

Convergence and Divergence

Globalization is the most discussed word in the 21st century. The world grows into an economic unit. The need for universal medium of communication is growing. People want growth, growth demands cooperation, cooperation requires communication.

English is playing a role for transnational communication. Voices are raised saying ‘increasing linguistic uniformity is a threat.’ English is a threat to cultural and linguistic diversity.

Some are trying to dam in the rising tide of English words that may flood many smaller languages.

There are two views of role of English in the present day world:

1. Many languages have been lost because of the widespread use of English. We are losing linguistic and cultural diversities. This loss of diversity can never be regained.

2. It is willed change. This is the result of the process of modernization. Cultural change is an inevitable and continuous process.

English is a diverse language.

- ☐ It has a relatively uniform centre: stE
- ☐ It has polycentric native language national varieties
- ☐ Outer circle of new Englishes
- ☐ Periphery of other Englishes
- ☐ Further diversity of speaker group marked by age, gender etc.

Linguistic Relativity

Language mirrors culture: language is symbolic guide to culture.

Is there one to one relationship between language and culture?

The cultures reflected in varieties of English are sometimes more sometimes less distinct from each

other just like the English used is also sometimes similar sometimes less similar.

Can English lead to multiplicity of daughter languages just as Latin developed into various languages?

It is unlikely. Reasons: Latin was in isolation, there was lack of communication, the development of nation states with its individual language. Such is not the case with English.

Prominent varieties of English AmE, BrE, AusE have mutual intelligibility. StE/ GenE language of educated English speaking communities is found everywhere.

Communication, news and entertainment media have made different Englishes accessible to all.

As the global culture grows, new words are limited less and less by the older linguistic boundaries. This is a tendency towards convergence.

We see increasing fragmentation of groups, of markets, of cultures. The groups are not labeled by nation. They are labeled by sports activities, fan clubs, taste in music, professional interests, politics etc. this is a tendency of divergence. Mutual intelligibility is increasing leading to convergence. Local varieties (Regional, national) are emerging leading to divergence.

The postmodern world is making room both for convergence and divergence.