



# Language As A System Of Communication And The Importance Of English Language

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## Abstract

Language is a means of communication. It is a method of communicating ideas, emotions, desires etc., by means of a system of voluntarily produced symbols - auditory and visual. The former constitute spoken language, to which the modern technological society pays more attention. On the other hand, the latter i.e. visual symbols constitute written language, sign language, body language and so on.

Language greatly enhances the ability of human beings to express their emotions, feelings and interaction with one another. Despite the fact that for centuries there has been a comprehensive approach towards the understanding of human language, a concrete consensus has not been arrived at regarding what this language is. Linguists, philosophers, psychologists and other researchers have all contributed to our understanding of what language is, and how it is acquired and used. These studies show that language is a complex, natural bestowed entity on each and every human being which is very difficult to be decoded in terms of scientific explanation. The complexity of the structure and its use involve many diverse, interacting psychological operations of which is human speech is one. Man being a social animal, requires something that

will link him to the milieu in which he lives. It is language, and particularly speech, which performs this task as O'Connor (1973:9) rightly puts it:

The spoken word is, and is likely to remain, by far the most frequent medium of communication between man and his neighbor and it is, to this extent at least the most important such medium.

**Key words:** Communication, Language, Inherited, International, Remarkable, Second Language.

## ***Introduction***

Speech is used more often than the written medium of communication. Further, written form is often an inadequate and misleading representation of the spoken language. It has been emphasised that language is primarily speech - a meaningful sequence of sound patterns that have significance both for speaking and listening. A child grows up speaking a language first and then learns to write it. On the other hand, in a second language learning situation things are not the same. However, most Indian children grow up as bilingual as a second language such as English is learnt in formal setting like schools.

The world during all its history has made use of certain languages as a means of communication among people of all countries and cultures. Leaving now- a - days in a world where information travels almost at the speed of light, almost everyone is directly or indirectly affected by occurrences all around the globe; therefore there is great need of a language to serve as link among the nations.

## ***Language as a System of Communication***

Communication is a very basic human need and activity-it is what keeps us in contact with the people around us. Without it we may become isolated and depressed. It is only in human that we find language being use as the most remarkably easy means of sharing information. AS Gray and Wise (1959:1) have aptly remarked:

It is through communication that individuals are integrated into societies; it is through communication that the cultures of those societies are perpetuated.

Human beings are different from other animals in that the former have developed a very complicated system to communicate with one another. In this context the assertion of A.C.Gimson (1980:1) is worth quoting:

One of the chief characteristics of the human being is his ability to communicate to his fellow human beings complicated messages concerning every aspect of his activity.

The term language applies to a system of conventional signals which are used for communication by the members of community. The signals used for human communication are chiefly of two different types - spoken or written arranged in specific patterns. Bansal (1978:1) accords more priority to spoken form of communication than written form when he states:

More people speak a language than write it and written language is only an attempt to represent the spoken language by marks on paper. In every language community the spoken form comes first. It can be produced easily by every member of the community and is therefore more suitable than the written form for everyday communication among the members of the community.

Language is viewed as a system of code that connects certain components like the sounds of words, sentence structures and so on, to meanings. The normal use of language often requires non-linguistic processing. When we speak, we constantly interact with our knowledge and understanding of the world and scan through our semantic memory for information about the world, continuously reason about what we are saying and hearing, take note of our immediate environment and incorporate information about it into our language production. Language processing does not take place in a vacuum that is devoid of mental reason. Language is something specific to humans, that is to say it is the basic capacity that distinguishes humans from all other living beings. It is a systematic means of communication by the use of sounds or conventional symbols. It is the code we all use to express ourselves and to communicate with others. In short, language is a major element in one's personal, national and ethnic identity. Lewis Thomas contends thus:

The gift of language is the single *human trait* that marks us all *genetically*, setting us apart from the rest of life.

## ***The Importance of English Language***

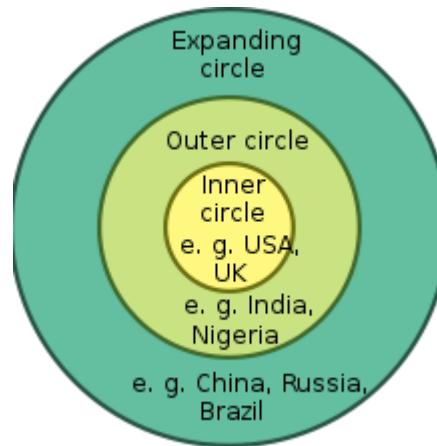
Two thousand years ago, the English language was confined to a handful of savages, now forgotten tribes on the shores of Northwest Europe; there was no English in England. Today, it is used, spoken or written in some form or the other, by perhaps 1.5 billion people around the world. Of the English users, three hundred and fifty million use it as their mother-tongue and the rest as foreign or second language. It is the only language widely used from China to Peru, and more scattered than any other language in the world. It has become a part of the IT revolution. Crystal (1988) is of the view that

English is the official language of nearly 50 different countries and is currently spoken as a first language by over 300 million people.

Way back in 1957 David Crystal's *English as a Global Language* gave the estimates about users of English taken from various sources. According to these estimates, of the 1.5 billion people who 'knew' English in some form or the other, about 337 million used English as the first language (L1) and about 350 million used it as a second language (L2) in countries like India, Pakistan, Singapore, Malaysia, the Philippines, Nigeria and Sri Lanka. In addition, there might be about 1 to 1.5 billion people who were actively learning and trying to use English in countries like China, Japan, Russia and in many European countries and South America. This would constitute about a third of the human race. Even the European Common Market resolved to use, what they called "Euro-English" as the common language for communication. One can fairly understand the importance and spread of English language in the present times where the world has become a global village due to scientific, technological, medical and economic advancement.

Similarly Braj Kachru, an Indian-American linguist teaching in the USA, classifies the varieties of English in terms of three circles. The 'inner circle' refers to the traditional bases of English where it is used as L1. The 'outer circle' shows the earlier 4 phases of the spread of English where the language is an important 'second language' (L2 or SL). The 'expanding circle' involves those countries and areas where English is recognized as an important international language and is taught and learnt as a *foreign language* (FL).

## *The 'three circles' of the English family*

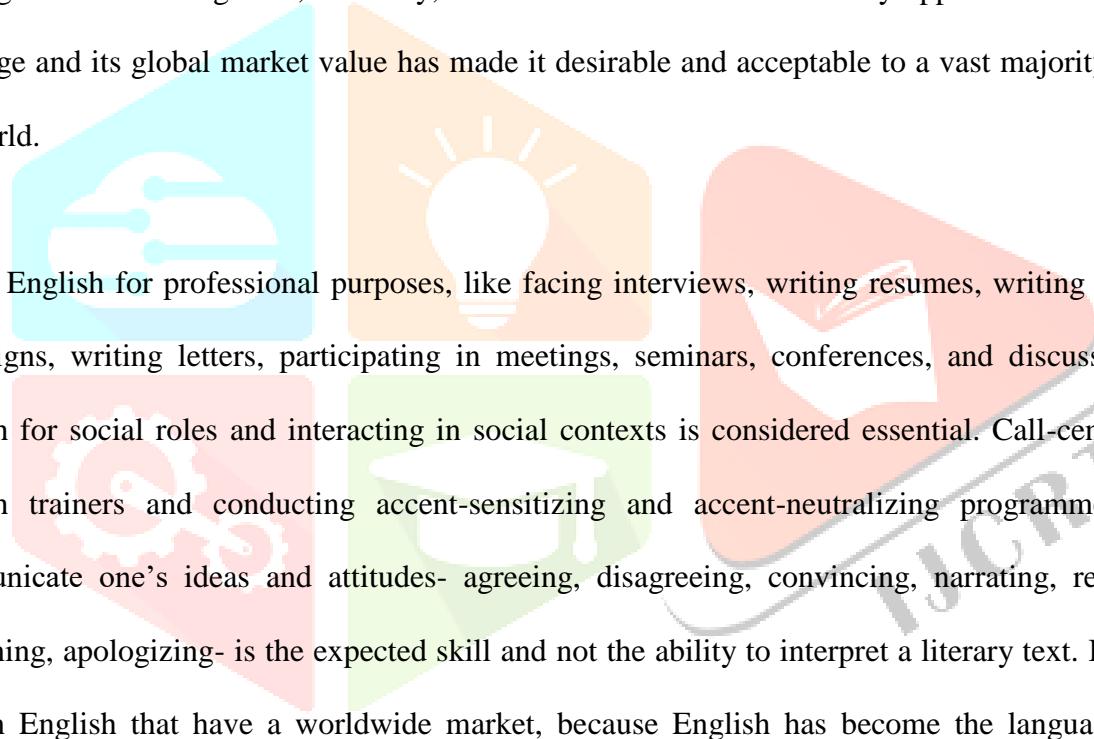


As a result of the information revolution during the last decade of the twentieth century, English has become a global commodity like oil and the microchip; without petrol, computer and the English language, the world will come to a halt. It is no longer the language of one or two nations. The English language is the language of Internet; it is estimated that nearly eighty percent of all websites use English and three quarters of the world's mail, telexes and cables are in English. The USA has far more computers than the rest of the world combined and the USA use English; English literacy and computer literacy have become inseparable and interdependent. The bulk of software is in English and all the IT giants, like Microsoft and IBM, are based in English speaking countries. Even countries like China and Japan- that area strong in computer technology and hardware-are forced to use English. The world has become not only Euro-centric but also 'Windows-centric'.

The remarks of Huntingdon (1996:6) worth mentioning here:

English is the world's way of communicating internationally and inter-culturally just as the Christian calendar is the world's way of tracing time, just as the Arabic numbers are the world's way of counting, and first as the metric system is, for the most part, the world's way of measuring.

As a result of the widespread use of English, the very character of the English language is changing; it is slowly being stripped of its culture, class, and even race. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, English was more of a culture, race and class-marked phenomenon. The IT revolution has stripped the language to its bones. Now, English is a tool for international communication. This is something unique; normally, a language goes with its culture; since English has become international, it is not attached to any one culture. Americans, even before the IT revolution, detached it from British culture and made it their own. The same thing is also true of Australia; and a number of African and Asian countries too, though English is used as a second language in these areas, have made English a vehicle of their own culture. Now, English as the language of the Info-Age has, in a way, become culture-neutral. This very apparent neutrality of the English language and its global market value has made it desirable and acceptable to a vast majority of people all over the world.



English for professional purposes, like facing interviews, writing resumes, writing reports, conducting campaigns, writing letters, participating in meetings, seminars, conferences, and discussions is demanded; English for social roles and interacting in social contexts is considered essential. Call-centers are appointing English trainers and conducting accent-sensitizing and accent-neutralizing programmes. The ability to communicate one's ideas and attitudes- agreeing, disagreeing, convincing, narrating, requesting, ordering, explaining, apologizing- is the expected skill and not the ability to interpret a literary text. It is communication skill in English that have a worldwide market, because English has become the language of business and commerce, trade and technology, journalism and electronic media, the Internet and IT-enabled services. If one is proficient in communicative English and if one's accent is internationally intelligible, the market is wide open. The gift of the gab in English can take one to all corners of the world. The study of literature has become a specialized field, and only those who are interested in it are taking it up seriously because of their special interest in that area; the market is only for communication skills in English.

English is widely spoken in all six populated continents of the world and has had a strong effect in many regions in which it is not the principal language spoken. While the widely diffused English-speaking

community is fairly stable in the British Isles, North America, and Australia, its future remains uncertain and unpredictable in Africa, the Indian sub-continent and Southeast Asia.

The people who speak English fall into three groups: 1) those who have inherited it as their native language; 2) those who have acquired it as a second language within a society or State that is largely bilingual; and 3) those who are driven by necessity to use it for some practical purpose- administrative, professional, or educational. Of the world's entire population, one person in seven belongs to one of these three groups.

### **Conclusion:**

As we all know that the ability to speak is the greatest boon of human beings. We can communicate orally and verbally. Communication plays a vital role in our daily life. Language is bounded with a set of rules to follow. As English is an international language and widely used language. It is obvious that every educated person should know the importance of English. It is bridge language among the nations. It is the Language of Science and Technology. It is very essential to master in English language to compete with the world. So, one can not deny its importance.

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