of language and culture and, thereby, human discourse and discursive fields. Today, communication is seen as the most significant employable and soft skill, as it is through effective communication that knowledge and other hard skills can find their true manifestation in multiple discourses. Therefore, the Ethnography of Communication focuses on patterning communicative behaviour as one of the culture's systems, as it functions within the culture's holistic context and relates to other cultural patterns within the given community. The ethnographic approach to communicative activity provides a framework for collecting and analysing descriptive data about how social meaning is conveyed, constructed, and negotiated (Saville-Troike, 1995, 351). Its goals are descriptive, based on the belief that information about different "ways of speaking" in human societies is a legitimate contribution to knowledge.

The significance of ethnography of communication goes beyond cataloguing communicative facts. Its approach and findings are essential for formulating a universal theory of language and human behaviour and its relation to culture. It is a fact that language, culture, ethnicity, class, gender, and race are linked to each other, and the language we speak reflects the socio-cultural community or group that we belong to. The paper "Englishes of the World: A Critical Study of Ethnography of Communication" explores the relationship between different Englishes prevalent in this world and how they are culture-specific. A study of the cultural specificities of the use of English language variations and diversity accentuates the diversity and richness of the language and the cultures from which English has enriched. It is to be remembered that none of these variations is more proper than the other as each English has its cultural baggage with which it has found legitimacy and identity as a language. So, whether it is Queen's English or Australian English, Indian English or American English – all of them have their distinct identity and are of equal importance.

Even though English was the language of the lower class in the Medieval Age when Chaucer was writing, the higher echelons of the society then used Latin. During the Renaissance, English gained significance as a language in England, with Shakespeare, Spenser and Milton providing the language with much-needed status. Thus, the cultural ascendance of English started, which was also boosted by the English colonial explorations and after that, colonial expansions led to its global presence within a few centuries. The cultural development of England as a colonial power is thus closely linked with the development of the English language. So, when one makes a diachronic study of the English language, one necessarily makes a study of England's cultural and colonial supremacy. However, with the expansion of English as a language due to colonial expansion, the language found varieties in all the spaces in which it was used. None of these varieties imitated Queen's English. Still, they contextualised it per their culture's needs, requirements and contexts, leading to the immense variations we see today in English.

Depending on the colonial experiences and cultural contexts of the individual nations, these variations found their legitimacy based on the uses and contributions of the writers and speakers of these respective spaces. However, even within a particular English variety of a particular nation, there were

immense varieties, depending upon regional cultural specificities, class, gender, and other factors. William Labov's sociological study shows how even a sound such as "r" varies with the class of people.

In his famous socio-linguistic study, William Labov pointed out how the pronunciation of the sound "r" in New York City varies with people's class. In his famous study, he points out how his observation in Departmental Stores shows how the elite class uses the sound "r" mildly in their speech and how the lower classes do not pronounce the "r" sound at all, while the newly rich are in the process of asserting their newly found status of material wellbeing emphasise on the sound "r" much more (Hazen, 2010). Labov's study is significant to understanding how even our utterance of sound varies with the class we belong to and how speaking and listening to even specific sounds. Similar socio-linguistic studies have been done in many different cultures to see the validity of the issue and found to be justified. Sociolinguistics in studying language in the contexts of its users have tried to manifest the means through which communicative acts are established and how that leads to immense variations within which the "langue" of the language operates to make the language fathomable to divergent users.

English is a global language spoken by the most significant number of people worldwide, but the English language is different everywhere. American English differs significantly from Australian, Queen's, or Indian English (Crystal, 2003). The English language travelled with the British colonial enterprises, and in each land, it traversed its journey and got an identity of its own. American English is very distinct from Australian English – for example, the way Australians use the word "mate" in their speech has a historical reason. White settlement in Australia came as a British convict colony, and when the convicts were released, they faced hardships which they had to deal with by helping each other; thus, the "mateship" that developed led to Australian English use of the word "mate" in a distinct way in their everyday speech which cannot be seen anywhere else in the world.

Furthermore, because of the interactions with the Indian culture, the English language not only incorporated many words from Indian languages in English but also got a distinct native accent, unlike any other English in the world. The English language encountered the local culture in each place and got a distinct flavour (Pennycook, 2007). Language is not static; it constantly evolves with each language used. Language changes with the usage, and each usage of English is distinct from the other. Language varies from community to community (dialect) and person to person (idiolect); these variations and individual variations often affect language growth.

Variation studies in linguistics deal with language usage in specific contexts and cultures. Ethnography of communication deals with the use of language within a specific culture as the cultural parameters define to a large extent how the speakers will use the language. For example, intonation features, the distinctiveness of cultural uniqueness, etc., found their way into the Queen's English to give birth to distinct English worldwide (Kachru and Nelson, 1996). Today, African English has a distinct identity. The same is true for Caribbean English or Indian English. The English language has national or continent-specific identities because of the cultural impact on the English language, which led to the English spoken in these places having unique flavours.

The English language has been in the process of evolution for long. In the Middle Ages, Latin was the language of the elites in England, whereas commoners used to speak in English. By the Renaissance, English had gotten on a high pedestal as the language of royalty. In becoming so, it borrowed heavily from other languages – French, Latin, and Spanish. With the colonial expansion, many words from the colonised nations also found a place in the English vocabulary. For example, the word “assassin” came from the Arabs, “bazaar” from India, and many more. These borrowings enriched the English language, but what is significant in the context of ethnography of communication is that even though some words were borrowed into British or American English, many words were specific to the English of these places.

Therefore, even when an American Indian speaks in the US, one can very well figure out without looking at the person that s/he is from the Indian subcontinent. The words used, the intonations, and other linguistic features have a distinct Indian accent, which makes the listener figure out the cultural and ethnic identity of the person (Kachru and Nelson, 1996). Such a distinctive and diverse English language not only enriches the language but also, at the same time, provides the world with a chance to be inclusive.

Standardisation is a process by which a language's diversity can be marred. As people from diverse communities and cultures start speaking the standard language, the language's cultural distinctiveness can be hampered. However, in the case of English, though certain standardisations happened simultaneously, the cultural uniqueness of the lands was kept in mind, leading to the advent of many Englishes. As already specified, all these Englishes have created a distinct cultural space for themselves and asserted a global presence.

In conclusion, when one studies the development of English globally as a language, one is amazed at the diversity of the language and the cultural uniqueness because such developments were possible. Only by studying the English language ethnologically can one understand the diversity and uniqueness of English worldwide and then think about the inclusive approaches with which such diversity can be maintained and yet a oneness be achieved.

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