



THE IMPACT OF CHANGING LITERARY TRENDS ON MODERN WRITING

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ABSTRACT

Development of languages is directly correlated to our ability to communicate with each other and with the masses. English, a widely spoken language, has been transformed over ages by many native languages and it has assimilated interesting words and phrases making it richer and more appealing. This transformation is further aided by the Internet, digital media, and related innovations, which has necessitated expansion of vocabulary, use of language and literary sense. This article seeks to explore subtle changes in the language and literary trends and correlate it with instruments of modern communication and information dissemination.

INTRODUCTION

TS Eliot once remarked, “*blank verse is no verse*” [1]. In today’s era when literary trends are marked by the dominance of blogs and social sites, this statement somehow appears disconnected and outdated. During the period of Victorian and Renaissance literature, writers signified their writings through fundamental thoughts, emotive expressions, rhythm and a virtuous use of language. Thus, English developed very rapidly in just few centuries. As the language underwent transformations in the craft of writing, most of the current writers find the 14th century Chaucerian text of Canterbury Tales and 16th century’s Shakespearean dramas unreasonably difficult to read and comprehend.

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However, we observed a gradual change in writing style of the 19th century literature where dark impressions of the First World War, social insecurities, decadent societies and rebellious revelations present in existing cultures, marked as prevailing themes in stark contrast to beautiful verses of 'nature and imagination', so richly interspersed in the poetry of Keats and Wordsworth. Literary language witnessed a change with multiple societies come in contact with each other, as largely seen after the World War II. The variation of social and educational backgrounds, mixing of generations, impressions of a lifetime and geographical differences generated vast contributions to change the literary trends.

Moving ahead, 20th century literature signified sentiments of fast-paced societies where faceless technologies and machine learning appeared to overwhelm what was benign literature. Literature slowly transformed in the Twentieth century with a marked difference in literary and non-literary diction. Notably, writings of women also made a gradual shift from romanticism in Jane Austen's novels and obsessively maniacal Sylvia Plath to identity crises, silent cries and other socially relevant tales offered by modern female authors. So, while generations of 18th and 19th century adopted more of Latin and Roman diction, non-fictional prose, formal and informal vocabulary and changing proportions of literary diction, emerging new generation authors occasionally chose vocabulary from German, French and many other international words.

Last decade witnessed literary resurgence leading to rejection of techniques and linguistic principles belonging to olden times. We find a sea change of trends from early English writers, reflecting a clear shift from an agrarian to an industrial, technical to a vastly digitized society. Though the writers, such as Dan Brown, J K Rowling and Stephen King were trying hard to keep pace with the past historical facts through mystical and spiritual scripts, these trends amount to a subtle decline in traditional religious beliefs in order to adopt and assimilate a globalized version of multiple philosophies.

Latest literary movements flaunted an attempt to define exclusive characteristics of literature and language in order to bring out extreme transformation of "*literature as a social learning*". Newer definitions of contemporary literature are not only associated with imaginative writings, which are not merely semantic, but also carry aesthetic concepts of social distinction. Simpler language to show a connection to "*low and rustic life*", [2] has given way to a more "*working language*", a language of subjective reality. The shifts in literary trends often engage less embellished techniques, with precise descriptions and simple writings, which are definitely suited towards prevalent hectic lifestyles and complicated social fabric of the present era. Thomas Hardy's style of long descriptions of landscapes, Charles Dickens' never-ending paragraphs and their outstanding skill of explaining native lands with long drawn out sentences are no longer followed in modern writings. However, in the process of transformation of literary reading, today's readers are exposed to virtual mass



media, which is driven by constantly evolving information technology. The current pace of society and reading on the run has led to prevalent usage of simple words, succinct phrases and shorter sentences, thus enabling new paradigms in writing and literature. Grammar and other nuances of semantics have indeed taken a back seat in the digitized age, which is perhaps meant for solitary reading. Mark Twain had also appreciated such reformed writing style even in the olden times:

I notice that you use plain, simple language, short words and brief sentences. That is the way to write English - it is the modern way and the best way. Stick to it; don't let fluff and flowers and verbosity creep in. When you catch an adjective, kill it. No, I don't mean utterly, but kill most of them - then the rest will be valuable. They weaken when they are close together. They give strength when they are wide apart. An adjective habit, or a wordy, diffuse, flowery habit, once fastened upon a person, is as hard to get rid of as any other vice.[3]

Social e-networking, internet, television and political readings, have affected current trends in literary writing. Unfortunately, such usage has adulterated English language by introducing many new words picked up from vernacular languages and added to modern vocabulary. Though there is less influence on the spoken language, the written language has seen introduction of emoticons, abbreviations and acronyms. Punctate communicative language is the new mantra of Internet blogs and writings on social media and it have, perhaps, diminished the quality of English. It is justifiable to assume that language development in this era has considerable influence of the Internet, unlike language evolution in the past where it was primarily driven by interaction with other languages. Digital age has incorporated revolutionary writing ideas for expressions, slangs and jargons in order to present a new linguistic peak, as seen during the Shakespearean times or during the pinnacles of the British Empire. But it has been realized that thoughts are superior to language used. Kamala Das once famously quoted:

"English is natural to meas cawing is to crows and roaring is to lions." She adds further, "The language one employs is not important, what is important is the thought contained in words".[4]

On the contrary, many contemporary literary critics accept that evolution of language and writing is an unavoidable process demanding freshness and reviving subtleness of expression. Socrates, the great Greek philosopher, was once very anxious about the invention of writing that 'it would make people forgetful' and the 'oral speech might perish'. It was believed that television led to people with poor reading habits. Similarly, today we agonize those digital technologies are shaping new writing trends. But Socrates concern was right: we moved from



verbal communication to written treatises and books, and now in the new communicative era or the post-printed era, the language has become more conversational and the usage of words more suggestive. It appears that development of language has completed a full circle.

Dr. Samuel Johnson broached an idea to produce a dictionary “*by which the pronunciation of our language may be fixed and its purity preserved*”, but confessed lately in an interview that it was futile to ‘*fix the language*’ because English language will continue to change on its own, in a creative way, by the users. According to a recent survey, word limit in dictionaries have expanded by over 9000 words a year in the millennium era as compared to only 1,000 words at the beginning of the 20th Century. It has almost doubled in the last few years depicting rich accumulation of terms or and entry of words from other foreign languages.

The modern-day literature available is expressed through many channels that is inclusive of art and books, generally followed by avid readers. A clear advantage of newer trends is that it allows generation of fresh ideas through varied expressions such as visual representations in both static and dynamic form. Given the reach of English language, the literature writing in it is appreciated by most readers, which is further aided by modern mediums of rapid transmission allowing widespread global accessibility. Notably, the technologies of portable data format, e-books and other such platforms support rapid knowledge transfer and digitized access to literature and books.[5] Such transfers are fast and support intermixing of writings in cultural context for multi-cultural population while reaching enormous number of footprints around the world.

It is generally agreed that recent trends are useful in promoting the exchange of ideas and provide ease of access to useful information that supports literary analysis. It is argued that social media and other such modern trends provide a positive impact on English language and literature. [6,7] Globalization has also modified writing styles and the sea change in social media has altered literary writings. However, another line of thought has concluded that social media has adverse effect on creative development of art and literature. For example, rapid read stories and short readable summaries are seen replacing the novel writing and reading culture.

It seems likely that digital technology will continue to influence language development and literary readings. It is likely that changes in language and repertoire of mainstream vocabulary will continue to thrive – and the English language will be enriched with newer words and phrases, innovative sentence making and latest diction and pronunciation, which will be in sync with changing times and societies. Shifting language trends will remain beyond control and it will leave to the users to choose either chaste English or modern evolved vocabulary to communicate or write their sentiments.



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