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## THE EFFECT OF DIGITAL AGE ON ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

K. SIRISHA<sup>1</sup>, Dr. POOJA BASNETT<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> D/o.K. Balangadhara Rao, Research Scholar, Dravidian University, Andhra Pradesh

<sup>2</sup> Assistant Professor/HOD –Dept. of Journalism, IFIM College, Bangalore



K. SIRISHA



Dr. POOJA BASNETT

### ABSTRACT

In our mundane life literature is the one that gives pleasure to the tired soul of man. It is like a drug that slowly inspires the mind and opens the gates of wisdom that makes us intellectual. But in present scenario the young generation has become slaves to technology. Digital media is a drug that slowly kills the creativity of the mind. It truncates the cognitive capability of budding thinkers with its bombarded instant text message, digital games glamorous advertisements, web log posts and high speed communication gadgets. “Not –having enough time” is the recurring complaint that we hear from the students. They argue that studies are increasingly difficult even though the system of education has reduced to what one may call “Packages” of different credit-hour course only. So the need for the hour is to enlighten young minds with the possibilities of how technology can be used to improve studying for language and literature and this research anticipates doing so. There have been many debates on the technology and the change it has brought about in the society with the main focus being positive development. However, we also need to look at the ill effects technology ,so that one can learn how to overcome it. Thus this paper has focused on the ill effects of technology on studying language and literature and how it can overcome it.

**Key Words:** Media, English Language, Literature, Technology, Gadgets, Slaves, Digital

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The present paper is an attempt to bring the realization to the young generation how technology affects the creativity of brain. Students have been in an impression of overburdening of studies though they will not concentrate on the high influx of knowledge. Indeed they fail to do an extensive study of even a single sub topic of any subject. Teaching a wide range of subjects in a very short span of time has become the prevalent practice in present system of education. The result is chaos. They get a cursory knowledge of a dozen

concepts with little or no understanding of the implication and applications of those concepts.

One can observe the smothering away of the desire to seek an in-depth knowledge. All the people have only two intentions in their minds, i.e to get good grades and eventually get well paid jobs. In such a scenario the survival of classical literature is a serious concern. Studying literature is an art that demands sustained concentration and persistence. It requires “some time alone”. But for a student of literature a market oriented approach towards knowledge is not as threatening a challenge as the

rise of digital media and its subtle yet tangible effects on his mind if he acquires the skill of reading literature. The student of literature should put a conscious effort to disconnect from social media and to come out of fast speed life styles and digital social media blitz. Human being's aesthetic sense is slowly paralyzed by the digital media. It spoils the potentiality of people to appreciate the works of art. The students will be addicted to this digital media as it works on a click and in a matter of seconds one can reach one site to another and the next link takes one to another site, extending to a not ending thread of links. The person who himself exposes to this form of communication process he gradually loses his patience and he cannot meticulously observe the nature and fails to appreciate a work of art. With the advent of digital technology updating the news for every hour has become the norm. Students may waste their time in setting up personal profile on virtual communities. By the end of the day, a modern day student will be in utter wonder what consumed his entire day. Because of the ruthless waste of their time they will be left with no energy to study at the end of the day.

When a person is engaged in surfing ,it clearly indicates that his mind is clearly pre occupied with the information that is scrolling on the screen. The mind acts as if it is hypnotized and could not think creatively except accepting passively the information on the screen. The person who gets the habit of taking the chunked texts rather than meticulous picturesque and thought provoking description in literary texts loses his patience. He cannot understand the text which is linguistically too complex text as he is addicted to reading a language rid with truncated expressions such as, "i8", "u2", "ur", "w8" and so forth. The excessive use of digital media debilitates the mind. It reduces the concentration and leads to distortion.

A notion that English Language has seen many changes over the years has been supported by the Complaint Tradition of Sociolinguists James and Lesley Milroy (1985). As per this tradition it is believed that people from various fields, society and all strands of life feel that English Language has been compromised over the years.

According to Milroy and Milroy the *ideology of standardization* has been "promoted and maintained" through the complaint tradition (Milroy and Milroy 2003:26). Even before English was established as the official language in England people complained how French words had impacted the language and when English became an official language in 1362 complaints still existed but this time it was based on spelling, vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation and today such complaints still exists with the use of changing technology

Milroy and Milroy divided the complaints into two categories:

**Type 1** - includes complaints concerning correctness. They attack 'mis-use' of specific parts of the phonology, grammar [and] vocabulary of English (and in the case of written English 'errors of spelling [and] punctuation

**Type 2** - complaints are concerned with the moral aspects of language. These complaints emphasize the importance of "clarity in writing and attack what appear to be abuses of language that may mislead and confuse the public

And today there are many factors due to which English Language is taking new forms one of which is the mass media itself. In modern Mass Media, time and space has more importance than the use of original English Language. Mass Media has made concessions on the language to say so much in so little time and space. For example in Twitter one has to use just 140 characters in 1 post. Now this has created short form and also created new words.

Nicholas Carr, the writer of the book *What the Internet is doing to Our Brains* describes in his article 'Is Google Making us Stupid?' his own experience in these word " My mind would get caught up in the narrative or the turns of the argument, and I' d spend hours strolling through long stretches of prose. That's rarely the case anymore. Now my concentration often starts to drift after two or three pages. I get fidgety, lose the thread, begin to look for something else to do. I feel as if I 'm always dragging my way word brain back to the text. The deep reading that used to come naturally has become a struggle." This happens to a person who is well versed in the language and who

is an avid reader throughout his life then one can imagine the status of a budding reader and thinker who have just stepped on threshold of literary reading. Nicholas also says that many people are going through this enervative experience. He says thus:

"I'm not the only one. When I mention my troubles with reading to friends and acquaintances-literary types, most of them- many say they're having similar experiences. The more they use the web, the more they have to fight to stay focused on long pieces of writing." So it is a fact that a person with an addiction of digital media can hardly get along with a work of literature as studying literature demands to use the multimedia only when it is required. It shows the ridiculous behaviour of a person who concentrates more on the screen savers rather lacks the ability to appreciate the different shades or hues on the canvas of the sky. This is not because of the difference in generation but only a difference in moderation.

#### TECHNOLOGY AND LANGUAGE

Lancaster University researchers analyzed 22 million words worth of Twitter and Reddit posts to track the rise of new words. They came across words such as *Manspreading* which means a man sits with his legs wide apart on public transport, encroaching on other seats. *Bootyful* (beautiful) is one of the top 5 new words on Twitter in South Wales, while *cyw* (coming your way) is popular in North Wales.

Form the above examples it can be seen that words are either shortened to abbreviations or even new words are being created to express an idea or a statement. The need of this kind of words is to say much more by using very less space.

According to Kaveri Paul in her paper 'Language Power - How It Progresses from Script to CD Rom' (*Language in India, Volume 4 - 4 April*

As per the survey done on the reasons why people use SMS language or Proper English Language following is what has been found:

Why People use SMS Language	Why People use English Language
a. Convenient b. Saves time and energy c. Easy to type d. Short and simple	a. May influence writings during exams so don't use SMS language b. Simply do not like it c. Easier when using T9 dictionary (T9

2004), "It is, however, interesting to note that, with the use of computers and e-mails, the language has undergone a drastic change. The language itself has been modified to suit the purposes. For example, the SMS (Short Messaging Service), which is the hot favourite amongst the youngsters, consists of codes. The language here comprises of alphabets and numbers. More and frequent use of phonetic sounds rather than words is an important characteristic of SMS."

A study on "*Investigation and Modeling of the Structure of Texting Language*" by Monojit Choudhury, Rahul Saraf, Vijit Jain, Sudeshna Sarkar, Anupam Basu from the Department of Computer Science and Engineering Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur, India, has observed the techniques while sending an SMS. According to this study, following are the common techniques for compression of the words.

- **Deletion of characters:** The commonly observed patterns include deletion of vowels (as in "msg" for "message"), deletion of repeted character (as in "tomorow" for "tomorrow") and truncation (as in "tom" for "tomorrow").
- **Phonetic substitution:** Examples are "2" for "to" or "too", "lyk" for "like", "rite" for "right" etc.
- **Abbreviation:** Some frequently used abbreviations are "tb" for "text back", "lol" for "laughs out loud" etc.
- **Dialectal and informal usage:** Often multiple words are combined into a single token following certain dialectal conventions. For example, "gonna" is used for "going to", "aint" is used for "are not", etc.
- **Deletion of words:** Function words (e.g. articles) and pronouns are commonly deleted. "I am reading the book" for example may be typed as "readin bk".

e. Saves character forms f. Saves space g. Possible to say lot in few words h. To type faster i. Cheaper j. No time to write full spelling k. Understandable l. In fashion m. To fit in more per message n. To write more and pay less o. It looks freaky	stands for Text on 9 keys, is a patented predictive text technology for mobile phones) d. Some people don't understand SMS language e. Easier faster and comfortable f. Don't want to get used to SMS language g. Better understanding h. Proper and clear communication i. To avoid misunderstanding j. Will not spoil the language or the writing skills k. Just used to it l. Its good m. It improves English n. Improves vocabulary
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Earlier telegrams were used to send quick messages and now a day's people use SMS technology or IM's (Instant Message) to send messages or chat with others. People have to type in the messages themselves in their phones using small key pads and send it thus generated the short forms. Moreover SMS service providers started to charge a certain amount for 1 SMS send and 1 SMS was only 140 characters thus generated the need for short forms which further took a toll on English Language.

Currently social media like twitter allow only 140 characters in 1 post and when someone wants to be expressive in a single post he or she has no option but to use short forms or use abbreviations or even create new words.

#### **HOW TECHNOLOGY CAN BE USED TO IMPROVE STUDYING FOR LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE**

On one hand technology has its ill effects on English Language but on the other technology itself can be used to improve one's language, below is a list of things that can be done using technology to improve language:

1. For starter use a spell check option in the SMS/Phone setting. This option will tell one if your spellings are correct. If incorrect the phone will provide you with a list of words closest to the word that you have typed and you can chose the correct spelling from the list provided. (It is best to avoid saving short forms in the phone dictionary as ones saved it will come up as suggestion every time you want to type that word)

2. Technology can be used today to reach the furthest of places to develop and educate people and create an interest in them in spoken and written English Language. It can be started with children at rural India where English can be taught using videos, audios and activities based learning. From learning new words everyday to applying them can be part of the web learning activity
3. At higher level education technology can be used by students from different regions to communication about English Literature such as live enacting of a play
4. Students can also use technology such as Skype to debate and discuss about current affairs or any topic of their choice. In the same way they can also share their articles to one another and get it peer edited and post editing it could be open for discussion
5. English classroom courses can also be recorded and used for teaching the students who cannot attend these classes
6. Students who are expert in English and other students who do not speak in English can be put together through face to face web interactions so that they teach each other through peer learning

As every coin has two sides the development of digital technology can best be used for the development of interest in the students of

literature. Educational possibilities offered by digital technology are

**Role Based Online Discussion:** It is a method to teach literary history. This approach is called "The Ivanhoe Game". This game consists of interventions, changes, additions and commentaries in the discourse field of an imaginative work. This is a game with dialogical and interactive in nature. It is played by two or three players. The discourse of the characters in the play helps to understand the entirety of the work, history and transmission histories. They can make use of primary or secondary bibliographic and historical texts to emphasize their discourse. It is a game of literary criticism and appreciation. Indeed it's a game of cultural criticism. The players have to refashion and reshape its material in ways that replicate the original piece of writing. This kind of play will give a way to emerge fresh theories to understand the characters. This pedagogically oriented version of a role-based on line discussion has been played in a course on European literary history at the University of Jyvaaskylaa for few semesters. It is giving encouraging results. The students who are well equipped with the information about the character and as well as historical period in general should be able to conduct on line discussions. The present day students are well versed in online chat with anonymous people. So this kind of role based play should not be that strange approach.

**Visualization Methods:** Application of various visualization methods of literary structures on the computer screen is one of the more educational potential. Hyper textual linking is useful in making various intertextual allusions visible.

**The Application of Text Arc:** The Text Arc is a free visualization tool that represents an entire text on a single page. It encourages the reader to use its juxtaposition to uncover meaning. This helps to understand text in a better way.

**Use of Literary Blogs:** Literary blogs and discussion forums are the good platforms for a student of literature. These platforms allow the students to engage in discussions with authors whose work they are studying. The tentative ideas will be peer – reviewed by literary enthusiasts.

## CONCLUSION

Technology has made the world a global village; it has linked people across the globe irrespective of their cultural differences but at the same time technology has its own ill effects. The problem is not with the technology in itself but how it is being used by individuals, one can use it for boon or bane. Similarly Language and Literature has seen multiple changes with the changing technology so has the attitude of students studying these subjects but technology itself can be used to eliminate the danger of losing the original English Language. Therefore it can be concluded that there will be no danger either to English language or to Literature with the advancement of technology if it is used with a positive/right perspective.

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