

FACTORS AFFECTING LANGUAGE CHANGE

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Annotation: All languages change over time and change is inevitable for any living language. History records that languages change over time at every level of structure which includes vocabulary, phonology, morphology and syntax. For many people, it may not be easily apparent or obvious in a day-to-day communication on a personal level because many individuals are so intimately connected to their language that they may fail to see its changes. However, languages do indeed change and some languages flourish, some expand and some languages even die.

Key words: factors, lexical, semantic, syntax, phonological change, spelling, social, political, moral factors

Generation by generation, pronunciations evolve, new words are borrowed or invented, the meaning of old words drifts, and morphology develops or decays. The rate of change may vary from one place to another but whether the changes are faster or slower, they do happen and they happen for a good cause. (Jones & Singh, 2005).

Having a knowledge of language change and causes of change are essential for students of language. It also is a significant topic for linguists, who take a descriptive attitude and accept that change is inevitable and it does happen for a better reason for all human kinds. Linguists have traditionally studied variations in a language occurring at the same and how language develops over time as both can be useful aids to understanding.

This thesis will discuss about causes the lead to changes of the English language and types of change. There are many factors that play roles in changing languages and they include politics, social, culture technology, environment and moral. Such factors can be extremely broad and complex in nature; therefore, this essay will only discuss about political, social and technological in a general term.

There are types of English language change which include lexis (word), semantics (meaning of word), phonology (sound), and syntax (grammar) and the study of these different types can be extremely complex. Therefore, there only a general and a few examples about the different types of change will be discussed. After that, there will be a brief discussion on whether these changes take place for the right or wrong reason. The conclusion will then be drawn to support the thesis statement.

Causes of language change

Languages change for a variety of reasons such as political pressures, technological development as well as social, culture and moral factors. Below are examples of causes that lead to change in the English language.

• **Political factor-** which is caused by foreign invasion, migration and colonization.

• **Social factor-** which means foreign influences from Latin, French, American, Australian, Indian and others. The unique way that individuals speak also fuels language change. Vocabulary and phrases people use depend upon the place, age, gender, education level, social status.

• **Cultural factor-** This means the exposure of one language group to another via television, radio, films, music, magazines and fashion.

• **Technological factor-** which means rapid advances in information technology, industries, products and economy simply require new words that drive language change.

• **Moral factor-** which is about recent developments in anti-racism and environmentalism (Beard, 2004)

Types of language change

There are types of language change. They include Lexical, semantic, phonology and syntax. General ideas about these changes are explained below with few examples. Lexical and semantic change will be explained in one category as, in general, they are closely linked to one another.

Lexical and Semantic Change

Lexical change refers to people using different words today than people from the past. A semantic change is very closely linked to lexical change but semantic change has something to do with changes in meaning behind the words. It is probably the most frequent type of language change and certainly the easiest to observe. For instance, one can make confident assertions about the age of a speaker who uses the word *courting* to mean “going out with”, or one who uses the adjective *fit* to describe someone they find attractive. In another example, an older person would use the word “wireless” to mean “radio” whereas the word wireless would certainly mean wireless technology such as phones and laptops for a younger person (McMahon, 1994, p.90).

Semantic change which is also known as semantic shift describes the evolution of word usage. In semantic change, the modern meaning of the word is different from the original usage.

Syntax Change (Grammar)

History records change in grammatical constructions. English syntax is very slow to change compared with vocabulary change which can be seen as fairly superficial and ephemeral. In another example, in modern English, the word “you” is used for both the singular and the plural form. In old English, the word “thou” was used for addressing one person; ye for more than one. However, the word “You” was around then, and while thou and ye were used as a subject of a clause, “you” was used as the object. In Early Modern English, the distinction between subject and object uses of ye and you had virtually disappeared, and you became the norm in all grammatical functions and social situations. The use of “Ye” had eventually become old-fashioned (Thomasom, n.d).

Phonological Change (SOUND)

Sound change consists of the practice of language change which causes the phonetic change or phonological change. It also includes the substitution of phonetic feature which lead to the total loss of the original sound and a new one is introduced (Wikipedia, 2012).

Spelling Change

There are regulatory organizations to preserve national languages in many countries but neither the US nor Great Britain have such regulatory bodies in place [D.M.Kholikova. 2024. 94-96.]. The English language changes with the publication of new dictionaries, or the way media uses language, or with the creation of colloquial terms.

English today is one of the fastest changing languages in the world because both old and new users of the language are actively shaping it as English has become a language of education and in an increasing number of countries. Today, English belongs to any country which uses it and the more people use English, the greater it would have impact on the language change.

Change can be a very good thing because it helps people in business to trade goods and services, travel and communicate with other nations more effectively. If the language we speak did not change, there would be an even greater language barrier than there already is. Another reason why languages need to change is for people to communicate with others who have a different culture, understanding and pronunciation of our language. If there were no change, humans would be so lost in this world of different languages and different beliefs.

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