

An Analytical Study of English  
**Philology**

*For Graduate and Post-Graduate  
[English] Students*

**Dr. Kalyan Pandey**

MA (Eng), MA (Linguistics)  
MA (Political Science), MA (Education),  
MA (Old Eng), MEd, PGDTE (CIEFL)  
M Phil (Linguistics), Ph D (Literature)

**Dr. Emily Pandey**

MA (Gold Medallist), M.Phil., Phd.  
Head of the Department of English  
NIIS College of Information Science and  
Business Administration  
Bhubaneswar, Odisha



**GRANTHA TIRTHA**

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## *P*REFACE

This book entitled 'An Analytical Study of English Philology' is based on the origin, growth and development of the English language up to the twentieth century. It is intended for the students of English Honours and M.A. It is a detailed and analytical study of various features of the language. It aims at providing detailed knowledge of the language to the students as well as to those who are interested in it.

The book deals with the origin, growth and development of English which had been deeply influenced mainly by European and Asian languages. It sheds light on coinage of words, word formation and development of grammar and syntax. It contains a separate chapter in which the derivation of some words has been explained.

I am heavily indebted to many scholars and teachers whose ideas, views and opinions about the poems have been freely used in the volume. Sri Debajyoti Bhattacharjee Kolkata, who has designed page setting and provided the decorative idea of the printing of the book is always gratefully remembered. Above all, I am immensely indebted to Sri Sandip Nayak, who kindly deigned to publish this book. My humble effort will be deemed highly prized if it serves the purposes of the students.

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## PHILOLOGY

◆ **INTRODUCTION** : Philology studies both language and literature scientifically. More specifically it can be said that philology deals with language and linguistics scientifically. It is the science of language and systematically traces the growth and history of language. It is concerned with the study of the nature and especially development of words or language. Philology is thus the science or study of the growth and development of language or of a particular language.

Philology deals with the written historical resources of language. It is a combination of literary criticism, history and linguistics. It includes the study of literary texts and written records, the establishment of their authenticity and their original form and the determination of their meaning. Now the scope of philology has been narrowed to the study of the historical development of languages. Philology is now synonymous with "historical linguistics".

Philology traces the origin, growth and development of language. It is the study of words, especially the words in a particular language and shows how the words have developed or changed. Historical linguistics and comparative linguistics are the two branches of philology.

Historical linguistics studies the development of languages in the course of time. It is an approach to linguistic studies which concentrates on the changes that languages undergo over longer periods of history. It deals with changes that take place in course of time. Historical linguistics has succeeded in revealing the fact that English, French, German, Russian, Greek, Latin, Sanskrit, Hindi, Gujrati, Bengali etc. are all the languages belonging to the *Indo-European family*.

Comparative linguistics, a branch of philology, studies the relationships between languages. It is said to have started with the discovery of the similarities between ancient Sanskrit and other languages of the Indo-European family such as classical Greek and Latin. Its aim was to reconstruct the common ancestor of the Indo-European languages.

### HISTORICAL STUDY OF LANGUAGE

English is one of nearly three thousand languages now spoken, which are "historically developed, socially learned, orally transmitted systems of communication." Modern linguistics stresses the study of structural aspect of language and relegates the importance of the historical study of language to the secondary position. Language needs to be studied both synchronically and diachronically. The synchronic study of language is concerned with the study of language at a given time, while the diachronic study of language traces the changes that takes place in the course of time. The diachronic study of language is concerned with the historical development of language. The history of language provides an explanation of many of the features of language which we use today.

There are two major approaches in the study of language. These are synchronic study of language and diachronic study of language. Synchronic study of language is the descriptive study of the language at a given time, while diachronic study of language is the historical development of language through time. This study concentrates on the changes that a language undergoes over a longer period of history. The aim of the historical study of language is to obtain a full understanding of a language by focusing on both its present form and function and its history and development. It aims at acquainting the students with both the anatomy and at physiology of the language and "its phylogeny and ontogeny."

Everything that exists now on earth has its history of evolution. It is not exactly of what it was in the very distant past. It now exists through long gradual changes. Even man by which we are known is the product of changes over many millenniums. History has made man or human. What he is physically shaped today is the consequence of his evolution. Language is also the produce of evolution. Historical study of language reveals that language is the product of society in which it was used, again the history of a society is well-reflected in its language. Society creates language and language is developed in society. The history of a language is expressive of the history of the nation that used and developed the language. If we study the history of the English language, we find that after the Norman Conquest the animals like *ox, sheep, deer, calf, swinen* etc. are still known by their Anglo-Saxon names but the flesh of those animals as used as food was denoted by French words i.e. *beef, mutton, venison, veal, pork, bacon* respectively. This example reveals that animals were looked after by the Anglo-Saxon people and the animals were killed for meat to be served for the Norman masters.

The study of the history of our language enables us to understand properly the great written records of our national history and the fine monuments of our civilization. We need to study the history of language to understand literature written in a particular language. If we want to understand and appreciate the works of Kalidasa, we need to study the history of Sanskrit and if we want to appreciate the works of Rabindranath Tagore, it is necessary for us to study the Bengali language of his time. We cannot appreciate the plays of Shakespeare if we do not have knowledge about Elizabethan English.

The study of the history of a particular language broadens our view of the present nature and characters of the language. This gives us a clear idea about the rules of grammar of the language and convinces us that the rules of grammar of a language are not fixed as fixed as the laws of nature. Grammar is not something static; it is dynamic; it is ever changing. Grammar changes with the change of time. A construction which was considered wrong or incorrect at a time in the past is at present accepted grammatically. For example a simple sentence with double passive construction like "The plan is accepted to be soon implemented" was considered grammatically unacceptable in the past but now it is accepted grammatically. A historical study of the language can help us understand the nature of the language better.

Again the study of the history of language enables us to develop knowledge about certain irregularities and irrationalities of the language. We find for instance in English a set of nouns which have plurals quite different from the rest. These mutated plurals do not form their plurals by adding an "-s" or "-es" to the singular forms. *Man, foot, tooth, mouse* all have these plurals formed by "mutation" of the vowels which gives us *men, feet, teeth, mice* instead of *mans, foots, mouses* and *tooths*. The study of the history of

the English language enables us to get a satisfying explanation for these irregular or mutated plurals in modern English. Our attitude to language becomes rational in consequence of our systematic study of language at different periods of its growth and development.

All natural languages are subject to change and modification. They have phase-wise history of development. But such languages as are artificial and devised to serve particular purposes have neither their history of origin nor have the words *change* and *'development'* related to these. Their nature does not admit of historical mutability. The rules of an artificial language are all laid down before the language begins to be used. On the other hand, the rules of a natural language are gradually evolved after the actual using of the language. This means that changes in the use of the languages are naturally reflected in changes in the rules of language use.

All natural languages continue to change as long as they continue to be used and spoken. They will cease to change and develop only when they are no longer used and spoken by human beings—such languages are then described as 'dead'. Languages called 'dead' remain static. Classical Latin, Greek and Vedic, Sanskrit are called 'dead' languages. The language used and spoken by human beings in the world are subject to change and continue to develop as time moves on.

All living languages which human beings possess, speak them and write in them are the changed and modified forms of primitive languages. Language is the result of thousands of years creative evolution. Some of the languages have lost their original character and cease to be used for purposes of communication and social cooperation. The modern languages which are today used are the products of gradual change.

Language is dynamic. It is subject to gradual change at all levels. It has been marked in the evolution of language that sounds, words, word-meanings and sentence patterns change with the passage of time. Each generation modifies and changes its language with a view to adapting it to changing needs and the demands of those who speak it and write in it.

## MAN AND LANGUAGE

Man is said to be God's best creation. He is best loved by Him. God bestows on him rare qualities which all other creatures do not possess. Man can think; he can imagine and invent; he is endowed with intelligence and wisdom. He acquires knowledge by power of which he dominates this planet. What makes, man far superior to all other living beings on earth is his language which forms the foundation of his supremacy over all animate objects. In the distant past when he did not have language, he was then hardly distinguished from animals. The need of expression of thoughts and communication or transmission of ideas adequately led to the gradual evolution of language, and language has empowered man to emerge as an unchallenged and invincible power who prepares himself to invade and rule over other planets in the universe. Where human achievements will reach in future is hard to predict. Language, not to be gainsaid, lies behind all human achievements.

Language is human specific; it is one of his unique possessions. His highly developed vocal organs have enabled him to possess language. Language reflects human history through ages. It preserves his thoughts and protects and nurtures his culture. It records how philosophers have travelled the whole world in quest of truth, how scientists worked day and night through ages to invent things to develop human civilization and

how artists devoted themselves to create things of beauty. Language maintains a chronological document how time changes everything in accordance with the law of Nature.

Man's need for self-expression—expression of his thoughts, ideas and emotions—led to the creation of language. Language was not created overnight. It took hundreds of years to develop non-linguistic sounds which man used to produce to communicate with others of the same species over the long period of his forest life, into linguistic sounds. The systematic meaningful arrangement of sounds led to the creation of language. The creation of language gave man the identity of a speaking being. Thus, he came to be distinguished from animal.

Man does not inherit language; he is to acquire it. A new born baby cannot speak, but gradually it acquires language. A man cannot be able to speak if he has been brought up in the non-human society since his birth. Man learns to speak, as a very small child, by hearing others and imitating them, and seeing them point to the thing or person for which the word stands. Society and language are closely related. Language is the identifying mark or feature of society, for there is no human society without language. Man learns or acquires language from the society of which he is a member. The evolution of man's social life paved the way for the evolution of language. It is the society which is the container of language. Thus we can say that language originates, grows and develops in society.

'Language' or 'speech' is the way or the medium through which we express our thoughts or feelings. It is used to put into words what we think, feel and desire. Language expresses what mind cherishes. We use a symbol, an image, a picture, a statue, a sign or certain sounds to express the mind and bare the heart. A symbol stands for something. Only a man who knows and can interpret the symbol, recognises and understands it. A picture functions more than language does. A picture carries a sense to express which one thousand words are needed.

Language is the prerogative of man, for it is the bond and basis of society. It is a social product. Language exists as long as society exists, and language grows and develops and is enriched with the development of the society. It is the index of social progress. The progress of society leads to the enrichment of the vocabulary of the language used in that society. Language is a great force of socialisation. It serves as a peculiarly potent symbol of the social solidarity of those who speak the language. A group of people are held together by the bonds of common language. National boundaries are often demarcated on linguistic basis.

Language has the function of cultural accumulation and historical transmission. "Language is flesh and blood of our culture." It helps preserve culture and civilization. It gives rise to society, and the society, in turn, re-shapes and re-models the language according to the needs and desires. Language is closely related to culture and society. The culture and civilization lie embedded in the words. Language helps develop a person's personality. It is regarded as the most potent indicator of personality.

Man possesses language as one of the special gifts of God. His possession of language as a special ability distinguishes him from animals. Man and language are interrelated. He uses language as 'a tool of communication' and also as a vehicle of expression of what works in his mind. He uses it to interpret his experiences. Language is a complex human phenomenon.



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Language is used in two ways—speech and writing. Man uses it to speak as well as to write. The spoken language comes first and the written language is secondary and derivative. There are primitive communities that have a spoken language without any system of writing but we know of no society that has a written language without spoken one. The sounds are the outward symbols of what is inward. Even the deaf and dumb people who use "Sign Language" or "Gesture Language" derive their language from the spoken language of the community around them. So, language is specific to man.

Language reflects human history through ages. It records all that is associated with human development. It reveals how human beings aroused the primitive ages over to the present age which is an age of science and human civilization. Language is the voice of the past. What we use to express our mind is language, and it is often called 'speech'. Speech is distinguished from language. The use of the word 'system' stresses or underpins the distinctions between speech and language. Speech refers to the action of an individual or the isolated actions of several individuals, while language refers to an organised system of means of communication used by a group of people who can understand one another. A speech becomes a language when it is fully fashioned to the common understanding and accepted by consent of a whole country and nation.

The study of speech sheds much light on the study of language. Speech is the symbol of thought and writing is the symbol of speech. Writing is the symbol of a symbol. While distinguishing language from speech G.L. Brook writes—"Speech is the action of an individual on the isolated action of a number of individuals. Language is an organised system of means of communication employed by a group of people who can understand one another." Sounds constitute language. The symbols, which constitute language, may be either spoken or written. Speech has certain advantage over writing. Speech can express more than writing. The shades of meaning, which cannot be expressed by means of writing, can be expressed in speech. Writing has the advantage over speech in the case that what is expressed through writing can be preserved and reproduced with greater ease. Man improved his speech slowly and gradually which has finally evolved as language that man uses for communication and for expression of his thought, ideas, emotions and experiences and which underpins all human progresses and achievements.

## ORIGIN OF LANGUAGE

It is difficult and almost impossible to say exactly when language came into existence. Man is not born with language nor does he inherit it. There is little evidence about the origin of the language since human speech is probably as old as man, and scholars who have studied the origin of language are of the opinion that the act of writing evolved between 25 and 2900 B.C. Anthropologists think that man first used visual signals for communication and when he felt it inadequate for communication, he developed and acquired vocal signal for adequate, effective communication among themselves. This is how, some linguists and anthropologists think, communication by voice evolved. Our primitive idea about the origin of language is that language was created to satisfy man's biological necessity, but this idea is baseless and has been rejected as erroneous since language is an effective instrument of transforming the thought in mind into words or expressions. Man uses language as a vehicle to transmit ideas from person to person, from generation to generation. Language is the translation of ideas or thoughts. The