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**1.0 OBJECTIVES**

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After going through this unit, you should be able to;

- know about the rise of English Language,
- learn about theories of the origin of English Language,
- understand about various influences on English Language.

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**15.1 INTRODUCTION**

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The gift of speech and well ordered language are characteristics of mankind and are the symbol and token of the boundary between man and brute. Language has been nicely defined by Edward Sapir as “a purely human and non instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions and

desires by means of a system of voluntarily produced symbols. It is the universal medium for conveying our thoughts or feelings to others. There are, however, other means of expressing our mind to others. Gesture is one of these means. We hear of certain peoples whose vocabulary is so limited that they cannot get on without the supplementary use of gesture, so that intelligible conversation becomes impossible for them in the dark.

It is difficult to see adequately the functions of language because it is so deeply rooted in the whole of human behavior that it may be suspected that there is little in the functional side of our conscious behavior in which language does not play its part. The primary function of the language is, as we know, is communication. Language is also a great force of socialization. Apart from the fact that no significant social intercourse is possible without the language, the common language serves as a peculiarly potent symbol of the social solidarity of those who speak the language. A group of people is held together by the ties of common language.

English is spoken and read not only in England and the United States, but also in many countries of the East and West. It is now spoken as a second language throughout the world. Though historical, political and economic factors have much to do with this worldwide extension of English, there are qualities and characteristics inherent in the language itself to which English owes much of its ever-increasing global (wide) appeal.

Historians of the English language distinguish three main stages of its development. The first is the Old English (The Anglo-Saxon) Period. This period extends from about the year 600 AD to 1100 AD. This is followed by the Middle English Period from 1100 AD to 1500 AD and finally there is the period of Modern English from 1500 AD onwards. These divisions need not be water-tight for the development of a language is never sudden but is a gradual process. However it can be seen that at times this process of change is more rapid due to a variety of reasons.

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## **15.2 THE OLD ENGLISH**

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The earliest inhabitants of the British islands were the Britons and they spoke a form of Celtic language. It had all similarities with the language spoken in some districts of Northern France which is now called Britain. This language was in popular use throughout the whole of Roman occupation from 55 BC to 410 AD. After this Anglos, Saxons and Jutes, tribes from north Germany, descended with their hordes and the supremacy of Celtic language rapidly came to an end. By 600 AD they had succeeded in establishing their power fairly, firmly and implanting their language in Britain. Critics call this language Old English to stress the continuity of speech and the connection of this early form with the language which is spoken today.

### **15.2.1 Contribution :**

The Old English language had many dialects but of all the dialects that of Wessex became the most important. This was because this region was the most civilized, had an ordered form of government and most of the literature of this period was written in this dialect, of which the work

Beowulf still survives. However traces of other dialects still survive. It is the old English with its several dialects that has given to us doublets or two words with only a slight difference in its meaning. They were originally dialectal variants of the same word. For example, because of the normal development of the old English *a* into *o*, the old English *hal* became *whole* (in the Biblical sense of healthy or free from disease). However in a northern dialect, the change did not take place and hence we now also have the word *hale*. Anglo-Saxon had a very complicated grammar. Nouns had three or four case endings. It was also highly inflected just as modern German is today. The vocabulary of old English was chiefly Germanic though some words came from the language of *Celts*. Every word has pronounced according to its spelling and there were no silent syllables. For example the word *come* was read as /kome/. The Roman occupation too had its impact on the Anglo-Saxon tongue. For example the modern English *wall* is derived from the Anglo-Saxon *weall* which in turn was derived from the Latin *vallum*.

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### 15.3 THE MIDDLE ENGLISH

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The conquest of England in 1066 by William of Normandy had a profound influence not only upon the history and political system of the country but also upon the language. English now became a much more hybrid language. In the beginning two languages were spoken side by side : Old English and Norman French. Gradually these two languages mingled to give what is known as Middle English. The Modern English descended from this mixed Anglo-French tongue. The Norman-French which was the language of the rulers enjoyed greater prestige and was used as the language of the aristocracy, while the Old English was the language of the general public. However, the mixed language had a fewer French words. Meanwhile Latin was still used for learned works.

Literary English developed with the growth of London as a centre of commercial, political, legal and ecclesiastical life towards the end of the fourteenth century. The *East Midland* English assumed a dominant position now because it was spoken in and around London. Oxford and Cambridge also used it and hence it became the language of scholarship. The *Received Standard* English of today is said to have descend from this dialect. Chaucer and number of other prominent writers of that time used it. Hence we find Chaucer to be intelligible to the modern readers. Finally the introduction of the printing by Caxton (in 1476) brought many changes at the end of this period.

#### 15.3.1 Contribution :

During this period there were changes in grammar, pronunciation, spellings and there were additions to the vocabulary. For example *-es* became popular as the plural termination in place of *-en*. The only survival of *-en* is *Oxen*. This period also marks the loss of some of the inflexions. Hence it is called the period of *levelled inflexions*. Phonetic development of the Middle English period was the lengthening of short vowels when they stood in open syllables and the shortening of long ones in closed syllables.

That is why we pronounce *laddy* and *lady* differently. The discrepancy between spelling and pronunciation began in this period.

The existence of two languages side by side gave rise to synonyms, one from the native tongue while the other was from the Norman–French. An example is found in the two words, *wed* (native) and *marry* (French). The French also established the beginnings of the modern legal system and so a number of new words were introduced into English from French. So we have a host of words like *justice*, *judge*, *jury*, *indict*, *verdict*, *prison*, *punish* and *court* itself. Same is the case with the higher offices of the church which got French words like *Chapel*, *Cathedral*, *Confession* and even the word *Religion* itself.

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#### **15.4 THE MODERN ENGLISH**

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On the advent of the renaissance the full flood of the new learning reached England at about the year 1500 and this affected the English language too. The Renaissance was chiefly a Latin one and hence Latin words were introduced into English vocabulary in great numbers. The reformation was an outcome of the spirit of criticism generated by the Renaissance. The bitter religious controversies gave rise to numerous words. A very important outcome of the reformation was the various English translations of the Bible, the chief being Tyndale's in 1526, and more important was the Authorised Version in 1611. The Bible played an important role in *fixing* the English language and setting a kind of standard. Many more inflexions were lost in this period.

Printing too played an important role. The printers of Queen Elizabeth's time fixed the spelling according to the pronunciation that existed during the late Middle English and Early Modern English period. However, the pronunciation changed considerably after that but not the spelling. Hence, the pronunciation was not phonetically reflected in the orthography. Hence English spellings are largely symbolical of thoughts and are not always phonetic representation of the actual sound of the words.

Hence the invention of printing established a *standard* language and discredited dialect. It served to popularize the new coinages and newly introduced words and it tended to fix spelling about which there had been a great uncertainty before. By the middle of the seventeenth century the language had more or less attained its present form so far as grammar, spelling pronunciation are concerned.

#### **CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 1**

<b>ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.</b>
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1. What is the primary function of a language ?

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2. Which two languages were mingled and resulted into the Middle English ?

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3. Why were there more number of words introduced from Latin ?

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4. By which time, the English language had attained its present form ?

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## 15.5 THEORIES OF THE ORIGIN OF LANGUAGE

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### 15.5.1 The Bow-wow Theory :

This theory supposes that human speech originated in man's attempt to imitate the sounds of nature. Thus a dog might be called a "bow wow" or a cow "moo". There is no denying the fact that such imitation accounts for a certain number of words in the English vocabulary e.g. cuckoo, hiss, gurgle, whistle, whine, babbi, prattle etc. Words that have this origin are sometimes said to be onomatopoeic. This theory comments Max Muller, "Goes very smoothly so long as it deals with crackling hands, and quacking ducks, but round that poultry yard there is a dead wall and we soon find that it is behind that wall that language really begins."

### 15.5.2 Ding Dong Theory :

This theory propounds that specific kinds of objects are so affected the primitive man as to ring out of them correspondingly specific utterances. The words *zigzag*, *dazzle* may be cited as examples.

### 15.5.3 The Pooh Pooh Theory :

This theory seeks the origin of language in such involuntary exclamation of pain, surprise, wonder, disapproval, pleasure as *Oh ! Bah ! Pshaw ! Fie*, and the like. As a theory of origin of language it stands upon a very slippery ground.

### 15.5.4 Gesture Theory :

This theory holds that language originates in gesture. The gesture theorists opine that the primitive people communicated with one another by the means of gestures made by hand, and ultimately the language-equivalents were substituted for these gestures. In saying 'I' and 'me' the lips are drawn inward as if pointing to the speaker, and in saying 'you' and 'thou' the lips are moved outwards as if pointing to the person addressed. Similarly, in saying 'here' and 'there' the lips are drawn inwards and thrown outwards respectively.

In so far as these theories are acceptable at all, they explain only small parts of language. It is hard to see how they can be extended to account for all languages. We may have some ideas of the origin and development of language by observing the way in which a child learns to speak. It is almost certain that “a good deal of language had its origin in a process parallel to that by which a child first pronounces meaningless groups of sounds to which meanings are afterwards attached either by the child itself or by its hearers. A notable stage in the history of language was reached when significant sounds began to be handed down from one generation to another, and then imitation came to play an important part in the development of language.

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## **15.6 INDO–EUROPEAN FAMILY OF LANGUAGES**

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English is descended from the Teutonic family of languages which form themselves one branch of another family, the Aryan or Indo–European. The Indo–European Family of languages is the most wide spread group of languages in the world, and from it almost all the languages of Europe and Western Asia are said to have descended. We have no written records of this great language family; but the modern researches have revealed that Sanskrit, Greek and Lithuanian retain a great many grammatical and linguistic peculiarities. The distinguished 19th century philologist August Schleicher of the University of Prague tried hard to reconstruct Indo–European on the basis of Sanskrit for the consonants, Greek for the vowels and Lithuanian for the inflexions.

We can divide the Indo–European Family of languages in two groups :  
Eastern Group and Western Group

### **15.6.1 Eastern Group :**

1. Indian (Sanskrit, Pali)
2. Iranian (Avestan, Old Persian)
3. Armenian (ancient and modern with its various dialects)
4. Slavonic (Russian, Bulgarian, Polish, Bohemian etc.)
5. Baltic (Lithuanian, Lettish, Old Prussian)
6. Albanian

### **15.6.2 Western Group :**

1. Greek (ancient modern with their many dialects)
2. Italic (Latin with its descendants; the Romance languages – French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese and Rumanian; Oscan, Umbrian)
3. Celtic (Irish and Highland Gaelic, Welsh etc.)
4. Teutonic or Germanic
  - A. East Germanic (Gothic – the earliest Germanic Language or which we possess written records)
  - B. North Germanic (the language Scandinavia)
    - (a) West Norse (Icelandic)

- (b) East Norse (Danish and Swedish)
- C. West Germanic
  - (a) High Germanic (German)
  - (b) Low Germanic (Dutch, Flemish)
  - (c) Anglo-Frisian (English or Frisian)

**CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 2**

**MATCH THE FOLLOWING COLUMNS GIVEN IN BELOW.**

Sr.	Theory	Sr.	Description of the Theory
1	The Bow-wow Theory	A	This theory propounds the specific kinds of objects.
2	Ding dong Theory	B	This theory holds that language originates in gesture.
3	The Pooh Pooh Theory	C	This theory imitates the sounds of nature.
4	Gesture Theory	D	This theory has involuntary exclamations in the origin.

**15.7 REASONS BEHIND THE SPREAD OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE**

There are a number of reasons behind the spread of this international language. Some of them are as under :

**15.7.1** Prominent among the characteristics of this language must be mentioned its extraordinary receptive and adaptable heterogeneousness. The varied ease and readiness with which English has taken to itself materials from almost everywhere in the world and has assimilated these outside elements are wonderful. This general receptiveness of new elements from anywhere in the world which helps to make English a suitable and attractive vehicle in so many parts of the world.

**15.7.2** In the matter of inflectional simplification English has gone much further than any European language. The manner English has reduced the endings it once had to a minimum is really wonderful. Inflections in the noun have been reduced to a sign of the plural and a form for the possessive case.

**15.7.3** The next reason behind the spread of this language is the use of word-order as a means of grammatical expression. Words in English do not play hide-and-seek they often do in Latin. English shows more regularity and less caprice in the matter of word-order than most or probably all Indo-European languages.

Of all the aforesaid characteristics of English it is the adaptable receptiveness and inflectional simplicity which have contributed most to the general success and spread of English. Again, it is because of its cosmopolitan vocabulary that English presents a somewhat familiar appearance to peoples of many parts of the world.

There are some persons who have contributed much to the development of the English language, and they are generally the authors of literary works.

There are generally two ways in which an author may enrich the language in which he writes. He may directly introduce some new words, expressions and phrases, or he may give the existing forms of expression new meanings and wider currency. If a popular writer like Shakespeare or Milton uses some comparatively rare word, it will be most likely to find its way into the popular vocabulary and gain a wider currency in the sense in which it was used by the writer. Apart from this linguistic significance, an analysis of the extent of the influence exercised by great writers adds to our knowledge of their minds and art and thereby helps us attain a fuller understanding of their works.

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### **15.8 THE BIBLE TRANSLATIONS**

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The translations of the Bible, from those of Tindale and Coverdale in the early 16th century to the "Authorized Version" have exercised no small influence on the English language. The Bible has been studied and quoted in England more than in any other Christian country, and a great many Biblical phrases have passé into the ordinary language as household words. The best judges of English style have greatly admired the style of the Authorized version, made under the direction of James I in 1611 and have recommended an early familiarity with, and the intensity perusal of the English Bible as the best training in English language.

The Bible translators after Tindale and Coverdale have contributed little by way of invention of words and phrases which have become part of the English vocabulary. But the indirect effect of the Bible has been felt down to the recent times. Many words which had become old fashioned in 1611 would have sunk into the sea of oblivion had they not been preserved in some familiar Biblical passages.

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### **15.9 INFLUENCE OF SHAKESPEARE**

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Shakespeare, who was unrivalled in so many other ways, has exercised great influence on the English language than any other individual maker. Indeed, the influence of Shakespeare as a maker of English is very much of the same kind as that of the Bible translations, though its extent has been slightly less fundamental and wide spread than that of the Bible. He has made some valuable and permanent contribution to the English language by his dramatic use of dialect, specially his native dialect. He has used a great number of words which so long floated from lip to lip of the people. Though these words made their first appearance in Shakespeare, there is no reason to believe that Shakespeare coined them. He only lifted them out of the spoken language and used them for dramatic purposes.

The greatness of Shakespeare's influence upon the English language doesn't consist in the number of new words or compounds he made, but in the multitude of phrases found in his writings which have entered into the texture of the diction of literature and daily conversation. They have become household words and we use them day in and day out without remembering or moving even that they have come from the immortal pen of Shakespeare. There are some Shakespearean phrases which are generally used with a meaning other than that which Shakespeare had intended.



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### 15.10 INFLUENCE OF MILTON

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Milton illustrates the fact that there is no constant relation between a writer's literary greatness or even the greatness of his fame, and the extent of his influence on the language in which he writes his works. Though as a poet he stands only second to Shakespeare, yet as a maker of English he cannot claim a place just beside Shakespeare. While Shakespeare has contributed innumerable phrases to the common treasury of English diction, the Miltonic expressions, which have really become part of English language, are extremely few. There are, of course, many Miltonic expressions which are very familiar to us as quotations : but there are not many of his combinations of words which we might call “household words”.

Thus, the English language has been the language of most people the world in everyday life. It should also to be kept in mind that this language has witnessed many ups and downs in the rise and spread during the journey and it has been influenced by many great writers and other political, social, economic, industrial influences.

#### CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 3

<b>STATE WHETHER THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS ARE TRUE OR FALSE.</b>
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Sr.	Statement	T / F
1	In the matter of inflectional simplification English has gone much further than any European language.	
2	Words in Latin do not play hide-and-seek they often do in English.	
3	Shakespeare has made some valuable and permanent contribution to the English language by his dramatic use of dialect, specially his native dialect.	
4	The best judges of English style have greatly admired the style of the Authorized Version, made under the direction of Tindale I in 1611.	
5	English a suitable and attractive vehicle in so many parts of the world.	

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### 15.14 LET US SUM UP

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We have, in this unit, discussed about the origin of the English language, various language theories which played an important role in the development of the language. We also discussed about the rise of the English language and how translations of Bible, printing contributed in the development of the English language. The influence of Latin and Greek languages along with Shakespeare and Milton were worthy in the process of making the English language more standardized.

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### 15.14 BOOKS SUGGESTED AND REFERENCES

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- A History of the English Language by Albert C. Baugh & Thomas Cable

- An Outline History Of The English Language by WOOD
- Objective Approach to English Literature for NET, JRF, SLET and Pre-Ph.D. Registration Test by Pandey Om Prakash, Rahmat Jahan Ivan K. Masih K.K. Narayan & Neeraj Kumar

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**15.15 KEYWORDS**

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1. Adaptable : capable of fitting a particular situation or use
2. Assimilate : make alike
3. Caprice : a sudden desire
4. Cosmopolitan : composed of people from many parts of the world
5. Discrepancy : a difference between conflicting facts or claims or opinions
6. Grammatical : of or pertaining to the rules that structure language
7. Gurgle : make sounds similar to bubbling water
8. Hale : exhibiting or restored to vigorous good health
9. Heterogeneous : consisting of elements not of the same kind or nature
10. Linguistic : consisting of or related to language
11. Multitude : a large indefinite number
12. Orthography : representing the sounds of a language by written symbols
13. Peculiar : beyond or deviating from the usual or expected
14. Primitive : characteristic of an earlier ancestral type
15. Propound : put forward, as of an idea
16. Reformation : improvement in the condition of institutions or practices
17. Theorist : someone who constructs hypotheses

**ANSWERS**

**Check your progress 1**

1. The primary function of a language is to communicate.
2. Old English and Norman French were spoken side by side. Gradually, they got mingled and resulted into the Middle English.
3. The Renaissance was chiefly a Latin hence Latin words were introduced into English vocabulary in great numbers.
4. By the end of 17th century, the language had more or less attained its present form.

**Check your progress 2**

1. C                      2. A                      3. D                      4. B

**Check your progress 3**

1. True                      2. False                      3. True                      4. False                      5. True

