

## HISTORY OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE: THE USE OF THE LANGUAGE AS MEANS OF COMMUNICATION

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**Abstract:** English language has obtained the status of the prime world language due to its multiple functions in international communication: it is the lingua franca for politics, diplomacy, international academic and business conferences, the leading language for science and technology, mass media, computers and entertainment. English language as the main medium worldwide is important both in global and local sense. The expansion of communities of users of English has indicated pragmatic, conceptual and discourse variation that has created new communicative needs. Before continuing to refer to other matters connected to English language as one of the main global and most widely used languages, the primary step is to look at its history, its origins and development.

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### INTRODUCTION

English language has obtained the status of the prime world language due to its multiple functions in international communication: it is the lingua franca for politics, diplomacy, international academic and business conferences, the leading language for science and technology, mass media, computers and entertainment. English language as the main medium worldwide is important both in global and local sense. The expansion of communities of users of English has indicated pragmatic, conceptual and discourse variation that has created new communicative needs.

### LANGUAGE AS MEANS OF COMMUNICATION

As one of the means for communication, language has crucial implications for humanity as stated by Crystal:

*Why does language provide such a fascinating object of study? Perhaps because of its unique role in capturing the breath of human thought and endeavour. We look around us and we are awed by the variety of several thousand languages and dialects, expressing a multiplicity of world views, literatures and ways of life.*

(Crystal 1996:1)

Speaking itself as part of a language is not something that is just an inner part of our nature, but includes all our experiences and practice that we go through in our lives. According to Francis,

*Speech, the universal human activity the very mark and defining criterion of humanity and its unique possession is not an innate part of man's nature at all. Each individual member of the race must experience in himself the task of learning it from other humans with or without their conscious assistance.*

(Francis 1954:6)

However, according to Crystal, language can be argued to have become global in reality when

*it develops a special role that is recognized in every country. Such a role will be most evident in countries where large numbers of people speak the language as a mother tongue- in the case of English.*

(Crystal 1997: 4)

Before continuing to refer to other matters connected to English language as one of the main global and most widely used languages, the primary step is to look at its history, its origins and development.

### HISTORY OF LANGUAGE

Since the ancient times many languages have been used on the territory of Great Britain and for a certain period of time Latin was the essence of communication for the educated classes, as stated by Allason-Jones below:

*By end of the first century AD the increasingly cosmopolitan flavor of the urban population will have resulted in many languages being heard in Britain with the consequence that a knowledge of Latin would have been essential for efficient communication between people who could have originated as far afield as Scotland, Africa or Turkey.*

(Allason-Jones 1989:174)

The circumstances changed with the newcomers, but those new conditions were not in favour for the natives as noted by Sherley-Price in the following.

*These newcomers were from the three most formidable races in Germany, the Saxons, Angles and Jutes... It was not long before such hordes of those alien peoples vied together to crowd into the island that the natives who had invited them began to live in terror.*

(Sherley-Price 1968:55-6)

Natives did not have many opportunities for development as in those vigorous times, kingdoms, people, languages changed quickly and for no reason. New kingdoms were formed. This has also been observed by Williams:

*It was in these latter regions that the rising kingdom of Northumbria, Mercia and Wessex took shape between 600 and 800. And it was in those districts that a recognizable Wales was defined.*

(Williams 1985:26-27)

All these changes and people left traces, but still before the appearance of the Normans, Anglos Saxons also had written records. Namely,

*On the whole, Norman administrators probably had less experience than the Anglo Saxon ones of written records and the Normans before 1066 had not shown such a consistent interest as the Anglo Saxons in recording their history and institutions in literate forms*

(Clanchy 1993:26-7)

Normans tried to clean up everything that did not correspond to their standards that is to say such things, according to them, were barbaric:

*Cleansed our language from barbarism and made vulgar sort here in London... to aspire to a richer puritie of speech.*

(Bailey 1992:37)

Greek, Latin and French had priority over the native English based on Germanic dialects and there were no English authors, no English grammar taught at all.

*Are learning Greek and Latin Grammar and no English Grammar, reading Greek and Latin authors and no English authors, and writing Greek and Latin exercises and no English exercises, the best means to an English style? Are the French and Germans wrong in teaching French and German otherwise, or are their mother-tongues less nearly related to Greek and Latin?*

*Or are our languages and literature less worthy to receive attention than theirs?*

(Hollingworth 1980:189)

Although, these languages were more or less equally used, there was certain ambiguity between similar words, as observed by Amis:

*A meaning change occurs when the meanings of two similar sounding words (often of Latin and Greek origin) are confused as in The Council is not a paradigm of virtue.*

(Amis 1980:27)

When English grammar and English language had their own position and status established, some scientist writers claimed that the basis of English was Greek language:

*In 1783 for instance the writer of one dictionary Lemon claimed that "the groundwork of our modern English tongue is Greek"*

(Crowley 1989:41)

Others had different insights. Namely, Alexander Gil called his people to raise their consciousness and start using their mother tongue, as stated by Moore:

*In his own work Logonomia Anglica from 1621 Alexander Gil in Latin addressed his fellow townsman and with great passion appealed to take care and preserve mother language.*

(In Moore 1910:8)

Discussion on the origin of the English language continued and certain opinions have been expressed which refer to the fact that it has some connection to the old Anglo-Saxon kingdoms.

*It has recently been suggested that the boundaries between dialects of Old English though corresponding roughly with those of the ancient kingdoms might best be seen as ecclesiastical.*

(Hogg 1992:4)

English could not develop as a language until the fourteenth century as it was overshadowed by the main languages, Latin and French. Instead, it was only referred to as a dialect, as remarked upon by Strang in the following.

*Until the fourteenth century English language was in dark shadow of these two languages which were dominant especially in the sphere of written communication, so it is very frequently named as dialect language par excellence.*

(Strang, 1970:224)

The statement that English dialects and terminology changed and developed over time and that many terms underwent certain changes from Old English through Middle English to the language used today has also been confirmed by MC Laughlin in the following quote.

*It has been shown how the OE and early Middle English term for animal deer changed to its present meaning ruminant animal, hooved, antlered and with spotted young under the pressure of the loan beast, creature and animal*

(Mc Laughlin 1970:303-313)

### SHAKESPEARE'S ENGLISH

Such changes can be seen even more clearly when reading Shakespeare who used language that was completely different from the one studied at school those days. This is confirmed by Jagger's statement that 'Shakespeare would have been punished, if he had used English at school, as the rules of the day ordered that in "public schools" no one who finished first grade was to speak English, not in the classroom nor during the games'. (Jagger 1940:19) On the contrary, Shakespeare continued creating new words and forms, or, as Burley puts it:

*Then he arose from the sleep and all those things that he had sung in his sleep he had fixed in memory and quickly he added to those words many words in the same metre of song dear to God.*

(Burnley 1992:28-31)

Some of the readers or audiences at the time found his innovations strange, some accepted them with admiration, but, as a consequence, English language became richer. This has also been observed by Ferry:

*Elizabethan readers might be alerted they often read aloud or experienced words as they sound and that adjective noun combinations like idle show were a specially prominent feature of this poetry.*

(Ferry 1988:2-3)

Shakespeare's language survived and so did his work. There are words he used which have gone out of fashion, but some of these still survive and are in use even today, as noted by Baugh and Cable:

*It is also noteworthy that many histories of English have overlooked the regional survival of thou and thee. Once again Baugh and Cable state that they are in ordinary use today among the Quakers.*

(Baugh and Cable 1978:242)

Shakespeare had his own contribution to the King's English, which became the basis for the language of the administration and correspondence.

*King's English had an eminent position in the history of English language than it was traditionally given as lingual and stylish characteristic of its correspondence by which it confirmed the standard of the administrative language itself.*

(Richardson 1980:726-50)

### CONCLUSION

The use of English language as an international language implies the necessity of its constant research, discussion, comparison and implementation in the constantly emerging new conditions. It is a language that has rich history and great development and it is certainly the most influential worldwide

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