

An Ecosublime Awareness Due to A 'Digital Detox' Demand Converging to Linguistic Development in English Language Teaching

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Abstract

Man's outlook towards nature has been impregnated with the technology driven society. This 'hypermediated' world is a result of man's deliberate ignorance of nature- God's gift and his liaison or networking with man's creation-technology. Subsequently, it has lead to an inevitable phase, demanding a 'digital detox' in order to create awareness for the safety of our 'oikos'. The prevailing chaos, violence, lack of integrity and other distortions are a result of man's parochialism necessitating the "heightened awareness of the ecological home (ecosublime)" (1). Christine L.Oravec's three stages provides an efficient description of the sublime, traversing from "an apprehension of the natural world, to a fear of its greatness and finally an exaltation," (Rozelle 3) acquiring a new identification of the self amongst the current environmental crisis. The language learner who is devoid of a space in the digital world encounters similar emotions of 'awe, fear and depression' which curbs the linguistic development of the learner. As green thinkers, the real picture of the anthropogenic effects should instill ecological concern conflating with ecosublime awareness, to propel the imagination or true experiences of the self through expressive writing and activities that enhances the language skills of the learner in the light of English Language Teaching. This paper as a prescient critique of technology aims at exploring the transition of a digitally intoxicated society to a 'digital detox' demand that paves way for a paradigm shift in the linguistic approach; paradoxically, allowing the learners of the tactile generation feel at ease in a society free from technology.

KEYWORDS: digital detox, ecosublime, Oravec's three stages, expressive writing

It might sound eccentric to talk about 'digital detox' in the 21st century which embodies all forms of technological advancements. It would be appropriate to identify "the earth being our home or 'household' (Greek, oikos)" (Coupe 63) as a powerful house of "technological pollution" (Burke 96). This condition is not just because of the proliferating technological inventions but also because of human being as Burke opines the "symbol misusing animal", "separated from his natural condition by instruments of his own making" (Coupe 64). Therefore, man who is supposed to protect his own home, in contrary, contaminates it. Though it's a vital component of the tactile generation yet seems to be bludgeoning the anthropogenic effects, in a digital realm. "Technology is in its very essence rational. Yet the accumulation of its instruments, with their unwanted by-products transformed the fruits of our rationality into a prodigious problem" (Burke 98). Such an outlook towards the duo human life-nature for a debilitating life, as highlighted by Henley in his poem 'Invictus' which echoes quite challengingly: "I am the master of my fate/ the captain of my soul" (15-16) satirizing it, "Adversity shall be my

universe/making me free to act to make things worse” (Burke 98). This attitude demands a turn of thought for a positive and productive change.

An alteration that arises from conflicts or crisis fulfills the need to rethink and be in “responsible engagement with natural spaces” (Rozelle 1). Only when the house is burning, there develops an “awareness of home” that provokes “terror and awe” (1). Thus, “ecosublime can be defined as the awe and terror of a heightened awareness of the ecological home” (Rozelle 1). This fear and awe can make us beware of our limitations and ways to protect the environment. The most alarming facts are the proliferation of technological products and the harmful effects they radiate. As reported by B.K.Mishra in his news story, “Birds are the worst victims of radiation. Mobile phones and towers emit microwaves that can damage bird eggs and embryos. It has already led to the disappearance of several species of butterflies, bees, insects and sparrows” (qtd.in ET Telecom) subduing the beauty of the Islands. Apart from this, while analyzing the natural disasters like hurricane, earthquakes and wildfires in Islands as found in the news story by Aylin Woodward, it “pummeled various parts of the United States and Mexico in 2017 crippled communities small and large”. Netizens claim that technology renders support to rescue and recovery, though not at the earliest phase but later through “helium air balloons to bring internet to Puerto Rico”, a victim of “hurricane Maria” (qtd.in Futurism). These dual views promote to discern the inevitable role of technology which signifies the digital world. Hence, ‘digital detox’, shouldn’t be misconstrued as shunning technological deployment, instead to reduce it’s wielding that influence climate change.

Considering these, it’s high time that literate minds express this situation to mankind. It could be done only through language; words are the powerful means to express the intensity of an emotion or situation. It has the ability to create an impact, to restore and to transform the bizarre state. Though this hodge podge cannot be resolved overnight by an individual’s rigorous writing (expression), yet it is an attempt to instigate conscientious minds to delve into such environmental issues in order to create ecosublime awareness. Accordingly, Christine L.Oravec’s description of the sublime in three stages as “apprehension, awe and fear” is to advance in transporting “from an apprehension of the natural world to a fear of its greatness and finally a newly acquired identification with that ‘world’” (Rozelle 3). It is this sublime attainment that is expected in the context of the current environmental crisis.

Thereafter, it is significant to examine the facts encompassing the “technological pollution” (Burke 96) caused by the mushrooming of gadgets and factors like immersion in the virtual world which results in consequences such as ‘cyber bullying’. According to ‘The Times of India, Chennai’ dated October 10, 2017, a news story explicated when there were ‘teen deaths’ because of “Blue whale challenge, a study by Punjabi University, Patiala, has found that 77% of Indian school students actually face more online and offline bullying than those in some western countries” (qtd.in TOI). Thereafter, awareness campaigns in educational institutions were emerged. But the problem doesn’t cease, because there are diverse effects of this ‘digital intoxication’.

In order to evolve a progressive act of liberating the young learners from the shackles of technological pollution, ecosublime awareness ought to be imbibed through

English Language Learning process, facilitated by the English Language Teacher. This global language is the right tool of expression while “The world is chaotic, but language organizes and civilizes it” (Snyder 129). The mind perceives the milieu, registers the sights and scenes, and records it in writing as an expression, which is heard even in far-off lands. It is feasible by an English Language Teacher to encourage such culture of ‘expressive writing’. “It is born of being deeply immersed in what is- and then seeing the overlooked connections, tensions, resonances, shadows...what comes forth is ‘new’” (Snyder 128). Ultimately, every learner could possibly be motivated to express their creative ideas, not necessarily based on fantasy but it could be based on the real-time issues such as environmental crisis. Since, “writing provides more opportunities for self-expression and problem resolution than other domains of creative work” (Runco 181). Not only this, but also because, “Expressive writing can be thought of as a preventive health measure in this sense: Those who write are less likely to get sick” (Pennebaker 264).

It is a proven fact that expressive writing aids in improving mental health thereby reducing “depression and rumination” (Sexton 266). In the study carried out by Sexton and Pennebaker, they specifically based their research on the scientific fact that expressive writing enhances an individual’s physical and mental health. Undoubtedly, validating the truth that this technique works wonders in giving vent to the pent up emotions and it could be channelized in promoting environmental concerns based on one’s observations. The second language learner happens to go through similar stages like those characterized as ecosublime awareness in terms of his language learning process; where the learner remains in ‘awe’ of his target language, struggles with ‘fear’ and ‘doubt’ in order to enhance his language skills. Murray(1938) identified this need “to understand or make sense of our worlds...he envisaged those needs as causing inner tensions which had to be released” (Williams and Burden 113). Therefore, the second language class activities could be graded up with technique such as expressive writing. Initially, the L2 Learner cannot reach that transcended stage of ecosublime awareness but motivating the learners to keenly perceive and transit those observations and emotions could induce ecosensitivity. It also improves the learners’ self-esteem thereby providing enlightened ways and proactive acts which unconsciously sets them unswervingly more intact to a digital detox. The reason being that, “every writer is creative; every writer interprets information in a constructive fashion” (Runco 186).

Thus, it accentuates the need for an environment free from ‘technological pollution’, to extricate the learner from ‘digital intoxication’, and to develop the second language learners’ interest to express the impact of these extraneous factors quite intrinsically and to encourage the learners to attain ‘ecosublime awareness’.

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