

GLOBALIZATION AND THE CONTEMPORARY NIGERIAN ENGLISH SPELLING AND LEXIS

SHEHU SIDI IBRAHIM

Department of Modern European Languages and Linguistics, Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

The primary focus of this paper is to examine the impact of globalization on the spelling and lexis of English in Nigeria. Since globalization directly or indirectly involves changes in areas such as environmental sustainability, economic development, political orientation, cultural development and information dissemination; it therefore follows that a discussion of it should have relevance to a language teacher. Questions such as: What is Globalization? What are the advantages and disadvantages of Globalization? Is English a Global language? To what extent does Globalization affect spelling and lexis of English in an ESL country like Nigeria, are the main concerns of this paper. The paper concludes that the English language in Nigeria is gradually both British and American norm dependent as far as spelling and lexis are concerned.

KEYWORDS: English Language in Nigeria is Gradually Both British and American Norm dependent as far as Spelling and Lexis

INTRODUCTION

Perhaps one of the best ways to define Globalization is by looking at it through the eyes of Costello, P. (1980). Globalization, according to him, refers to the description of the fact where countries and their citizens are affected by other people, or governments, or businesses, or decision makers all round the world because of faster communication, cheaper transportation, and a more immediate and more intense connections than ever before. In his keynote address at the opening ceremony of the International Conference on *The Challenges of Globalization to Language, Literature and Linguistics* held in Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto on the 31st May 2006, Adebisi, A. R. aptly states that globalization and its affects are subject to different interpretations. Thus, whereas some countries and citizens appreciate the integration, and the interconnectivity which globalization brings about, there are other societies and people who resist the dependency and the fruits that come from it.

Costello P. (1980) asserts that Globalization is not a value but a process where massive changes in every facet of human existence take place. Perhaps there is no better way of capturing the effect of globalization on humanity as a process both in time and in space than what Heidegger (1971: 165) describes in Friday-Otun (2007:221), thus:

*All distance in time and space are shrinking. Man
now reaches overnight by planes, places which,
formerly took weeks and months of travel
Distant sites of the most ancient cultures are shown*

*on film as if they stood this very moment amidst
today's street traffic.*

As a process, globalization does describe what is happening. Thus, accusations commonly leveled against it are akin to accusations leveled against the mobile phone. A mobile phone can be used for good or for evil, much depends on who is using it and for what purpose.

THE DEMERITS OF GLOBALIZATION

3.1 Globalization makes the rich people richer and the poor, poorer. That the only way it can be beneficial to the poor or to the world as a whole is when the executives are not part of the equation. However, the current situation where the IMF and the World Bank are still being the dominant bodies that make decisions about what other countries thousands of kilometers apart, would willy-nilly implement and the resultant effects of these in most cases expose the poor people and their families to an ever-increasing descent in the lowest rung of level of poverty.

3.2 Globalization changes nothing in terms of the welfare of people. What it succeeds in doing is to take people from the fields (where farmers work 12 hours /day), and put them into factories (where workers also work 12 hours/day). Workers in Sokoto Cement Company, for example, find it difficult to construct semi permanent houses for themselves and their families just as workers in PAN (Kaduna) find it hard to own a Peugeot car.

3.3 Globalization and its advocates rush to create a Global village and in so doing, obliterate the erstwhile borders and countries that had for centuries stood as symbols of respect, culture, language, belongingness and shared goals of their people. They tend to disregard the wise saying that, strong fences make good neighbours. The current political climate in The UK commonly known as BREXIT may be a kind of British reaction to this global trend.

3.4 Globalization leads to language death by granting power to a few languages and displacing others and that information on the African languages, where it is found, is normally inadequate and replete with errors. 'A person needs only one language to talk to someone else', it is sometimes argued, and 'once a world language is in place, other languages will simply die away.'

3.5 That the domination of English language in the world of publishing creates a situation where English becomes the only language that is capable of becoming commercially viable. The possible result of this scenario is that only works written in English have the chance of reaching the global audience and the sum total effect of all these phenomena suggest that world literature becomes an English literature.

3.6 The Globalization of English may result into the decline of world's talents. Fears are ripe that the very gifted poets, novelists and dramatists would rather risk the option of not being internationally recognized by writing in their own tongue, than accept the humiliation of writing in the language of the colonialists simply because they want to be recognized. When this happens, therefore, the Globalization of English language negatively affects the creative skills and activities of these scholars.

3.7 Lastly, it is argued that a global language possesses the potential to cultivate an elite monolingual linguistic class, more complacent, arrogant and dismissive in their attitudes towards other languages. Thus, those who have such a language at their disposal—and especially those who have it as a mother –tongue – will be more able to

think and work quickly in it, and manipulate it to their own advantage at the expense of those who do not have it and thus maintaining in disguise a difference between higher and lower socio-economic statuses.

MERITS OF GLOBALIZATION

In the previous section, we attempted to present a short list of some of the shortcomings of globalization. However, there are scholars who are of opinion that despite the general outcry, the benefits of globalization on humanity in general and on language in particular, far outweigh the disadvantages. Costello, P. (Ibid) frowns at the manner the anti-globalization movements appear to see nothing good in anything that carries the word “world” it and this they depict through organized protests ‘World’ Bank (Washington April 2000), the ‘World’ Economic Forum (Melbourne September 2000). But quite paradoxically Costello (ibid) goes on to say, these demonstrations which are organized by these anti-globalization movements take place on the internet, otherwise known as the ‘world’ wide web’, its members fly the one ‘world’ airline ticket to get to anti-globalization rallies and they organize demonstrations for ‘world’ wide television coverage!

4.1 The argument put forward above that globalization makes the rich, richer and the poor, poorer does not seem to hold much water to the proponents of globalization because, to them, the worsening poverty scenario in the Sub-Saharan Africa, for example, is not because of globalization but because of weak economic institutions, war, corruption and near absence of purposeful leadership. Be that as it may, this position is highly debatable and will continue to be so in the next foreseeable future.

4.2 On the question of whether or not globalization leads to language death, it is argued that though English may be global, its effect on native languages it comes in contact with does not necessarily lead to their decay or death. The English language is already in the process of globalizing in Nigeria for more than a century ago yet the indigenous languages such Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo seem to continue to grow without much interference. No wonder why Kachru, B. (1982) states that the cause of language death seems most closely tied to how speakers perceive the value of the language they interact with, relative to the satisfaction of their desired socio-economic status is concerned.

4.3 Other advantages of Globalization include the provision of the fruits of modern world to other countries. Here, globalization provides the fruits of the modern world to countries that might not otherwise see them for many decades if not for many centuries to come.

4.4 It encourages humanity to work together as a team towards attainment of collective noble goals instead of acting as individuals struggling to meet their own needs.

IS ENGLISH A GLOBAL LANGUAGE?

To be able to answer the question of whether or not English is a global language one needs to first of all explain what variables make a language, be it English or any other language, global. In the words of Crystal (2014) a language does not become a global language because of its internal structural properties, or because of the size of its vocabulary, or because it has become a vehicle of great literature in the past or because it was once associated with a great culture or religion. Admittedly these are factors which can motivate someone to learn a language, but none of them alone, or in combination, can guarantee a world wide spread of a language. Indeed, such factors cannot even ensure survival of a

language as is clear from the case of Latin, learned today only as a classical language in some few countries and by only a scholarly and religious few. On the contrary, difficult structural properties (such as awkward spelling, illogical grammatical patterns, and complex intonation patterns) do not negatively affect a language achieving international status either as is evident with English.

The fact of the matter is that a language becomes a global (international) language almost solely because of the political and military power of its people. This explanation is the same throughout human history. For example, Greek became a language of international communication in the Middle East over 2000 years ago not because of the intellect of Plato and Aristotle but because of the swords and spears used by the armies of Alexander the Great. Latin became known throughout Europe not because of the rich literature written in the language but because of the chivalry of the Roman Generals. Spanish, Portuguese, and French all found their way into the Americas not because of the beauty of the languages, if they have any, but because of the colonial policies of the Renaissance kings and queens, and the way those policies were ruthlessly executed by armies and navies all over the world. Therefore, the emergence of a global language is intricately connected with the successful activities of its soldier/sailor speakers. And English is by no means different. (Crystal 2015)

As a lingua franca of the world, English language has become the most important language in the areas of access to the world's intellectual and technical resources. In spite of some misgivings from different academic circles on the colonial vestiges of the language, it seems likely that a number of scholars today view English less as a symbol of imperialism and more as a viable candidate for the world's most important international language. It is spoken in every part of the world, both among speakers within a particular country whose share a common first language and across speakers from different countries/first language. In other words, English is no longer spoken only by its native speakers in UK, North America, Australia and other places where it is a National Language or ENL (Moag; Smith 1983; Kachru 1982; Alptekin and Alptekin 1984; Jenkins 1998).

English is a language most frequently used in international trade, diplomacy and tourism, (Smith 1983). Crystal (1992), reports that the non- native speakers of English comprise more than two thirds of its potential speakers. This seems to be an appropriate point to state that English, as a global language does not belong to any group of people. In fact, people from different races and cultures across the world use the language for a variety of reasons. In Nigeria, for example, English serves as a link between people of different ethnic groups, it is the language of international politics, trade sports , education, technology, administration, judiciary, mass media and executive . It is the language of social mobility and because of the prestige attached to it; a person in Nigeria, for example, is often wrongly regarded illiterate if he cannot speak it even if he is literate in his mother tongue or any other language. Smith (1983) reports that the German chancellor and the French prime minister speak English while having secret negotiations. This situation does by no means suggest that a sign of weakness or diminishing of the importance of their languages or cultures has occurred. Rather, it shows that, as an accessible resource contact available to them, English is used for its power in creating mutual intelligibility and understanding. This attribute of English is probably what leads Campbell et, al. (1982) to assert that Globalization of English can briefly be defined in the context where English, in all its linguistic, social, cultural and economic aspects, is used as a vehicle for communication between non- native speakers, as well as between any combination of native and non-native speakers.

THE VARIETY CHOICE

In the previous sections we have been able to define the term Globalization, we have also been able to consider the issues globalization raises in the field of the environmental, economic and social changes of humanity. Drawing together the various strands of globalization debate and their implications to the lexis of English, this section will explore the following lines of discussion:

- The internationalization of English makes the proficiency in it a likely vehicle of upward social mobility and economic enhancement. Moreover, as a means of enhancement of socio-economic status, the demand for the language increases. The increase in the demand for the language creates more employment opportunities for the teacher.
- The growing interest in English worldwide stresses the need for a new approach to the teaching and learning of English spelling and lexis. What informed this new approach are the improvements in the areas of communication technology. Thus, Global English is now seen to substitute the old models of EFL/ESL Smith, (1983), Nunan, (1999/2000). The emergence of global English is due largely to the inadequacies and the vagueness of the EFL/ESL models and partly due to the evolving needs of learners who are undoubtedly affected by the challenges of the process of globalization.
- For quite some time now in Nigeria and perhaps elsewhere where English is taught as a second language, the target teaching dialect has been the Received Pronunciation or RP which in itself has been described by some writers as dialectal. With the globalization of English, the compartmentalization of erstwhile varieties of English is no longer valid. From the Global English, otherwise known as English as an International Language (EIL), point of view all speakers are regarded as users of English, no matter whether they are speakers of Hausa English, Yoruba English, Igbo English, Black English, American English, Indian English or South African English. Baxter, (1980).

The challenge, here, for the language teacher lies heavily on how to get to distinguish between the various spellings and the lexical items. For example: British forms and the American forms. In other words, the emergence and the seeming growing popularity of American English in an environment where the British English variety is predominantly taught, creates its own problem for the teacher when it comes to the choice of the model teaching method in the areas of spelling and lexis.

AMERICANISMS IN NIGERIAN ENGLISH

In spite of the fact that Nigerian English is predominantly British norm dependent, there many instances of Americanisms in it. This phenomenon may be attributed to the world wide importance of America in the areas of science and technology, commerce, education, politics and so on. Features of American English in Nigerian English can easily be identified at the levels of phonology, syntax, semantics, style, spelling and lexis. In this section we shall examine some of the instances where the American English influences the Nigerian English spelling and lexis. A major part of the data below, particularly on the British and American spelling and lexis, is drawn from Crystal (1988).

SPELLING

Some typical examples of spelling differences follow. However, the picture is complicated by the fact that some American spellings are now in use in British English (e.g. judgment, inquire, encyclopedia) and some British English spellings are used in America (e.g. enclose, judgement).

BrE	-ou-	colour	honour	labour	mould	smoulder
-----	------	--------	--------	--------	-------	----------

AmE	-o-	color	honor	labor	mold	smolder
-----	-----	-------	-------	-------	------	---------

NE	-ou-	<i>Both forms of spelling are found among Nigerian users of English.</i>				
----	------	--	--	--	--	--

BrE	en-	enclose	endorse	enquiry	ensure
-----	-----	---------	---------	---------	--------

AmE	in-	inclose	indorse	inquiry	insure
-----	-----	---------	---------	---------	--------

NE	-en/in-	<i>The two forms of spelling appear to be interchangeable in Nigerian English.</i>				
----	---------	--	--	--	--	--

BrE	-ae/oe	anaesthetic	encyclopaedia	foetus	manœuvre	amoeba
-----	--------	-------------	---------------	--------	----------	--------

AmE	-e-	anesthetic	encyclopedia	fetus	maneuvre	ameba
-----	-----	------------	--------------	-------	----------	-------

NE	-ae/oe/e	<i>The first two forms of spelling – /ae/and /oe/ are found in Nigerian English but the third form /e/ is rare.</i>				
----	----------	---	--	--	--	--

BrE	-re	centre	litre	theatre	fibre
-----	-----	--------	-------	---------	-------

AmE	-er	center	liter	theater	fiber
-----	-----	--------	-------	---------	-------

NE	-re/er	<i>The two forms of spelling are applicable in Nigerian English.</i>				
----	--------	--	--	--	--	--

BrE	-ce	defence	offence	licence (noun)
-----	-----	---------	---------	----------------

AmE	-se	defense	offense	license (noun/verb)
-----	-----	---------	---------	---------------------

NE	-ce/se	<i>Both forms are applicable in Nigerian English.</i>				
----	--------	---	--	--	--	--

BrE	-ll-	libellous	quarelling	travelled	jewellery
-----	------	-----------	------------	-----------	-----------

AmE	-l-	libelous	quarreling	traveled	jewelery
-----	-----	----------	------------	----------	----------

NE	-ll-	<i>The two forms of spelling interchangeable in Nigerian English.</i>				
----	------	---	--	--	--	--

BrE	-l-	fulfil	skilful	instalment
-----	-----	--------	---------	------------

AmE	-ll-	fulfill	skillful	installment
-----	------	---------	----------	-------------

NE	-ll-	<i>Both usages are found in Nigerian English.</i>				
----	------	---	--	--	--	--

BrE	cheque	gaol	kerb	moustache	storey	tyre
-----	--------	------	------	-----------	--------	------

AmE	check	jail	curb	mustache	story	tire
-----	-------	------	------	----------	-------	------

NE	cheque	jail	kerb			
----	--------	------	------	--	--	--

BrE	pyjamas	programme	kidnapper
-----	---------	-----------	-----------

AmE	pajamas	program	kidnaper
-----	---------	---------	----------

NE pyjamas programme kidnapper

LEXIS

There are many lexical items which are used in both British and American English, but with a difference in meaning. Several of the American English usages have come to be used in British English. Nigerian English draws its resources from both sources. For example:

<u>British English</u>	<u>American English</u>	<u>Nigerian English</u>
lift	elevator	elevator/lift
rubbish	garbage	rubbish/garbage
paraffin	kerosene	kerosene
film	movie	film/movie
petrol	gas	petrol/gas (with difference in meaning)
line	queue	line/queue
dustbin	trashcan	dustbin
pacifier	dummy	dummy
dynamo	generator	generator
crossroads	intersection	crossroads
mudguard/wing	fender	mudguard
torch	flashlight	touorch
silencer	muffler	silencer
lawyer	solicitor/barrister	lawyer/barrister
gear lever	gear shift	gear lever
ill	sick	ill/sick
lorry	truck	lorry/truck
holidays	vacation	holidays/vacation
roundabout	traffic circle	roundabout
saloon car	sedan	saloon car
nought	zero	zero
sweets	candy	sweets
motor car	automobile	motor car
biro	ball point	biro
biscuit	cookie	biscuit
tin	can	tin
graduate	alumnus	graduate/alumnus
ring	call (phone)	call/ring
boot	trunk	boot
bonnet	hood	bonnet
nappy	diaper	diaper
treacle	molasses	molasses
second-year student	sophomore	second-year student
diversion	detour	diversion
jug	pitcher	jug
timetable	schedule	timetable/schedule
semi-detached house	duplex	duplex
vomit	barf	vomit

CONCLUSIONS

One of the important arguments of this paper is that as long as the true picture of the challenges of globalization to language teaching is not clearly identified and shaped, the debate on whether or not globalization is advantageous or disadvantageous to humanity in general and to the teaching and learning of spelling and lexis of the English language in particular, will continue to rage. However, such a picture is only likely to emerge if a truce is called in the academic war between the pro globalization and the anti globalization camps. Both must be prepared to admit that the phenomenon globalization has its drawbacks as well as its assets. The position of this paper is that in spite of everything else, the

English language in Nigeria is gradually moving in the direction of bidialectism especially in the areas of spelling and lexis.

REFERENCES

1. Adebisi, A.R. (2006). *Culture, Language, and The Challenges of Globalization: A keynote Address Delivered at the 1st Annual Conference on Languages, Literature and Linguistics 31st May-2nd June.*
2. Alptekin, C. & Alptekin, M. (1984). *The Question of Culture: EFL teaching in non-English Speaking countries* .ELT Journal 38/1.
3. Baxter J. (1980). "Interactive Listening": In L. Smith. (ed) 1983. *Readings in English as an International Language*: Pergamon Press.
4. Campbell, D. *et al* (1982). English in International Settings: Problems and their Causes, In L Smith. (ed) 1983. *Readings in English as an International Language*: Pergamon Press.
5. Costello, P. (1980). *Benefits and Challenges of Globalization-On Line Opinion-Australia's e-journal of social and political debate.*
6. Crystal, D. (1988). *The English Language*: Penguin Books, U.K.
7. Crystal, D. (1992). *An Encyclopedic Dictionary of Language and Languages*: Blackwell Publishers.
8. Jenkins, J. (1998). *Which Pronunciation Norms and Models for English as International Language?* ELT Journal: 52; 2.
9. Kachru, B. (1982). "Models for non-native Englishes": In B.B. Kachru (ed.) *The Other Tongue*: Urbana University of Illinois Press.
10. Nunan, D. (2000). *Yes, but is English?* TESOL Matters, p.3.
11. Oyeleye, L. (2004). *Language and Discourse in Society*: Hope Publications: Ibadan, Nigeria
12. Smith, L.E. (1983) (ed.). *Readings in English as an International Language*: Pergamon Press.
13. Stern, H. H. (1992). *Issues and Options in Teaching*: London: Oxford University Press.