



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

The Influence Of Sanskrit On English Language

Shatabdi Roy

Assistant Professor

Department of English and Literary Studies

Brainware University

Abstract: When the English conquered the world, the English language slowly spread around the globe. It did not remain just the language of the small island of England. In course of time, the language being widely spoken came to be known as a global language in today's world. The English language has several loanwords. The language not just borrowed from other European languages, but also from different Indian languages. Old English or the language of the Celts is very different from modern English. When the nomadic tribes dwelled in the island, they went through various invasions and influences, thus slowly affecting the language. The French, Scandinavian and Latin influences made it what it is today. The language Sanskrit, being a very important part of Indian art and culture, has also greatly influenced English. Many words of common use including several names have been taken from the language Sanskrit. English, being the official language of many countries, has a large number of speakers. It is not just spoken in the U.S.A. and the U.K., but also in Afro-Asian countries. Even non- English speaking countries encourage children to take up English in School as a second language. Being widely used today, English has now become a language of science and technology.

Introduction: The Origin of Language

Language is the primary method of communication of human beings. It may be spoken or written. It is used to express oneself. Henry Sweet, an English Phonetician and language scholar, stated: "Language is the expression of ideas by means of speech-sound combined into words. Words are combined into sentences, this combination answering to that of ideas into thoughts."

Over time, various theories regarding the origin of language have developed. Michael Corballis, in his book, *From Hand to Mouth: The Origin of Language*, stated;

My own language developed much more gradually, starting with the gestures of apes, then gathering momentum as the bipedal hominids evolved. The appearance of the larger brained genus *Homo* some 2 million years ago may have signalled the emergence and later development of syntax, with vocalizations providing a mounting refrain. What may have distinguished *Homo Sapiens* was the final switch from a mixture of gestural and vocal communication to an autonomous vocal language, embellished by gesture but not dependent on it.

Although there are plentiful theories the exact chronology of the evolution of language remains unknown due to lack of evidences to support the theories.

The English Language:

The Germanic family of languages has three branches- the North Germanic languages, the extinct East Germanic languages and the West Germanic languages. English is one of the most prevalent West Germanic language, the other prevalent languages being Afrikaans, German and Dutch. Even though the English language originated in England, it is a dominant language in several countries around the globe like, the USA, the UK, Australia, Canada and many others. It is also the official language of India, South Africa, Singapore, the Philippines and many other African-Asian countries.

Influence of Other Languages on English:

Over the years, European languages like French, Latin, Dutch and Spanish have influenced and enhanced the language. English words like 'chair' (from *chaise*), 'bottle' (from *bouteille*) and 'lizard' (from *lezard*) have a French origin. While words like 'landscape' (from *landschap*), 'cookie' (from *kookie*) and 'Santa Claus' (from *Sinter Kloas*) originated from the Dutch language.

Several Indian languages have also influenced English. For example, words like 'chanel' (from Marathi), 'catamaran' and 'curry' (from Tamil), 'bungalow' and 'cummerbund' (from Urdu), 'jute' and 'almirah' (from Bengali) are all of Indian origin.

Influence of Sanskrit on English Language:

The language Sanskrit also had an immense influence over English. The Sanskrit language is an old Indo-Aryan language which is a subgroup of the Indo-Iranian branch of the Indo-European language family. It is believed that Sanskrit is one of the oldest languages in the world. In 1786, William Jones compared the languages Sanskrit, Greek, Latin and Persian and said that there was a unique similarity among these languages perhaps because they were the branches of a same ancestor language. In the book *A History of the English Language*, A.C. Baugh and Thomas Cable have said,

It is easier, for example, to see the resemblance between the English word *brother* and the Sanskrit *bhrātar* - than between *brother* and *frāter*. But what is even more important, Sanskrit preserves an unusually full system of declensions and conjugations by which it became clear that the inflections of these languages could likewise be traced to a common origin. Compare the following forms of verb to be:

Old English	Gothic	Latin	Greek	Sanskrit
eom (am)	im	sum	eimi	asmi
eart (art)	is	es	ei	asi
is (is)	ist	est	esti	asti
indon (are)	sijum	sumus	semen	smas
indon (are)	sijup	estis	este	stha
indon (are)	sind	sunt	eisi	santi

The Sanskrit forms particularly permit us to see that at one time this verb had the same endings (*mi, si, ti, mas, tha, and nti*) as were employed in the present tense of other verbs, for example:

Sanskrit	Greek	
dádāmi	dídōmi	(I give)
dádāsi	dídōsi	
dádāti.	dídōsi	
dadmas	dídomen	dial. Didomes
datthá.	dídote	
dádanti.	didōasi.	dial. Dídonti

English Words of Sanskrit Origin:

Many English words have Sanskrit origin. For example, the English word *mother* comes from the Sanskrit word *māthar*, *father* comes from *pithar*, *sister* comes from *svasar* and *daughter* comes from *duhitar*. Other words like the word *widow* comes from the word *widhwa*, *eight* from *astha*, *decem* from *dashan*, *diva* from *devi*, *atom* from *anu*, *man* from *manu*, and the word *saint* from *sant*. Even several words related to food like *cereal* (from *siri*) and the word *ambrosia* (from *amrut*) are of Sanskrit origin. Words like *guru* and *mantra* have been directly adopted into the English language from Sanskrit.

Again, numerous English names have a Sanskrit origin. The name *Abraham* has been taken from *Brahma*—a Vedic God, *Adam* has been taken from the word *aadim* meaning, ancient or first man, the name *Jerusalem* has been taken from the word *Yadu-isha-layam* meaning the township of Lord Krishna, *Svetlana* from the Sanskrit name *Svetanna* meaning ‘fair faced’.

Influence of Hinduism on Christianity:

There has been found immense similarity between the lives of Lord Krishna and Jesus Christ. Both Bhagavad Gita and the Srimad Bhagavatam contain many similarities to Christianity. This has been accepted by Reverend J.B.S. Carwithen, known as one of the ‘Brampton Lecturers’ who says, as quoted in Reverend J.P. Lundy's *Monumental Christianity* (pp. 151-152),

Both the name Crishna and the general outline of his story are long anterior to the birth of our savior [Jesus Christ]; and this we know, not on the presumed antiquity of the Hindoo records alone. Both Arrian and Strabo assert that the God Crishna was anciently worshipped at Mathura, on the river Jumna, where he is worshipped at this day. But the emblems and attributes essential to this deity are also transplanted into the mythology of the West.

Conclusion:

In April 2007, when the Indian President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam visited Greece, the Greek President Karolos Papoulias greeted him in Sanskrit and said, “I wanted to welcome you in Sanskrit, the ancient Indian language that is related to ancient Greek, and which I had the opportunity to learn and love during my time as a student in Germany.”

In 2010, 30th October, the Commonwealth games began with British children chanting Vedic hymns in Sanskrit in presence of President Pratibha Patil of India and Queen Elizabeth of Great Britain at London in an extravagant ceremony.

Sanskrit language and literature has enriched Indian culture since time immemorial. Sanskrit, today is a dead language. But, various steps are being taken to revive it.

Although English was originally a language of England, it is now the official language of several countries around the world including USA, Canada, Australia, Singapore, and India. Children are often encouraged to take up English as their second language in countries where English is not the official language. For example - Netherlands and Sweden. In about sixty seven countries in the world English is the official language and the secondary official language in around twenty seven countries.

English is even the language used to create most websites. About four hundred million people speak English in the UK and USA alone, not only making it a language of science and technology, but a global language.

References:

1. Baugh, A.C. and Thomas Cable. *A History of the English Language*. Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1951.
2. Cardona, George. www.britannica.com/topic/Indo-Aryan-languages. Accessed 11 September 2018.
3. Corballis, Michael. *From Hand to Mouth: The Origins of Language*. Princeton University Press, 2002.
4. Crystal, David. And Robert Henry Robins. www.britannica.com/topic/language. Accessed 11 September 2018.
5. Ghosh, Subrata. Editor. *Bangla Bhasha O Shilpo Shahityo Shanskritir Itihash: Dadosh Sreni*. Pashchim Bongo Uchho Madhayamik Shikkha Shonshod, 2015.
6. Harrub, Brad. et al., trueorigin.org/language01.php. 2003. Accessed 11 September 2018.
7. Lindy, J.P. *Monumental Christianity*.
8. Naved, Zeeshan. owlcation.com/humanities/importanceofenglishlanguages. Accessed 7 September 2018.
9. Nordquist, Richard. www.thoughtco.com/what-is-the-english-language-1690652. Accessed 8 September 2018.
10. Potter, Simeon. and David Crystal. www.britannica.com/topic/English-language. Accessed 13 September 2018.
11. Stoney, Richard. hinduwebsite.com/hinduism/sanskritwords.asp. Accessed 7 September 2018.