



The Progress of English Language by the Advent of the Invention of Printing

Mahmud Embark

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Omar Al Mukhtar University Faculty of Education Department Of English

Mahmud. Embark @omu.edu.ly

ABSTRACT

This paper aimed to provide readers, researchers and those who are interested in English Language, with a range of important information regarding the impact of the invention of printing on the development, improvement, spread of the English language and the changes happened within the English language. Exposure to previous studies that concerned with the relationship between the changes in English language and the invention of printing is an aspect of this paper. The invention of printing contributed to the widespread dissemination of literary works both inside and outside Britain. The printing press had a tremendous impact on many aspects of social life in Britain; The philosophers, theologians, scientists, poets and authors were able to publish their views, theories, philosophy and ideas when they began to publish their works which became available for reading among the public. As a result of the availability of printed materials, English language teachers had been able to build good learning programmes and assigned teaching plans, to help learners to acquire an ideal language. The invention of printing was the main factor that contributed to the dissemination of English language and provided the opportunity to teach and learn English all over the world to become an international language. This was the result of the efforts of many linguists , writers , printing technicians and pioneers such as William Caxton. Comparing the output of this paper with the findings of the previous studies, it was found that the invention of printing benefited the reader, the researcher, teacher and learner.

Keywords: *advent, flyers, painstakingly, patrons, and scriptorium.*

الملخص

هدفت هذه الورقة إلى تزويد القراء و الباحثين و المهتمين بشؤون اللغة الانجليزية بجملة من المعلومات الهامة في ما يتعلق بتأثير اختراع الطباعة علي تطور, و تحسن و انتشار اللغة الانجليزية , و ما أحدثه هذا الاختراع من تغييرات علي اللغة الانجليزية . كما أن التعرض للدراسات السابقة الخاصة بعلاقة التغييرات في اللغة الانجليزية و اختراع الطباعة أحد جوانب هذه الورقة. ساهم اختراع الطباعة في نشر الأعمال الأدبية بشكل واسع, سواء داخل بريطانيا او خارجها . وكان للطباعة تأثير كبير علي العديد من جوانب الحياة الاجتماعية, ففي بريطانيا

فقد استطاع الفلاسفة, الاهوتيون, العلماء, الشعراء والمؤلفون نشر آرائهم, نظرياتهم, فلسفاتهم وافكارهم بمطبوعات أصبحت متوفرة للقراء. ساهمت طباعة الكتب في تثبيت قواعد النحو, و توحيد استخدام أدوات الترقيم, و نتيجة لذلك استطاع معلم اللغة الانجليزية أن يبني برامج تعليم جيدة, و واضحة, كما تمكن المتعلمون من اكتساب اللغة بشكل متقن, نظرا لتوفر المادة اللغوية المطبوعة بشكل موحد, و صحيح وقابل للتداول, و لذلك يعد اختراع الطباعة هو العامل الرئيسي الذي ساهم في نشر اللغة الانجليزية بشكل واسع, و أتاح فرص تعليم و تعلم اللغة الانجليزية في جميع أنحاء العالم, حتى أصبحت لغة عالمية, وكان ذلك نتيجة الجهود البذولة من علماء اللغة و أدبائها و فني الطباعة و روادها, مثل وليم كاكستون. وبمقارنة مخرجات هذه الورقة مع ما توصلت اليه الدراسات السابقة تبين أن اختراع الطباعة امر استفاد منه القارئ و الباحث والمعلم والمتعلم.

Introduction

Inceptively, the role of printing must be given a concern because it contributed in making English literature works available for the readers. Printing or publishing written materials made copying easier, cheaper and faster. Books before the invention of printing were owned by the extremely rich and noble families, monasteries and educational institutions. As result of that contrivance books were more widely, and Caxton's endeavors let to higher literacy rates because books became more widely and cheaply available to those outside of just the upper classes. So the English language was changing rapidly in Caxton's time and the works that he was given to print were in a variety of styles and dialects (lass, 1987) Then the invention of the Printing Press played a significant role in the spread of a common version of English, as more people were able to access books and the rules about the look of letters and spelling of words became more concrete. Consequently, English Language became popular and widespread (Blake, 1980).

Linguists have always conceded that the invention of printing had done a great influence on languages features particularly on handwriting. Among other things, printing helped to develop a standard language and a more codified form of spelling (fisher, 1996).

Some people have not discerned that if printing works were not invented, how could the reader be able to get copies of those long novels or poems or any other literary works which were written or said through times. Through

this work the researcher would endeavor to focus on the importance of invention of printing and its role in English literary works diffused among readers and speakers of English language. Consequently, the objectives of this study are to discuss the effect of invention of printing on English language. Moreover, to inform the readers that except for the invention of printing, many readers would not be able to read more literary works in the past times. In addition to apprise the audience that the invention of printing contributed to a considerable extent, in making English language a global language. To activate the role of this study, the researcher followed the attributive methodology because it is suitable for the study purposes. To represent the materials of this work he employed, utilized and depended on the references and resources which are available in the libraries, cultural centers and the internet web sides. Hypothetically, the most significant impacts of the invent of printing upon the English language manifests in standardization the most familiar aspect of the language like spelling, punctuations, grammatical rules.

When the invention of printing was discovered many scholars have paid more attention to the process of publishing. Since Guten-burg invented the printing press in 1445 a lot of books were printed. Following that important event, some studies were carried on (Eisenstein, 1979).

The most important related studies will be mentioned and cited below.

- 1- Mr. Francis Bacon from University of Koblenz in Landau had presented a study titled "The Impact of Printing on the Development of E.L"

This study shows the fore effect and consequence of invention of printing and its role in development of Language.

- 2- Dr. Jeff McMullan

" The Effect of printing Access and Print Exposure on English Vocabulary Acquisition "

This study examines the relationship among access to reading materials, print, exposure, and vocabulary acquisition among language minority students in USA

- 3- Elizabeth Dickens

" English Language Change and the Advent of Printing"

The study concerned with impact of printing on English Language since 1476, and the role of Caxton's press.

These studies concerned with relationship between the printing process and the effect it made on the developed of the English Language.

Literature

English Language Progress as a Result of Advent of Printing

The printing press impact on the English language, evidently in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, had two miens that not only made this language discrete from continental languages but also contributed to printing's effect on language change (Mckitterick, 2003).

Continental printing works since then had a near monopolization on the production of conventional literary materials; therefore, early English publishers, expressly those who followed Caxton's procedure, worked mostly in the colloquial language. This concept emphasized the widespread distribution of texts in English and also contributed to the eventual standardization of the language. Most of readers looked forward to have printed materials as private references, but imagine life today if the printing press had never been invented, people would not have books, magazines or newspapers. Moreover, Posters, flyers, pamphlets and mailers would not exist. The printing press allowed readers and learners to share large amounts of information quickly and in huge numbers.

In fact, it is so important that it has come to be known as one of the most important inventions of our time. It drastically changed the way society evolved (Mckenzie, 1999).

Life before the invention of printing press

Before the printing press was invented, any writings and drawings had to be completed painstakingly by hand. However, such a chance was not accessible for just anyone but for who was allowed to do so. Such work was usually restrained for calligraphers who lived and worked in abbeys. The priories had an exclusive chamber called a "scriptorium." There, the calligraphers would work in tranquility, following successive steps; first measuring and outlining the page layouts and then carefully copying the text from another book. Then the illuminators and the decorators took over to add designs and embellishments to the pages. In the Early Ages and Middle Ages, books were usually only possessed by clergymen, educational institutions or extremely rich people. Most books were religious in nature. In some cases, a family might be lucky enough to possess a book, in which case, often it would be a decorated copy of the Bible (Walsham, 2004).

The existential influence of invention of printing on invigorating the relationship between English language and its audience

Publishing activities which were introduced in England by Caxton in about 1476, helped to increase the spread of knowledge and literacy level among the British public as more and more people had better access to reading materials (Blake, 1991).

Through decades, as more English texts were published, such as novels, dictionaries, the Bible and other documents, the English language gradually gained popularity and established itself as the national language of England. Apart from the advent of printing, political, social and economic factors also contributed to the development of English as a national language. Some linguists had pointed out that through printing; Caxton played a very significant and instrumental role in stabilizing English as the national language of England (Crystal, 1985).

There would be an idea that Caxton as the first printer in England was extremely responsible for imposing some forms of uniformity to the English language. His choice of the dialect of the southeast Midlands had

given the present form of Standard English. Some language historians pointed out that printing was the technological foundation of the European Renaissance. In other words, printing revived the tradition of learning the aspects of the language. Consequently, this attitude led to unprecedented mass communications and the dissemination of information on a very wide scale. As printing became widespread, the Standard variety of English also spread to all corners of England (Fisher 1996).

Obviously, Caxton's presentation of printing process to Britain played an instrumental role in the progress of Standard English and the development of the English language should not be forgotten. His works became significant and noticeable as linguists in search of antique manuscripts to interpret and present the story of the development of English language in England. More importantly, the public could now read and interpret the contents of some books such as the Bible, which was used to be exclusive to the clergymen (Jespersen, 1972).

The impact of the invention of printing upon English language

Before the invention of printing press, books were exceedingly expensive and their production was the right of the church. A person of a massive wealth may own a few books. With the invention of printing the monopoly was broken and the price of books fell precipitously, allowing the spread of all kinds of knowledge and ideas. The most noticeable impact of the invention of printing on the social life, was that so many theologians, scientists, poets, authors, philosophers could print their theories, philosophy and ideas and spread them far quicker and easier than they had before the printing press was invented (Hogg 1999).

Since the language was the milieu where ideas, thoughts, opinions, were shifting through, it received a great impact. Hence, English language aspects like spelling, punctuations, and grammatical rules were affected. Printing press works formalized the forms of English words spelling, in other words the printers used one form of spelling in all printing activities unlike the manual calligraphers did when they inscribed the books.

Furthermore the grammatical rules were fixed to have one particular aspect used in all printed materials. Punctuations were not an exception. As result of those innovations there were some aftereffects such as: the invention of printing press saved time in copying, printing press contributed in the spread of information quickly and accurately, it took book printing out of the hand of Church and made it much harder for the Church to control or censor what was being written, the features of spelling and the usage of punctuations were unified so there were no difference in spelling manners or the position of punctuation among all printed works although the authors had different accents, then owning books became relatively cheap and widely available (Bede 1979).

The First Pioneers of Printing in Britain:-

The earlier intelligible person with regard to printing in Britain was "William Caxton". He was the first Englishman who became energetically and efficiently involved in the new art of printing, and he introduced printing into Britain when he established a press at Westminster in 1476 (Blake, 1991). Since he was a texture tradesman for the most famed textile companies at that time (Mercer's Company) in the Low Countries, Caxton had come across the new technician processes in Europe. His business brought him to Germany where he learned the career of printing (in Cologne) in 1471. After his coming back to the continental, almost in Bruges, Caxton established a printing machine of his own and published "The Recuyell of the History of Troy", which was claimed to be the first book ever to be printed in English and one of some translations Caxton made himself. Just like other specialists and technicians in the continental (Martin Luther) who made the dialect of his home region the standard form of German through his Bible translation, William Caxton resembled him to be responsible for a formal form of English which became the Standard English. Caxton adopted a special formation of Middle English, which was known as "King's English", and it was commonly used in London and its surroundings. This form of English Language spread widely in Europe because of Caxton's translations. Also

this language variety was spoken throughout England as result of his trade. If this diffusion of the language was a conscious choice, it cannot absolutely be asserted, however, Caxton had an acute sense of language through his time spent abroad and he was aware of the problem of dialect variation in England (Crystal, 1992). So Caxton's introduction of printing processes emerged as a turning point in the development of English as a national and later an international language.

William Caxton did not have an appropriate or higher education to deal with literary works, but he obviously had a liking and inclination for books sale and that passion came across his love to the interesting literary works through his business travels. As a merchant, he surely saw the business opportunity behind printing those works. Caxton was not only a typographer, but he was also a publisher and enjoyed the patronage, custom and friendship of some responsible, as he had a good relationship with Edward IV, Richard III and Henry VII. Caxton's real social prestige lies in the fact that three quarters of the hundred books he published between 1473 and his death were in English. It was claimed that Caxton's selection of titles (including books on geography, history, saints' lives, grammar and rhetoric, translations of classics, and prose romances like (Thomas Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur*) showed him to be a good tradesman for his books appealed to a wide readership. Caxton also addressed his readers personally, included in many of his publications an explanation for printing a particular text, and he dedicated certain books to his sponsor, patrons and helpers to emphasize their higher social class and value. Caxton's first major book in England was "Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*". Caxton gave himself the best possible chance of persuading the English public, not to use his translations, but he persuaded them to buy books. His desire to impart to others his taste for books is amply apparent from his many translations into English of new works to an English public (Blake 1980).

The first printed works in English.

It was said that the first book printed in English language was the "Recuyell of the History of Troy". The book was issued about 1475; however, the French original was completed in 1464 by Raoul le Fever. When we compare the period between completing the book and the year, when it was printed, obviously there were about eleven years.

Some scholars claimed that, "The Wars of Roses" was one of the longest and famous printed books by W. Caxton (Clanchy, 1993).

As it was known, the book was composed by French. The Duchess of Burgundy asked Sir Caxton, one of the most famous educated persons in Burgundy to translate the book from French to English. Sir Caxton started his job. However he had never been to France and by the rudeness of his French, he soon laid the work aside. Encouraged by the Duchess of Burgundy, he, later, resumed his task and finished the work in 1471. As his knowledge of French was not perfect, he produced an imperfect translation, but must have required an adequate knowledge of the language so, too, with his English. These actions were the main reasons for delaying printing the book. The task of printing continued.

People at that time were eager to read. So those who worked with printing concentrated on the most popular literary works. They thought of novels but, what were the first novels and literary works printed? (Crystal, 1987) From what was prevalent at that time, there were some novels and other literary works which were claimed to be the first or earlier published books in Britain at Caxton's era: Thomas Malory, *Le Morte d'Arthur*, (Written circa 1470, published 1485), John Lyly, *Euphues: The Anatomy of Wit* (1578) and *Euphues and his England* (1580), Philip Sidney, *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia* (1581), Aphra Behn, *Oroonoko* (1688), Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), Daniel Defoe, *Moll Flanders* (1722), Samuel Richardson, *Pamela* (1740) and Watt's candidate, Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), gained wide acceptance (Jackson 1953).

However, with the rise of feminist criticism in the 1970s and 1980s and its concomitant rediscovery of forgotten writings by women, it is now more

often argued that *Aphra Behn's Oroonoko* (1688) was the first published English novel.

Another important factor emerged as a result of inventing of printing was the dictionaries which had a great influence in English language.

The invention of the Dictionary had two main influences:

1. The Dictionary has standardized spellings. Before dictionaries, some people kept lists of words. But in different parts of the country, the spellings were often quite different, being influenced by local accents, or local spellings. For most people, they knew how to say what they wanted to communicate, but they rarely had to write anything. So when it came to writing, many just made up the spelling as they saw fit. (Crystal 1992) Even William Shakespeare's name was spelt several different ways. Of course, the word 'Shakespeare' is a proper noun and therefore is unlikely to be found in a standard dictionary. Even so, it is a good example of the significant variations in spelling that were common before Dictionaries began to be published and used as standard reference works.
2. Dictionaries have made people more aware of language (and the meanings of language), and provided greater opportunity for people to increase their personal vocabularies. The result is that, with good use of dictionaries, people are often better equipped to express themselves because they had a wider range of words at their command, and they can then select those that best match the idea of what they want to express. And even if they occasionally use an obscure or abstruse word, the other person can always look it up in a dictionary! According to Harris and Taylor, many Renaissance men of letters held the view that language can be altered and improved by human design. As such, the Renaissance scholars worked towards standardizing the language by producing English dictionaries and grammar books. John Wallis, one of the last of the Renaissance scholars, published a grammar of English in 1653 entitled (*Grammatical Linguae Anglicanae*), which is often regarded as the first systematic grammar of English. In 1755, Dr Samuel Johnson published his famous and very influential Dictionary.⁽ Another famous dictionary is John Walker's *A Critical Pronouncing Dictionary* of 1791. The early English dictionaries,

especially Dr. Johnson's can be seen as a model to the modern English dictionaries. The idea of modernity in thinking, which is easily reflected in the language used by a given society, had its roots as early as the Renaissance era (Crystal, 1985).

Since the publication of *The Canterbury Tales* by Chaucer, the English language had changed dramatically in form and grammar. By the late 1850s, English scholars saw the urgent need to have an authoritative dictionary as English had already established itself as the national language of England.

Findings and Discussion

It becomes clear that the invention of printing related to English literary works is a continuous process for centuries. Now English language has become an international language with all modern features because of the effect of invention of printing. Since the most interest of this paper is to present the impact of the invention of printing upon English language, one is really surprised by its great development and believable growth in all aspects. As a result of printing invention the literary works have reached many readers all over Britain and overseas.

An attention has been given to trace out the history of the invention of printing particularly its influence on English language expansion. The style of printing and the manner of presentation of printed works were excellent. In this study the history and growth of invention of printing had been given a manner in a chronological order. The invention of printing has contributed in the development of English language either in speaking or learning. The most distinctive findings can be bridged as follows:

- 1 – The invention of printings produced a new easy sample of using English language.
- 2 – It simplified the explanation of words used in the old literature of Shakespeare to the current English, as the most of the book were give foot-
nots to elucidate the unfamiliar words.
- 3 – It helped in dissemination of books or any knowledge resources.

4 – The invention of printing spread the use of English and attracted more people to read and learn the language.

5– It contributed to the strengthening of the English language identity.

6– The invention of printing assisted the exposition of some old words used in old English forms such as the old ballads and Shakespearian and Miltonic sonnets. Furthermore, the interest of using punctuations and fixed particular manners of grammar helped foreign English learners in teaching and learning the English language.

Conclusion

The invention of printing played a great role in the diffusion of the English literary works among readers and it had a large participation and contribution to make English language be spoken by many speakers not only in Britain but also overseas. Clearly, the generalizations regarding the causal relationship between printing and language change are founded in fairly indisputable fact; Printing did contribute to the development of present day English from Middle English. Nevertheless, it is important to remember that these changes were not necessarily the result of printing alone, nor did they all come about instantaneously, or even quickly. Both historians of the English language and historians of book publishing and marketing would benefit from more widespread dialogue and greater consideration of the two fields' complex interactions. Consequently, the invention of printing had contributed in making English language be read and spoken in many different parts of the world. Moreover, the printing press, which helped in spreading information much more easily, was a communication revolution that introduced a torrent of new words and ways of recording work in the English language. As a parallel process in which language and knowledge experienced growth, this development also served as a turning point in education, and is, possibly, the moment at the value of data and knowledge became a currency in the world of information. Moreover, teaching and learning English language became easy and fixable and wide spread by the printing of books. By virtue of the invention of printing the English language expanded. Starting from its humble origin as

a language spoken by the Anglo Saxon, it developed into what it is now, an important global language of science, communication and the Internet.

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