Effects of E-Communication on English Language with Special Reference to Email

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Abstract:

 Human civilization has flourished on earth and has been able to navigate in space via various inventions and discoveries due to constant and consistent communication. The significant advances in related technologies of computers, telecommunications, data-access, storage devices, graphic equipment, internet and software have created a wide spectrum of new modes of communication. Out of all the available tools, email communication has remained preferred medium of e-communication, mostly, due to its flexibility, accuracy and powerful features such as attachment option, forwarding option, CC and BCC option; and its immediate reach at the click of a button. English language, on the other hand, has evolved over the course of time. It cannot be static and is ever-growing and evolving. The present paper focuses on the different effects it has had on English language.

Key words: Human civilization, E-communication, Email, English language.

1. Introduction

With the advancement of technology and the wide-spread use of

e-mode for communication, the scenario of communication has changed forever. By way of regular telephone links, private cables, internet access, microwave relayed by communication satellites or by land based repeater-stations, many activities which were considered impossible have become possible. Mehrotra and Vajpeyi rightly point out, "Traditional means of communication have been rendered outdated by mobile-cum-satellite telephony and email (38)." Of all the present tools of communicating messages, electronic mail or email is considered as one of the fastest and most popularly used tools. A major part of the internet load is the result of email communication. Email can also be exchanged between online service provider users and in networks other than the Internet, be it public or private.

2. Definition of the Terms

According to the *Webster's New World College Dictionary,* 'communication' is:

- The act of transmitting
- A giving or exchanging of information, signals, or messages as by talk, gestures or writing
- The information, signals or message(Webster – online).

'E' is an abbreviation of 'electronic' which has been defined as *Concise Oxford Dictionary* as

▢▢adj.

1. having components such as microchips and transistors that control and direct electric currents.

2. (of music) produced by electronic instruments.

3. of or relating to electrons or electronics.

4. carried out using a computer, especially over a network: *electronic shopping* (COD).

Thus, the term 'electronic' denotes the application of science for

practical purpose and represents gadgets having micro-chips and transmitters, namely computers or similar devices, ideally possessing internet facility.

While, *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* defines 'email' as,

1. A system for sending and receiving messages electronically over a computer network, as between personal computers.

2. A message or messages sent or received by such a system (Thefreedictionary.com).

Email is a system of global communication in which the user can compose a message in his or her account and send it to person/s possessing email accounts. In present time, free email services like Gmail, Yahoo, Hotmail, Mail.com, AOL Mail have always been the focal point of internet communication and are used for a variety of purposes. These services have become the most popular modes of correspondence and interaction; and are used extensively for both personal and professional communication.

3. Effects of E-Communication on English Language with Special Reference to Email Communication

A comparison between English used in letter and email can prove to be instrumental in revealing the prominent effects of email communication on English language. A sample letter (conventional form of writing) and couple of emails used as samples (alongwith other samples) have been presented below: (cover-letter-resources.com)

MARK B. SMITH

98 Paul Revere Drive

Boston, MA 03223

999–555–5555

mbs@aol.com

January 4, 2002

Mr. Gordon Ferguson
President
DEF Company
665 Cowboy Avenue
Dallas, TX 345678

Dear Mr. Ferguson:

With my experience in marketing, new business development, and operations I have demonstrated the ability to deliver accelerated market growth, significant cost reductions, and enhanced customer loyalty while at the same time planning and implementing critical business expansion. I offer a broad base of experience and the vision to help lead companies to achieve continuously improved results. My achievements clearly demonstrate the ability to deliver. I have:

- Provided the vision, strategic direction, and tactical implementation for helping launch and grow Americanbank from zero to 15,000 customers with $70 million in deposits in eight months.

- Created a forward-looking Customer Care Center with resulting excellence in response to customer inquiries both by phone and email.

- Planned and implemented technology solutions that reduced operating costs (e.g., inter-bank transfer costs by 90% and banking approval costs by 75% per customer).

- Created the business development plan that resulted in 100% increase in sales over two year period at Independence Direct Inc.

- Increased Orange Bank market share 60% in four years by introducing bold relationship marketing, product development, and sales programs.

Along with the vision to set attainable aggressive goals I have demonstrated the ability to assemble, retain, and support superior teams committed to ever-increasing profitability.

Seeking new senior level management challenges I would like to discuss my potential contributions to your company. Thank you for your consideration.
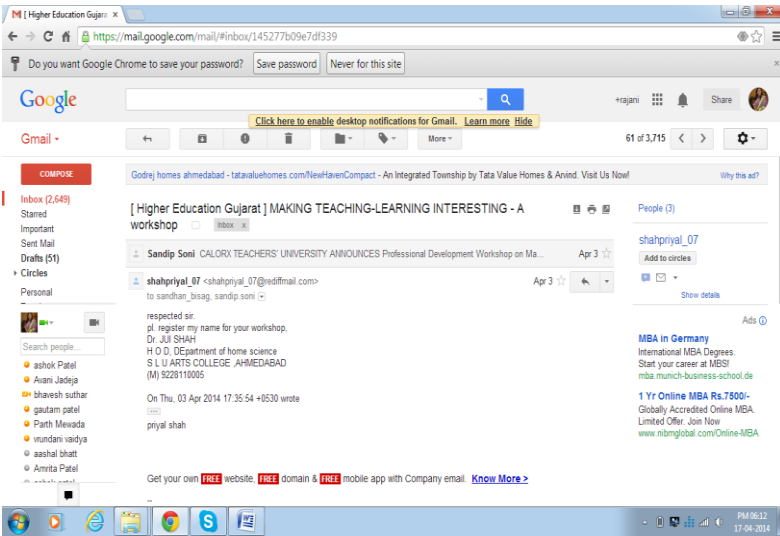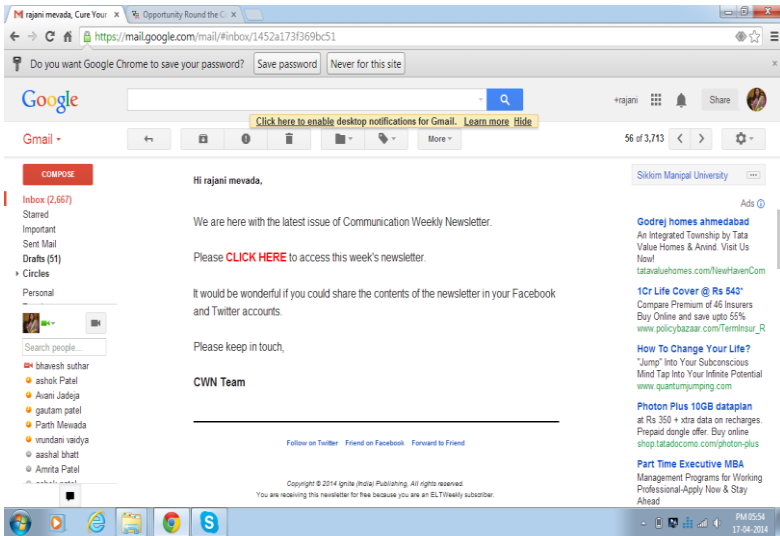
Sincerely,

Mark B. Smith

Enclosure

(cover-letter-resources.com)

After studying the samples the prominent effects of email on English have been enunciated below:

Email communication language combines selective features of speaking and writing

Any language requires proficiency of four skills, namely, listening, speaking, reading and writing. Email, to a large extent, pre-eminently combines selective features of two skills, namely, speaking and writing. On one hand, it provides the sender direct and immediate chance to communicate with the receiver- a feature inherent in speaking. On the other hand, like written communication it also offers the sender not only an opportunity to compose and edit his or her message, but also, print, copy, save and distribute the message to others. This unique combination of selective features of both the skills present in email communication is not present in the traditional modes and makes it more flexible and user-friendly than other tools involved in communication.

Less formal attitude in the greetings is used in email

Formal communication is also becoming less formal with the passage of time. Due to its format and pattern, formality doesn't go well with email. Formal salutations such as 'Dear Sir', 'Dear Harsh' etc. have been replaced with 'Sir', 'Hello Sir', 'Hi' or simply the name- 'Harsh' etc. Also, since there are multiple receivers of the message, the salutation 'Dear All' has come very much in vogue.

Also, the complimentary close elements like, 'Thanking You' has either been replaced with 'Thanks' or is not used altogether. And 'Yours sincerely' has given way to 'Best Regards' or 'Best Wishes' or 'All the Best' Thus, email communication is more flexible and less formal as more emphasis is given to context of the message rather than the format. The content matters more than the style of writing as far as emails are concerned. Unnecessary sentences are avoided and the approach remains more pointed and precise. The tone remains less formal and straight forward.

Expressing oneself through 'emoticons'

In email, 'emoticons' (icons reflecting emotions) are commonly used to show mood in email messages. Emoticons have become a popular way to express one's feelings and frame of mind which was not used so extensively in communicating through traditional modes. Instead of typing the word the emoticon speaks for itself. Individuals use emoticons because they are fun and upbeat. They are generally a part of informal communication. Some of the popular emoticons are:

☺ happy
☹ sad

Hastiness and immediacy in language

Emails are basically speedier than any other form of written communication. This aspect of speed was not present in the earlier forms of written communication and has made a significant impact on the language used for communication via emails; the element of speed, hastiness and immediacy is also evident in the language in it. In a desire to communicate or to reply instantly the users have begun to omit formalities and greetings and consider it more important to convey the message directly. Also, full-fledged sentences have been replaced with selective use of only the important words of the sentence. And abbreviations like are used instead of complete words. The punctuation marks have also begun to be left out unless absolutely necessary. All these changes point towards the fact the speedy and instant communication via email has made the language used in it more pointed and less formal with emphasis on the meaning of the message than its sentence structure and grammar.

Thus, with speed and facility to communicate graphically (via emoticons etc) language has got scope to evolve in a new direction which was not possible earlier. At the same time, language can be considered as been distorted (due to the

addition of the element of speed and hastiness), and it has become less precise and refined.

Experimentation and modification

Adlerstein puts forth a very interesting aspects about human beings when he says, "Human beings are social creatures… we are also inquisitive and adventurous (118)." This need to remain connected with one's social circle and the thirst to find innovative ways to do things has also seeped into communication and use of English. Email is one such medium where humans have displayed their vein to test or modify their skills. For e.g. simplified forms of words have come into existence such as:'dinr' for 'dinner', 'dwb' for 'don't write back', 'coz' for 'because'. In addition to this, the use of code-words such as 'Gr8' for great or 'b4' for before etc., appears to be increasing in email language. Thus, language used in email communication has become more flexible and customized; and the user of language decides or bends the rules of grammar and sentence structure as per his or her desire and requirement.

Punctuation usage and improper capitalization

Hokanson makes a very valuable point on use of punctuation when he says, "punctuation tends to be minimalist in most situations, and completely absent in some emails and chat exchanges." In some emails, use of punctuation marks is minimal. Whereas some instances of inappropriate use of punctuation marks can also be detected, such as use of several exclamatory marks: '!!!!!' to express excitement or use of full stops: '……' to demarcate a break or end. Thus, an imbalance in punctuation use can be derived, in the sense, it is either neglected or used in excess. In addition to this, at some places instances of improper capitalization can also be observed.

Slangs and use of informal language

The language used for communication in one's personal circle is

considered as informal language. In personal emails and in some professional emails also, a predominant use of slangs, colloquial expressions and abbreviations has been observed. Some words are written exactly the way they are spelt. For e.g. 'u' is used instead of 'you', '4' is used instead of 'for' or 'vl' is used instead of 'will'. Words or salutations from the mother tongue are transliterated and in English and blended with English sentences.

4. Conclusion

The need to communicate and interact with other individuals has remained an inherent human requirement. As one of the famous sayings of Pablo Casals goes, "We ought to think that we are one of the leaves of a tree, and the tree is all humanity. We cannot live without the others, without the tree (Casals)." At the same time, it is undisputed fact that the present world is, undoubtedly, technology driven. In present time, technological gadgets like personal computers, internet connection, mobile phones are no longer a luxury. As far as email communication is concerned, it has undoubtedly emerged as a powerful, cost effective and flexible tool. It is capable of standing of standing the test of time and revolutionizing the face of human communication. The need to experiment and try new and easier methods to communicate via technology has also affected evolution of English language and changed its course. It has, undoubtedly, influenced English language in more ways than one. Formal communication in English has become less formal. Similarly, the tone has remained less ceremonial and more straight-forward. Greetings have become casual. Language has become more customized and compact. Hastiness and instantaneous approach, which is on vital aspect of technology enabled communication, has also seeped into the language used in email communication. Finally, emoticons have become a popular way to express one's feelings and frame of

mind in email communication; which was not used so extensively in communicating through traditional modes.

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