



History of English Language: Development of English From Europe to South Asia

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ABSTRACT

English language, West Germanic language of the Indo-European language family that is closely related to the Frisian, German, and Dutch (in Belgium called Flemish) languages. English originated in England and is the dominant language of the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, Ireland, New Zealand, and various island nations in the Caribbean Sea and the Pacific Ocean. It is also an official language of India, the Philippines, Singapore, and many countries in sub-Saharan Africa, including South Africa. English is the first choice of foreign language in most other countries of the world, and it is that status that has given it the position of a global lingua franca. It is estimated that about a third of the world's population, some two billion persons, now use English.

KEYWORDS: - INDO-EUROPEAN, GLOBAL LINGUA, POPULATION, DOMINATED LANGUAGE

English, a cosmopolitan means of communication, is now being studied and used by a number of well-trained investigators on both sides of Atlantic. These investigators and scholars, knowingly or unknowingly, contribute to enrich the language. In the present research work, entitled "Indianization of English: A Descriptive Study of Indian English" efforts are made to establish Indian English as one of the powerful variety. The work ascertains that none other variety of English can perform the unique and particular functions as Indian English often accomplishes, not only at local or national level but also at world level. Contribution of Indian English in the structural growth and development of the language cannot be ignored. Thus, a detailed study on Indian English is presented in the present research work. But, the study will remain incomplete and insignificant if the history and development of language is not taken into consideration. Hence, in the present chapter historical aspects and sequential growth of the language has been observed.

It is a fact that English in England is as alien as it is in India or in any other country. It is so because English was brought to England by the German Tribes, "known as Angles and Saxons who invaded England in the 5th and 6th centuries C.E." It has also been found that English Language has its nearest relation with the dialects of some unfertile islands on the German coast. English Language belongs to the Indo-European language family. It is, therefore, related to many other languages of Europe and West Asia. From India to Iceland and Australia to New Zealand are to be added on the East; North and South America on the west; and parts of Africa on the South. "These languages, nearly or distantly related, all derive and descend from the parent language (called Indo-European, Indo Germanic, or Aryan) which was spoken round about five thousand year ago by nomads living in the plains of what is now the Ukraine and Southern Russia." English used in modern times is also considered as a derivative of ancient biblical Hebrew. This is the reason why English is considered inflected. In this language, word order was free and sentence – division was not clearly mentioned. The origin of Christian missionaries brought them closer to Latin speaking community and after Norman Conquest to the various languages that were derived from Latin. With the revival of learning, Greek language was associated to Latin. Later, for about two centuries, because of political association of the English with South Asian countries, especially with India, started developing and strengthening in roots. Thus, various new varieties of English, i.e. Indian English, inaugurated.

The Old English

In the 5th and 6th centuries, the very first movement of the settlement of the English in the island of Jutes, Saxons and Angles, was clearly most decisive. This information was provided in 'The Ecclesiastical History of English People' which was written in Latin Language by Bede nearly three centuries after the first Jutes, Hengist and Horsa stepped at Ebbs fleet in the Isle of Thanet in 449. Bede in his masterpiece sketched a very "clear picture of the settlement of Britain by these three related 'nations' or tribes: the Jutes, from Jutland, who came first and settled in Kent, Southern Hampshire, and the Isle of Wight; the Saxons from Holstein who afterwards occupied the rest of England (south of the Thames) and the Angles or English from Schleswig who founded homes in regions north of the Thames. The country was also named after the leading branch of the Saxons, named Angles, and the new language, the Anglo-Saxon, was also denominated from them. This language was a branch of Teutonic language.... The Danes, the Dutch, the Germans and the English are considered as nations chiefly of Teutonic origin, and languages used over there bear a strong resemblance.

During eighth century, Northumbrian was used in literature and culture, Mercian for short period and West Saxon after that. Afterwards, the Norman Conquest has put all the dialects, once again, on their mettle, in which the midland region excelled. The West midland a more direct descendant of old Mercian, was the speech of the Cathedral cities of Hereford and Worcester, where the continuity of English prose and poetry was most evident. In 1087,

when King William-I died, there were only two bishops named Wulfstan of Worcester and Giso of Wells, who were preaching in Old English. But, during the thirteenth century, the East midland dialect had risen into greater prominence, as it became “the dialect of the Court, of the City of London and of both universities, Oxford and Cambridge.”

There are several thousand words of Old English that are easily recognizable. Several “are slightly disguised compound whose components are distinguishable after a little acquaintance, and that many thousands more are peculiar to the diction of alliterative poetry. A very great part of the vocabulary of the more original prose.... Out of one hundred words of the account of King Cynewulf’s death.... eighty three are still in daily use, however much meanings, functions, and forms may have been modified.

Impact of French Language on English:

Before October, 1362, French was used like a language of refined social class. Later on, English was enshrined as the official language of England. But the influence of French language and dialects are remarkably found on English Language. Many of the French loan words are distinctly aristocratic. “It is true that they left the old words king and queen intact, but apart from these nearly all words relating to government and to the highest administration are French;” e.g. to govern, minister, reign, parliament, exchequer etc.

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