

# Demography as the Basis of Analyzing Students' Attitude towards the Emerging Diversities in the English Language

Dr. Aditya Prakash<sup>1</sup>, Amita Dhawan<sup>2\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Assistant Professor, Department of Humanities and Management, National Institute of Technology, Jalandhar, India.

<sup>2</sup>Research Scholar, Department of Humanities and Management, National Institute of Technology, Jalandhar, India.

\*Email:- amitagirotra@gmail.com

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## Abstract

The research paper aims at examining students' attitude towards the emerging diversities in the English language. Undergraduate as well as Postgraduate students of Degree as well as Professional institutes of five districts of Punjab were the subject of this study. The study aims at knowing whether students take these changes positively, and find them constructive to make them learn new forms of English Language or they consider it to be a hindrance in learning English language. Following the eclectic approach, students' perspectives have been recorded in the form of questionnaires, interviews and observation which has been further analyzed statistically through one-way ANOVA. Speech Accomodation theory has been applied in this study. The paper, therefore, presents the results of an empirical study and indicates that any geographical regions do not leave any impact on the attitude of students. Due to the influence of technology and immigration students go to urban areas to get education which not only modify their perception but leave an eternal impact on their thought process.

**Keywords.** *Diversities, English language, Headlines, Language attitude, Locality, Students*

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## 1. Introduction

Attitude is not a jargon to be used by psychologist; it has a specific value stated Baker (1992) in *Attitude and Language Change*. Research work on language attitude has become popular in the last 50 years due to the influence of technology and emerging changes in the English language such as the use of symbols in sentences, non-standard abbreviated forms, and the use of numerals and so on. Language is the medium of communication as well as a way of exchanging ideas, opinions, beliefs, declarations and knowledge (Hatami et al., 2012). Singh (2019) in

*Understanding Human Behaviour* also asserts that attitude is a drive implies thoughts, beliefs, feelings and behaviour of a person toward a certain subject, person, object or institution (p. 191). Linguists hence set out themselves out to research related to the language attitude and its impact on the behaviour of people. Attitude is developed through experience and can influence a person's linguistic behavior (Agheyisi & Fishman, 1970). Therefore, an individual's attitude towards language is his frame of mind to respond either in a positive or negative way to a language and various users of language. Studies

have been conducted to study the language attitude on the basis of gender, age and ethnic group and age as well. Talking in terms of the English language, it has become an international language. But, the present global situation of uncertainty over the deviated use of language has left students in a confused frame of mind. The alluring impact of diversities in language is laying down the new foundation of a newly born version of the English language. Students, though, say empathetically that they restrict and maintain the use of diverse language to the informal level only but in reality they have become habitual in its usage. They consciously and unintentionally make use of the new and awkward forms of English language which are informal in nature. Diversified language is creeping into the regular written expression. The protracted and voluminous use of compressed words, abbreviations, and symbols in place of traditional accurate words seems to be odd in formal writing. Much research work has been done to unfold the implausible effects of the compact use of English words. Technology-mediated communication has given rise to varied forms of communication carriers. Hence, the prospect of language change has expanded at a wider level. Thurlow, Lengel and Tomic (2004) in *Computer Mediated Communication* go to the extent of saying that Computer-mediated communication has brought an entire change in the cultural identity of a person in the community, including their relations and the way they interact with each other. The emerging innovative forms of English such as usage of short forms of words, deleting or adding letters to the standard words and forming words with incorrect spelling and soon have further influenced the usage of diverse language among people. The most acclaimed social networking

sites such as WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn and others such as Facebook encourage new forms of the English language. The advent of these forms has received much attention from the youngest generation, specifically students because they emulate the same changes in their writing skills without realizing the aftermath of its impact. The simulation of the use of incorrect words of English in written language is encouraged by this process. Students use unacceptable language in formal situations too. Language assuredly changes with time but the change should take place for some valuable reason. Inspired by the usage of diverse language by the popular social networking sites, it has been noticed that newspaper agencies have also inaugurate the use of diverse language, thus leaving the future of English language in a doubtful situation. Students have also initiated using this diverse variety of language in their answer script, therefore, they do not learn the faulty use of English but they grasp to compromise the standard use of English. The changes are taking place linguistically at grammatical level. It also involves adaptation of new spellings of words or creating words and sentences by adding or omitting some letters or words to the original word. The stage has come where it has become difficult to ascertain whether these emerging diversities are constructive and thereby providing a platform to convergence<sup>1</sup> in students' communicative ability or these forms are leading students towards divergence<sup>2</sup>. Giles et al. (1991) in *Contexts of Accommodation*:

<sup>1</sup> In convergence speakers accommodates one another speech style to enhance communication effect and receive social approval. (Jurgen, Östman and Verschueren). It reduces "interpersonal" differences and "interindividual "variations" mention Giles, Coupland and Coupland

<sup>2</sup> In Divergence, speakers disintegrate themselves from the group on the basis of their speech. (Jurgen, Östman and Verschueren)

*Developments in Applied Sociolinguistics* mention Thakerar et al.'s perspective on accommodation. They conceptualize the phenomenon of objective and subjective viewpoints towards the accommodation. According to the objective approach, the speech of a speaker is judged in terms of the shift towards convergence or Divergence i.e. moving close to or away from the particular speech pattern (p. 14). The subject domain refers to speakers' own perception regarding whether they and other speaker of the group are converging or diverging. Newspapers mirror society much better than other modes of written language. Therefore, the use of diversities in the headlines leaves an unflinching impact on the mind of student readers. This research study is an effort to probe the perspective of youth, explicitly students towards the emerging diversities in the English language and its impact on their formal writing.

## 2. Review of Literature

Newspapers play a key role not only in informing or persuading people but shaping their attitude as well. Therefore, the language of newspapers should be simple and precise as it reaches its readers and leaves an imprint on their thought process. English newspapers, particularly, are a common source of spreading news and sharing information in the world over. Parhi (2008) in *Indian English Through Newspapers* asserted that English language happened to be a contact language at global level and the most facilitated means of communication –written as well as spoken. News depicted society's opinion about the world as much as it formed society's impression of the world declared Romer & Schulze (2009) in *Exploring the Lexis-grammar Interface* (Vol. 35).

Promulgation of news, in the early days in Roman times, as mentioned by Peter Cole and Tony Harcup (2009) in the *Newspaper Journalism*, was done by “Acta Diurna”<sup>3</sup>. Any official news such as daily news of court, information about death, accidents, public events, notices, reports of municipal and so on were carved on stones or metals to be placed or marked on public places. The news and daily account of events were produced in manuscript form because there was no printing press available at that time. The advent of the use of diversities by editors and journalists in newspapers has given rise to new forms of English. Journalists take freedom and opportunity to craft the language mischievously to enhance the economy, just as a poet conceives or restructures words to cultivate his style of writing added Raman (2004) in *English Language Teaching*. Journalists bring out new ways to write headlines as well as advertisements which seems to be less apposite to the existing norms of language. This practice leaves an inimical effect on the viewpoint of the students regarding the way of penning down things. Their central task is to entice readers. Consequently, the younger generation categorically students are mostly affected by the diversified language. They, rather than shaping the writing skills through set norms, imitate the same diversities to make their writing style different. Diversities in the newspaper headlines have been used in the form of deviations and errors which seem to be deliberately committed.

Ungerer (2000) in *English Media Texts, Past and Present: Language and Textual Structure* observed that the encyclopedic study of headlines was, first of all, conducted by Simon

<sup>3</sup> Acta Diurna is a mean of disseminating the official announcement of news related to state or royal families (Berger).

Vandenberg in the nineteenth century who analyzed the changes in the headlines of *The Times* from 1870-1970 (p. 45). A number of attempts have been made to investigate modifications in the headlines of newspapers at varied linguistic levels afterwards. The main motive of these studies rests on putting forward the problems that readers face in grasping the actual meaning of headlines or the insights they are receiving from the innovative writing styles of headlines. Apart from receiving constricted knowledge, readers actually feel confused and puzzled over the non-standard changes in the English language. Grammar of newspapers' headlines has been subjected to change due to space constraints, which was entirely different from the "ordinary English" declared Shams (2013) in *Newspaper in the ELT Classroom: A Guide to English Classroom for ESL/EFL Students*. Gregoriou (2007) in *Deviance in Contemporary Crime Fiction* asserted that deviation indicated the difference between what was orderly, natural and acceptable and what is not (p. 1) is. Shi (2014) remarked that the headlines of any newspaper do not only summarize the content of articles but they also work on instigating the interest of the readers, and encourage them to get engrossed to an idea expressed in the headlines. According to Straumann (as cited in Roohani & Esmaili, 2010) news headlines are independent and hence, they are always subjected to linguistic analysis. In order to carry forward the connotative and denotative meaning to the readers, simple and concise language, along with the appropriate usage of words can be helpful (Ifantidou, 2009). A headline which is made up of terse sentences, distinctive words and phrases create a link between the story and its already known facts. It also generates a bridge between

the prior knowledge, beliefs together with prognosis existing in the mindset of readers (Dor, 2003). Therefore, it is important for editors or journalists that they should pay due attention to the grammatical aspect of a language too. Mårdh (cited in Bazza, 2012) identified some of the following features of grammar such as the omission of articles, the omission of verbs and auxiliaries, Nominalizations, the frequent use of complex noun phrases in subject positions, the omission of both verbs and subjects, the use of short words, the widespread use of puns, word play, and alliteration, the importance of word order, with the most important items placed first and Saxena (2006) also suggested other grammatical features as typical of the news headlines such as active verbs give meaning and weight to the headlines, widely known abbreviations should/ may be used, attributions of those whose statements or comments are presented in articles should be used in headlines, present tense is the most common, infinitive is often used instead of future tenses, numbers should be written as numerals and punctuation should be avoided in order to save space.

It is absolutely clear from the features mentioned above that the editors or journalist deliberately break certain conventional rules of grammar for the sake of space constraint which make a headline not only difficult to comprehend but sound difficult to understand the main content of the story unless a reader goes through the entire content of the news. Headlines are the first thing that a reader pays attention too in the newspaper; they should be clear and complete structurally irrespective of the space constraints. Kniffka (1980 as cited in Chakraborty & Dash, 2019) also stated that grammar of headlines is conventional in the newspapers of all languages with certain differences in the way these

linguistic structures either follow the grammar of the language or deviate from the rules of the language. The present study addresses the need to observe grammatical rules of grammar. Based on the literature review, following are the objectives of research study:

### **2.1 Objectives of the Research**

1. To understand the attitude of students towards changes happening in the English language and their effect on the formal writing.
2. To understand the attitude of students towards Convergence happening in the English language.
3. To understand the attitude of students towards Divergence happening in the English language.

### **2.2 Research Question**

Does a geographical area affect students' attitude towards the emerging diversities in the English language?

### **2.3 Hypothesis**

A geographical area does not affect students' attitude towards the emerging diversities in the English language.

### **2.4 Significance of the Research**

It will be helpful for the researchers who prefer to investigate the impact of grammatical diversity on writing skills or any of the four communication skills with respect to different demographic variables. The digital variety of English, the use of text language and computer-mediated communication has hindered the formal writing of students. Grammar is the main component of communication. Nobody should muddle the words, phrases by altering the standard forms of the language. Empirical study, therefore, can be conducted keeping into consideration the grammatical aspect of a language.

## **3. Research Methodology**

The study was carried out through the appropriate research methodology. Appropriate research design, data gathering tools such as questionnaire and interview have also been conducted apart from analyzing the data statistically. This study includes the primary as well as secondary data. The primary data has been gathered from undergraduates as well as post graduate students of Degree as well as Professional institutes in the form of the questionnaire. The secondary data such as magazines, research papers and newspapers have also been studied for references and further directions for research.

### **3.1 Data Collection Procedure**

The data for this study has been collected from five cities of Punjab viz. Ludhiana, Jalandhar, Pathankot, Nawanshahr and Kapurthala. These cities have been remarkable centers of education. People from remote areas of Punjab come to these cities to get education. A total of 10 institutes, i.e. two institutes (a degree and professional) from each city have been selected randomly where students of all the discipline required for the study were available. On the whole, 750 respondents– 500 undergraduates and 250 post graduates were selected using non-probability convenience sampling. Before administering the questionnaire, following the direct approach to study the attitude, interview of all the respondents has also been conducted in which they have been asked about their perspectives towards the recent changes and developments happening in the English language. The questionnaire has been administered to those students who are absolutely aware of the emerging changes in the English language.

#### 4. The Analysis

On the basis of geography, locality has been categories into rural as well as urban. It has often been pointed that due to less facilities, students from rural areas lag behind in education as compared to students living in urban areas. It follows that the perspective and attitude of students from rural areas with respect to the English language is developed in comparison to students from urban areas. Thus, the research has been conducted to know the influence of locality-geographical area on students' attitude.

##### Does locality affect students' attitude towards the emerging diversities in the English language?

Investigation of students' attitude on the basis of demography has been done in this study. It is a fact that students who belong to rural areas have less opportunities and exposure as compared to the students who live in urban area who have maximum opportunities to excel. This is due to the advancement in the spread of education that students from rural localities receive education which instills in them an urge to know more. Moreover World Wide Web, its availability, and access to every learner in each and every corner of the world have enhanced their exposure and vision. On such ground, attitude of students with respect to their locality has been analyzed statistically. The summary of analysis of students' attitude towards changes happening in the English language is as follows:

##### 4.1 Effect of Locality on Students' attitude towards the impact of diversities on formal writing

Localities in which students live not only mould their attitude; it adds many things to their

personality also. Nortier & Svendsen (2015) in *Language, Youth and Identity in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Linguistic Practices across Urban Spaces* observe that language plays an effective role in depicting belongingness of a person to a certain town or region (p. 162). Therefore, students' attitude towards the impact of diversities has been explored on the basis of locality. The summary of the analysis is as follows:

**Table 1: Effect of Locality on Students' Attitude towards Diversities on their Writing Skills**

ANOVA  
Impact

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.059	1	.059	.338	.561
Within Groups	130.679	748	.175		
Total	130.738	749			

The analysis in table 1 shows that there is no significant difference between the attitudes of students regarding the impact of the diversities on the basis of locality.

##### 4.2 Effect of Locality of Students 'Attitude towards divergence in the English Language

Locality leaves imprint on students' mind and psychology because they are empowered by the sites, lifestyle and environment and people around whom they live. Their opinion, interests and ideologies are shaped by the exposure they receive. Keeping into consideration this view, their attitude towards divergence has been statistically explored. The summary of the analysis is as follows:

**Table 2: Students' Attitude towards Divergence in the English Language**

**ANOVA**

Divergence

	<b>Sum of Squares</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>Mean Square</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
Between Groups	.212	1	.212	1.357	.244
Within Groups	116.640	748	.156		
Total	116.852	749			

The table 2 shows that there is no significant difference in attitude of students towards divergence with respect to the locality. It is the influence of technology, education-distance or regular, which is largely responsible for such kind of outcome.

**4.3 Effect of Locality on Students' Attitude towards Convergence in the English Language**

Students' attitude towards convergence on the basis of locality has been measured to find out the difference in students' attitude towards convergence on the basis of locality. The summary of analysis is as follows:

**Table 3: Effect of Locality on Students' Attitude towards Convergence**

**ANOVA**

Convergence

	<b>Sum of Squares</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>Mean Square</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
Between Groups	.048	1	.048	.235	.628
Within Groups	152.688	748	.204		
Total	152.736	749			

The results shown in the table 3 declares that there is no significant difference between

students' attitude on the basis of locality. Due to the technological benefactions and under the influence education, people living in rural areas have become vigilant about their rights and the requirements. They participate in competitions; put efforts to change their standard of living due to which development is also taking place in these areas. There is a change not only in infrastructure but thought process, language, attitude and personality. Desai 2018 noted that the technology, art, thoughts, religion and economy of rural society have undergone a great change. She further asserts that the inventions of new techniques, tools and means of transportation and communication have made their work and life easy. Education has played a role in changing the social structure of rural areas and its people. They put efforts to gain "scientific knowledge" which helps them to move above the conservative ideology and root out superstitions and ignorance from their mind, thereby, changing their whole personality assert Desai. Hence, locality no more affects students' attitude towards language. Students get the appropriate learning environment.

**5. Conclusion**

The present research was conducted to analyse the students' attitude towards the transformations of the textual content on the basis of demography. Based on the findings, the study concluded that locality does not leave any impact on students' attitude towards the emerging diversities. There is no significance difference between the attitudes of students with respect to the impact of diversities on their formal writing. They believe that any geographical area does not leave any influence on their attitude. Now, the question arises that what are the factors that

influence and promote the use of the text speaks as Daniel Jones; a linguist has termed this variety of language. The marked changes happening in the English language, affecting students' writing skills in general and academics in particular, is clearly noticeable. Students though claim that they do not use the text language or concise forms of English formally yet they go for shortened forms, often omit punctuation marks and unnecessary capitalize certain words without any relevant ground. Above all, the power of newspapers lies in its informative nature and persuasion effect. Its language engraves opinions. Greer (1999) in *A New Introduction to Journalism* also clears up that concise and definite English for authentic communication is pivotal for journalists, but their recent approach towards the use of ungrammatical words and sentences have changed the point of view of students towards the usage of words and sentences of the English language. The headlines such as

'0,0,0,0,0,0,0,0,0: Nagaland all out for 2 runs.. Month on, SC panel headless'

'Why no job to terror informer, HC asks govt'

seem to be grammatically barren and can be considered unstructured. Students' perspective with respect to the usage of the English language has altogether changed. They rather than shaping the writing skills through set norms, imitate the same diversities and errors to make their writing style different. Short words speed up communications and thus cater to the curiosity of youngsters, especially teenagers who prefer to be different in every way. Children are well aware of the fact that the most amusing thing they can do with language is to play with "sounds, words, grammar and later on – spellings" asserted

Crystal (2006) in *Language and the Internet*. They do it without knowing the consequences. In an ultimate analysis, it can be said that the hypothesis of the study (Locality does not affect students' attitude towards the emerging diversities in the English language) has been accepted undoubtedly, but the study leaves one pertinent question of knowing the absolute reasons and factors that have not only endorsed the regular usage of the non-standard forms of the English language, but encouraged students to make use of such forms candidly in the academic environment too. Therefore, a holistic or integrated view of multi-dimensional factors responsible for the emerging diversities in the English language should be studied. The present study sets a platform for conducting a preliminary study for identifying factors and observing attitude of respondents towards the factors causing diversities.

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