

## English Language And Its Features: An Overview Of A Historical Aspect

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### Introduction:

The history of English Language in India commenced with the arrival of East India Company in 1600 AD, on 31<sup>st</sup> December with the consent of Queen Elizabeth of British. In the course of the time it was become as a foreign language and it also no longer stood as it and later on it has sustained as a second language of the country. With the minutes of Thomas Bobington Macaulay on 2nd feb 1835 its authentic structure started and it is the blue print and historical milestone in the History of English language in India. Its most important to refer that Macaulay's minute what exactly says that "We must at present do our best to form a class of people who may be interpreters between the British and the millions whom we govern: a class of people or persons, Indians in blood and colour, but English in Taste, in opinions, in morals and in intellect; to the class we may leave it to redefine the vernacular dialects, to the country to enrich those dialects with terms of science borrowed from western nomenclature and to render them by degrees fit vehicles for conveying knowledge to the great mass of the population".

### Meaning:

Language is derived from the Latin word 'Lingua', French term 'Langua' which means 'Tongue'. Language is the entire complex of phenomena associated with human vocal and auditory communication of emotions and ideas. Language is called a social phenomenon, because it has relevance only in a social setting. And language is a living phenomenon.

### Definitions:

Although, there are plenty of definitions were given by various Linguists, among them: 'A language is Audible, articulate human speech as produced by the action of the tongue and vocal organs'. is said by John Webster, he also continues as, 'The body of words and methods of combining words used and understood by a considerable community, especially when fixed and elaborated by long usage, a tongue'. by Webster.

According to Sapir, 'Language is a primarily human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions and desires by means of a system of produced symbols. - Sapir.

Another definition is that, 'Language is may be defined as the 'expression of thought by means of speech'. - Henry Sweet

'A language is a symbol system..based on pure or arbitrary conversation of extendable and modifiable needs and conditions of the speaker'. - R. H. Robins

### Nature of Language:

English is a language like our mother tongue. Like English, there are so many languages in the world. No doubt at all, there is no human being on this earth who does not know language. Language is very important in our lives and in this world. Its nature is that language is an organic and dynamic. Here the word organic refers to a living thing as well as dynamic refers to active or changing or growing. So, we can say confidently that languages have life and that they keep changing or growing.

Another thing is that living things have a capacity for Auto-repair when a living thing is injured, the injury gets repaired on its own. Similarly, we have experience that we have injured and we have several cuts, burns and wounds and healed without the intervention of a doctor or any treatment. And also like human beings, languages also interact with each other. If we go to any border places we can see that there people speak mixer languages respectively two or more. So that, two neighbouring languages do not dis miss each other, but co exist by borrowing and lending words.

When languages co exist by borrowing and lending words and grammar rules, they become rich.

Languages that live in isolation tend to become weak and die in due course of time. Many languages when they come together and stay together for a long time, they give birth to new languages. For example: The language spoken in Goa is called Konkani. A few hundred years ago, this language did not exist. Kannada and Marathi both existed in unison like married couple and the result was the birth of a language like Konkani. Hence, that living beings reproduce. Languages also reproduce as well as suffer death.

Living things grow. English is also the same case. It adds new words and its vocabulary. Some words are borrowed, some words are coined to provide meaning to certain new concepts. We may discover plenty of words everyday by portmanteau words, reading novels, news papers, comics, short stories, magazines, by watching tv news, programs, and movies. etc.

### **Language is learnt:**

We can learn a language in a specific way. Its process is natural and structured. For language learning there are different ways and concepts and methods. Coming to English language we can see its structural aspect which has been following from last several decades.

### **Language is systematic:**

Learning language involves with various components like grammar, words patterns, sentences and sounds, formations as well as usage. In English language without grammar there is no glamour English. And we can not separate the grammar from English language. One who knows proper grammar can be considered as well English known.

### **Language is system of system:**

Language is related to sub-systems such as.. morphology: the study of internal structure of words, Syntax: the study of structure and formation of sentences. Phonology: is the study of the patterns of the sounds, it also includes the study of sounds and syllables, rhythm and intonation. Semantics: the study of meaning system in a language. Pragmatics: the study of usage of a language.

### **Language consists symbols:**

Language consists various sound symbols and their graphological counterparts, symbols are arbitrary chosen and conversationally accepted and employed.

Words are not mere signs or figures but symbols of meaning.

### **Symbols of Language are vocal:**

Language is made up of vocal sounds which are produced by physiological articulatory mechanisms. So, speech is primary.

### **Language is Arbitrary:**

Each language chooses its own system of symbols and speech sounds. It means it has words for different objects. The same objects in different languages called with different names. For example - A cat in Telugu Pilli, in Hindi - billi, in Kannada - bekku, in Gujarati it is called as billadi as well as in Tamil and Malayalam- Pune. Thus, the same animal has different names in different language. This is called Arbitrary.

### **Language is Culture or Society specific:**

Human beings are social animals. And also they can not exist without society. In society, through language culture, customs and traditions transmitted and through culture language is learnt. It also related to society.

### **Language is species specific:**

Only humans can speak language. Thus human beings are called as Talking animals. Of course, we can not ignore that some non humans also can speak language like parrots can speak words or human sounds with proper training. Similarly, ants can speak in their own way of sign language. At the same time, honey bees also can speak language by making different sounds in their own pattern like making sound like... zzzzzzzzzzzzz or hiiisssssssssss sounds.

### **Language is for communication:**

We, human beings use language as communication tool. Though this communications tool we do express our views, ideas, desires, needs and necessities. And communication is the vehicle of Information, directions and knowledge transformation process.

In communication process encoder sends message or information through language as a medium of instruction. And decoder decodes the given information by understanding through language. So, in entire process of communication language is vehicle or tool of communication. Through this language tool we express our feelings, thoughts, otherwise we will not.

### **Language is Productive and Creative:**

Finally, language has the power of productivity and creativity. With this it can produce number of vocabulary and phrases and sentences. According to the needs and priority of the society, language is created and produced.

### **Language Theories:**

#### **Bow - wow Theory:**

According to this theory, the earliest speech was produced by humans through the imitation of some characteristic sounds of the creatures or the objects they were referring to. The view of the beginning of language is based on the concept of natural sounds. This suggests that the primitive words could have been imitations of the natural sounds which they heard around them.

The theory points out that they adopted a similar method of expression in symbolizing the things that produced sound. When an object flew by making a CAW - CAW sound, the early human tried to imitate the sound and used it to refer to the thing associated with the sound. And when another flying creature made a COO-COO sound. That natural sound was adopted to refer to that kind of creature.

The fact that all the modern languages have some words with pronunciation that seems to echo naturally occurring sounds gives support to this theory. Words such as splash, bang, boom, rattle, buzz, hiss, screech, puff, whine, wail, whistle, babble, etc. Are examples to natural sounds which are used even today. Such words are also known as onomatopoeic words.

In addition to the natural sounds taken from the environment around, there are other sounds which are produced from the natural emotional cries of human beings such as pain, anger, happy, and joy. Words such as ouch!, Ah!, Ooh!, Wow!, or Yuck!, are examples of such natural. Ouch is used in painful connotations. Almost all the interjections such as Ah!, Ooh!, Wow, and Yuck! Are usually produced with sudden intake of breath, which is the opposite of ordinary speech sounds of the English language.

### **Ye-he-ho Theory:**

The other theory which is also based on the natural sounds is 'Ye-He-Ho' theory. The theory is best rooted on the physical effort while working in community, single or group. In controlling the efforts they produced a sound speech like ye, he, ho so on. The early humans must have produced a set of grunts, and curses like ye, ho, ho and so on while lifting and carrying large bits of trees or dead animals. It marked a chain in the development of human language as a social context. Human sounds, however they were produced, must have had some principles used within the social life of early human life in the development of language as a social speech.

### **Ding-dong Theory:**

This theory was favoured by Plato and Pythagoras. They opined that speech arose in response to the essential qualities of objects in the environments. The original source people made were supposedly in harmony with the world around them. This theory is usually associated with the name of the eminent German scholar and philologist Max Muller, though others have also accepted it. The theory holds that the beginning of the language was found in the rhythms which seem to have been innate in man from a very perspective stage of his existence and by which he is related to the rest of the universe, which is essentially rhythmic.

This language theory is based on onomatopoeia. Examples include words such as boom, crash, and oink. This theory doesn't supply words of certain grammar or abstract items in the English language.

### **The Gesture Theory:**

This theory was advanced by Wilhelm Wundt and later re-stated by Sir Richard Paget in his book Human Speech. Where he mentioned it as 'Gesture Theory'. According to Wundt, the earliest methods of communication were by signs and gestures made with the hands. This theory is supported by two types of evidence:

1. Gesture language and vocal language depend on similar neural systems. The regions on the cortex that are responsible for mouth and hand movements border each other.
2. Non-human primates can use gestures or symbols for at least primitive communication, and some of their gestures resemble those of humans, such as the begging posture with the hands stretched out, or beating the chest. Which humans share with chimpanzees.

Even today humans still use hand and facial gestures when they speak, especially when people who have no language in common to meet. There are also, of course, a great number of sign languages still in existence, commonly associated with the hearing impaired community; it's important to note that these sign languages are equal in complexity, sophistication, and expressive power, to any oral language. The cognitive functions are similar and the parts of the brain used are similar.

From the various points it can be stated that the gesture theory is the main theory where every gesture of the hand is accompanied by corresponding movement of the tongue, the lips, or the jaws and in the course of time the hand-gesture came to be displaced by the successor tongue, lips, or jaw gestures, and so man passed from sign language to spoken language.

### **Pooh-pooh Theory:**

This theory holds that speech began with interjections as spontaneous cries of pain (Ouch!) surprise (Oh!), and other emotions (yabba dabba do). In the book The Flintstones, Fred Flintstones illustrates the 'Pooh-Pooh' theory as 'I can recognize that this theory is one striking example of organization and complexity in languages using the first words as emotional interjections and exclamations triggered by pain, anger, dilemma, upset, etc. Acquiring the meaning of the speech in single word'.

The language we speak is a refinement upon these cries, sentiments, loud pain, etc. Which were not at first, having a meaningful sense. The theory came to be known as 'pooh-pooh' theory, from the expression 'pooh-pooh'. This term is used in the present day expression 'to pooh-pooh a scheme'. at first pooh-pooh is just an exclamation implying



contempt or disgust. Through being frequently used with this implication it acquired a meaning; then from this root is formed the verb to pooh-pooh, which took a definite place in the spoken language.

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