

**ONE WAY PROCESS OF GLOBALIZATION OF LANGUAGE: CONCERNS AND ISSUES**

Javaid Aziz Bhat  
 Department of Linguistics  
 University of Kashmir

Srinagar

Email ID:javaidazizbhat@gmail.com

**ABSTRACT**

*Globalization is the process of transmission of ideas, meanings, values and cultures around the world in such a way as to extend and intensify social relations. In globalization, economic and cultural phenomena spread across the political and geographical boundaries. Among the aspects of globalization like economic, cultural, industrial, and many others, the globalization of language is an important aspect. Globalization of language means the spreading of a language to the societies which otherwise have languages of their own. In the present world scenario, the globalization of language means globalization of English language. This globalization of English language is a one way process wherein the English language has been gaining ground everywhere at the cost of other native languages and has therefore given rise to many issues. The present paper is an attempt to highlight the concerns and issues which have emerged because of the globalization of English. The paper also throws light on the effects of English on the languages of Jammu and Kashmir. The paper brings to fore the fact that English language has become global, while as other languages have remained local in their size and scope. This has resulted in the prestige differences among different languages in different world societies. English is considered as a dominant language in terms of prestige in almost all societies and this garners negative attitude, among the natives of different societies, towards their native languages. People tend to be inclined more towards English which has given rise to the serious issues like language shift, language endangerment, language loss and language planning. There are about 7,000 languages in the world and half of them have fewer than 7000 speakers, 80% of the world's languages have fewer than 100,000 speakers. These smaller languages are increasingly thought of as endangered, since all over the world they are failing to be taken up by young people. Closely associated with the problems of language endangerment and language loss is the problem of identity. The loss of language means the loss of identity and all this is encroaching upon the diversity in the world leading to a kind of homogeneity with respect to language.*

**Key Words:** Globalization, Language Shift, Language Death, Identity, Language Planning, Social Justice, Prestige, Minority Languages

**1. Introduction**

Globalization is currently a popular and controversial issue, though often remaining a loose and poorly-defined concept. In general terms globalization is defined as the process of transmission of ideas, meanings, values and cultures around the world in such a way as to extend and intensify social relations. When we talk about extension of communicative networks, it presupposes a multilateral flow of the phenomenon being globalized, not a unilateral and unidirectional flow. The fact of the matter, however, is that there are many things like power at the base of globalization. It is power that enhances the chances of globalization of a particular phenomenon. There is no denying to the fact that all societies across the world are not at par in terms of their power and this power differential makes the process of globalization a one-way affair. All attributes associated with power have more tendency of getting globalized. The case of globalization of language is not an exception to it. Like many other attributes associated with power, the language associated with it also has proved the same. If we look back in history, visiting the colonial era, we recollect the fact that the language associated with power was imposed upon the people of the British and American colonies by the colonial powers. The globalization of language therefore refers to the globalization of English. This language has been gaining more and more importance in its non-native territories even in the post colonial era. It is the language which has become global whereas other languages have remained local in their size and scope. As far as the impact of globalization is concerned, discussion on it tends to consider its effects on economic growth, employment, income distribution and other social impacts such as opportunities for poverty alleviation, human and labour rights, environmental consequences and so on. The effects of globalization of language have always been undermined. A serious look at the globalization of language draws our attention to the fact the globalization of one particular language has been taking toll on other world languages. The space for the minority, lesser known and subaltern languages has always been shrinking. This has resulted in a huge lot of issues

ranging from languages shift to languages death and loss of identity. Therefore, in the case of globalization of language, the one way flow is more severe than the globalization of other aspects.

## 2. Issues Arising from Globalization of Language

As already mentioned in the introduction, English has got globalized whereas other languages have remained local in their size and scope. A lot of issues have arisen because of the one way process of globalization of language. But we will be discussing some of the most prominent issues related to the process of globalization of language.

### 2.1. Prestige Differences

There is no denying to the fact that majority of the world societies are multilingual having their own indigenous languages. The spread of English to such societies has added the load on these societies. In multilingual societies, there always emerge the prestige differences among languages because of the different roles these languages are assigned. Popan posits that language never spreads due to intra-linguistic causes, instead affected by the perceived prestige of speakers, perceived usefulness, and, most saliently, the dominant position of speakers in the social, political, and economic domains. This dominant position gives the speakers prestige. The speaker's position in society appears as a goal worth striving for. In order to reach this goal, we imitate their language and their way of speaking. English due to the perceived social superiority and social, political, and economic control wielded by English speakers has gained relatively higher prestige. The prestige differences among languages create classes in the society on the basis of proficiency in the more prestigious languages. If we take the Kashmir society as an example, it is clear that in the hierarchy of prestige, English lies at the top of the ladder followed by Urdu. The indigenous languages of the valley have low prestige associated with them because of their meager role in the important domains like education, media, law etc. The prestige differences among languages in a multilingual setup become the reason for all the related issues which are more severe. The issues which directly emerge because of the prestige difference among languages include language shift, language endangerment and language death.

### 2.2. Language Shift

While a language requires social, political, and economic power in order to spread, the language continues to grow in power in accordance with an expanding number of speakers. The more speakers a language has, the greater the power it is able to wield, as both active and passive use of the language, or oral and written communication, garner a greater reaction if the audience is wider. The prestige of speakers may serve to initially catalyze the language's spread, with social rise and communal integration representing lures for language learning. Popan writes that "a person belonging to a minority/less prestigious group is aware of this perception, wishes to dissociate from their group in order to integrate into the more prestigious/majority group." In other words, the low prestige of a language in a particular society garners negative attitude among its speakers which results in language shift. Once again taking example from the Kashmiri speech community, there has been a continuous decrease in the usage of Kashmiri language so far as its usage in different domains is concerned. There has been a continuous intrusion of the non-indigenous languages like English and Urdu in the different domains. Starting with the domain of education and media, these languages have finally entered the home domain and that is where the threat to native languages is posed and shift has happened.

### 2.3. Language Endangerment

Closely related to the issue of language shift is the language endangerment. An **endangered language** is a language that is at risk of falling out of use as its speakers die out or shift to speaking other languages. Many of the world languages have got endangered because of the language shift. Today there are about 7000 different natural languages. Eleven of them account for the speech of more than half the world's population. Those eleven are Mandarin Chinese, Spanish, Hindi, French, Bengali, Portuguese, Russian, German, Japanese, Arabic, and English. According to Garrick Bailey and James Perle in their book *Humanity: An Introduction to Cultural Anthropology*, estimates for extinct languages range from 4,000 to 9,000 since the 15th century. Other estimates for the future predict that only 10 percent of the present languages will continue into the 22nd century.

### 2.4. Language Death

The issues of language endangerment and language death are closely related. In fact language death directly occurs because of the language endangerment. The first step in language death is *potential endangerment*. This is when a language faces strong external pressure, but there are still communities of speakers who pass the language to their children.

The second stage is *endangerment* is once a language has reached the endangerment stage, there are only a few speakers left and children are, for the most part, not learning the language.

The third stage of language extinction is *seriously endangered*. During this stage, a language is unlikely to survive another generation and will soon be extinct. The fourth stage is *moribund*, followed by the fifth stage *extinction*. A language is said to be dead or extinct when no one speaks it any more.

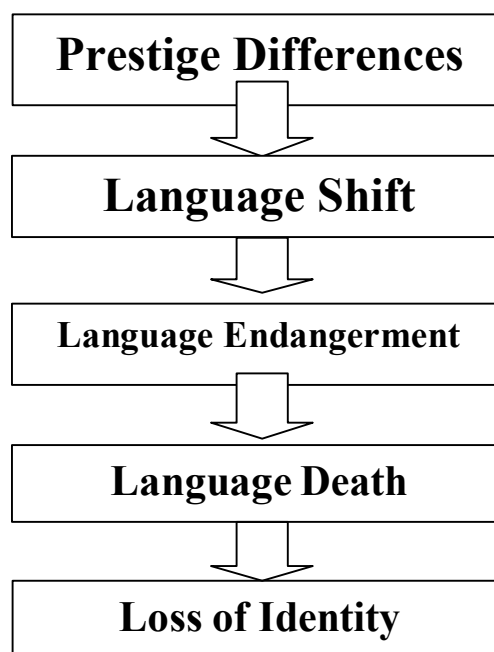
Crystal (2002) explains that languages with only one speaker are already dead languages for language is considered alive only as long as there is someone to speak it to.

He refers to implicit and explicit role of in extinction of Australian indigenous language and states that in Australia, the presence of English has, directly or indirectly, caused great linguistic devastation, with 90% of languages moribund.

More than half the world's languages have fewer than 5,000 speakers, and there are many hundreds that have as few as a dozen.

## 2.5. Loss of Identity

Language is inextricably linked with identity and the loss of language is not the loss of language only, it is the loss of identity also. After learning a new language, one's perception of his or her competence, communicative style, and value systems undergo some changes. Tabouret-keller (1997) says that the link between language and identity is so strong that a single feature of language use suffices to identify someone's membership in a given group. It is explained that linguistic items are not only the characteristics of groups or communities; they are themselves the means by which individuals both identify themselves and identify with others. The loss of language means the loss of the whole treasure of knowledge encoded in that language, the loss of the cultural values etc. The whole scheme of things goes in an ordered way starting from prestige differences as shown in the next page.



*Flowchart showing the scheme of things from prestige difference to loss of identity*

### 3. Other Issues

The other issues arising out of globalization of language include the issues of language planning, social justice and conflicts which are related issues.

#### 3.1. Language planning

Any decision or principle of action adopted with regard to the usage of language or languages by an organization or individual is known as language planning.

Language policies are basically designed to promote one or more languages and also it specifies the usage of language in different domains, like education, administration, media, etc. So we can say that language policy is a cover term for all the linguistic behaviors, assumptions, and cultural forms, folk beliefs, attitude towards a language etc.

Language planning is one of the biggest issues for the language planners, governments, educationists etc. particularly in the sensitive multilingual societies like India. It is an uphill task to do justice with all the languages in a society because all languages cannot be equally treated in the practical world.

Therefore other issues like Social justice and conflicts arise because of unacceptable language planning.

#### 3.2. Social (In)Justice: Violation of Language Rights

When one or more languages are given preference over certain others, it violates the democratic principles of equality and equity. In such cases, the minority languages always remain at the receiving end. Such scenarios have occurred many a time in the history of language planning and thus giving rise to other issues. If we take the example of the Valley of Kashmir, Kashmiri is the most dominant language in terms of number of speakers. Along with Kashmiri, there are many other minority and lesser known languages which are spoken in different parts of the valley. After strongly pressing for the introduction of Kashmiri as a subject in schools, out of the concern for its preservation and maintenance, the majority community somehow managed to initiate what they consider as a step towards proper planning. As a matter of fact, the same cannot be done for other minority and lesser known languages given the impracticability of any such step. In this way these minority communities are denied equal rights and this is the case with most of the minority languages in multilingual set ups across the world.

#### 3.3. Conflicts and Language Riots

Faulty language planning at times results in serious conflicts in a society. The communities whose language rights are violated find the solution in confronting with the language planners, governments in most of the cases. Many violent organizations have been witnessed fighting for their language rights. Certain groups organize themselves on the basis of linguistic affiliations. The violation of language rights and faulty language planning has resulted in language riots even in India. The faulty language planning in the name of Three Language Formula resulted in language riots in West Bengal and Tamil Nadu. Such incidents can happen anywhere if a language is imposed upon people against their wishes.

### 4. Conclusion

The article sums up some of the major issues that have arisen because of the one way process of globalization. The article starts with a brief introduction about globalization with special reference to globalization of language and proceeds forward with the proposition that the globalization of English has come up with serious issues starting from prestige differences in languages in multilingual societies. The prestige differences lead to many other related issues like language shift, language endangerment, language death and loss of identity. Other issues that arise because of the globalization of English include language planning, language riots and violation of the democratic principles of equity and equality.

**References**

- Block, D. (2007). The Rise of Identity in SLA Research, Post Firth and Wagner (1997). *The Modern Language Journal* 91, 863-878.
- Bourdieu, P. (1977). *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Cambridge. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Canagarajah, A.S. (1999). *Resisting Linguistic Imperialism in English Teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Crystal, D. (1997). *English as a Global Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Fuller, J. M. (2009). Teaching & Learning Guide for: Multilingualism in Educational Contexts: Identities and Ideologies. *Language and Linguistics Compass Teaching & Learning Guide* 3(5), 137461378.
- Gumperz, J. (Ed.). (1982). *Language and Social Identity*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Joseph, J. E. (2004). *Language and Identity: National, Ethnic, Religious*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Kamwangamalu, N. M. (2007). One Language, Multi-layered Identities: English in a Society Intransition, South Africa. *World Englishes*, 26 (3), 263-275.