

**SHRI M.R.D. ARTS AND
E.E.L.K.COMMERCE COLLEGE, CHIKHLI**

B.A.SEM : 2, English -paper:-4

Topic: General Character of English- Bhoomika Patel

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INTRODUCTION:

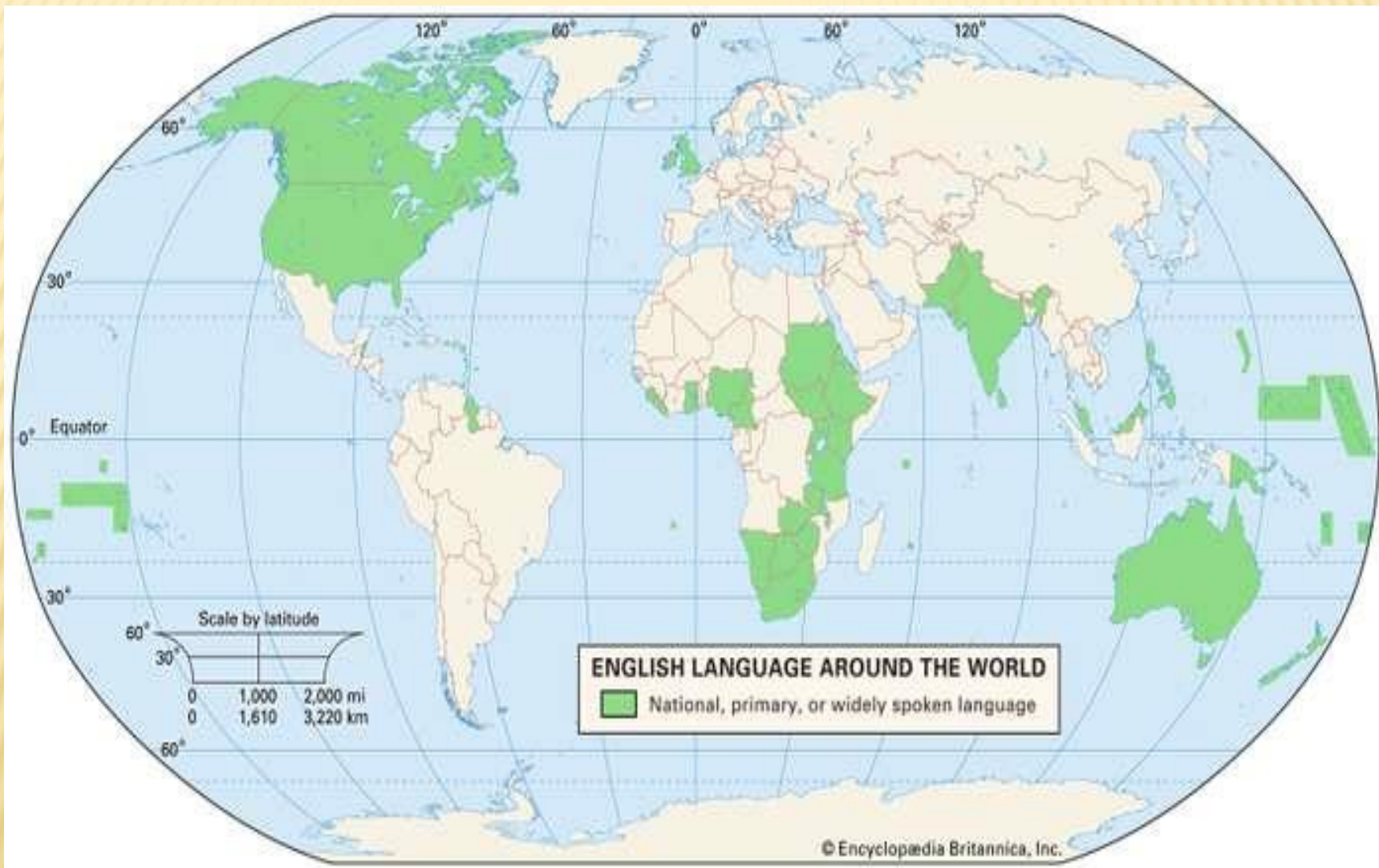
English is medium of international communication. It has many sided role in international communication. English is the widest used language in the world due to economical historical and political reasons. English has world wide significance on the ground of others factors.

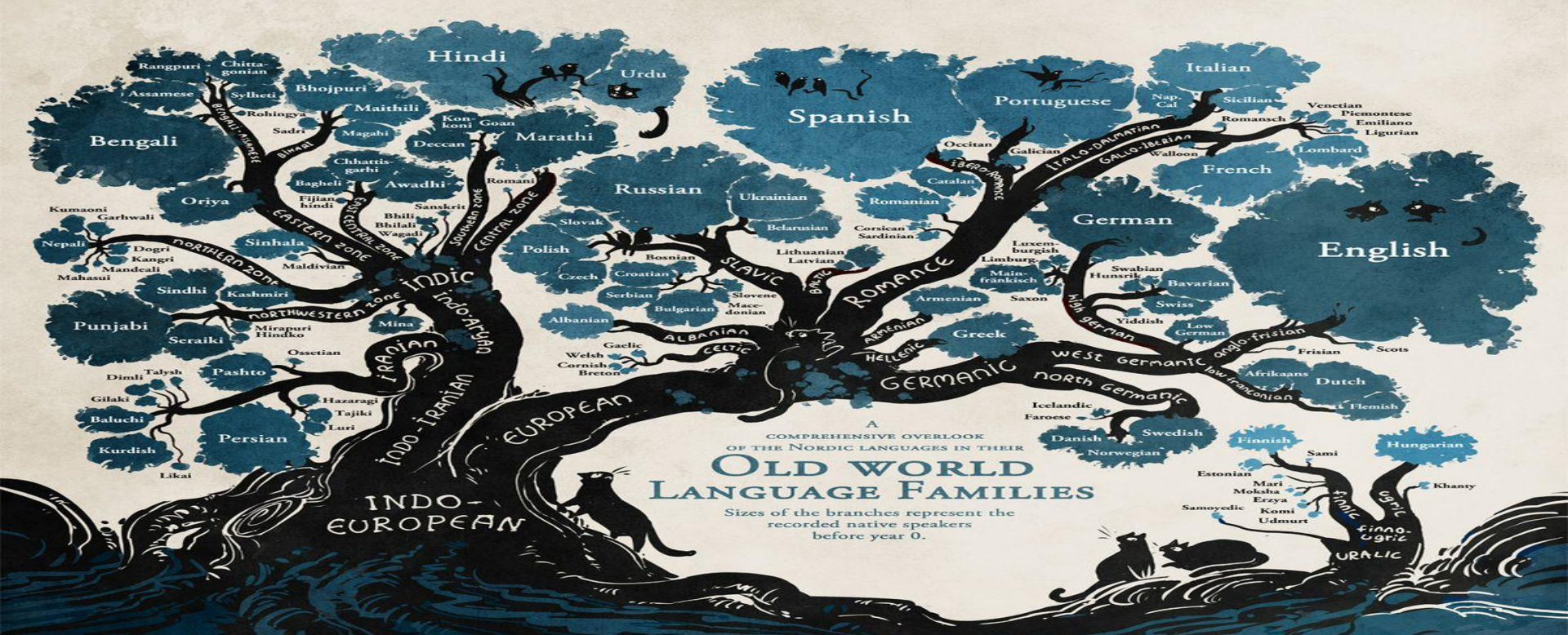
The Characteristics of English Language

Among the different languages of the world, English is the most widely spoken and written languages of the world. Today, English occupies the prestigious place of an International language. It is utilized by the largest number of the people of many nations in all the five continents in the world.

The reason, which comes to our notice is that, it is not due to the qualities of its own but there are important historical, political and economical reasons for its worldwide popularity. The other obvious reason is that English speaking nations, like England and America have made it prominent. However, no language can become so important, unless it has some outstanding and special characteristics for its phenomenal growth and popularity. The main characteristics for this stride of English language are as under:

- 1) Receptiveness
- 2) Heterogeneousness
- 3) Simplicity of Inflexion
- 4) Fixed Word Order
- 5) Use of Periphrasis
- 6) Growth of Intonation.





COMPREHENSIVE OVERLOOK
OF THE NORDIC LANGUAGES IN THEIR
OLD WORLD LANGUAGE FAMILIES

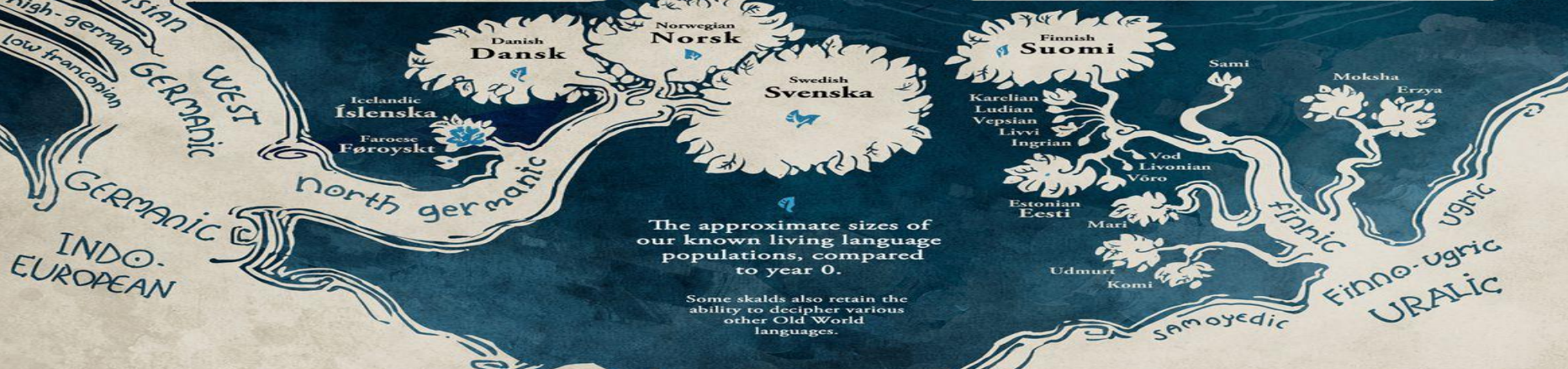
Sizes of the branches represent the recorded native speakers before year 0.



The historic spread of
Indo-European
North Germanic



Uralic
Finnic



The approximate sizes of our known living language populations, compared to year 0.

Some skalds also retain the ability to decipher various other Old World languages.

The Characteristics of English: Assets

- **Heterogeneous**
- **The adaptability, receptiveness and assimilative power**
- **The exceptional range and extent of its vocabulary.**
- **Simplicity of inflection**
- **Evolution of English from being a highly inflected language in the Old English period to one of minimum inflections today - Illustrations.**
- **Fixed word order a consequence of the simplification of inflections.**
- **Periphrases another consequence of inflectional simplicity - Use of prepositions taking the place of the lost inflections**

ENGLISH IS EXTRAORDINARY RECEPTIVE AND HAS ADAPTABLE HETEROGENEOUSNESS:

- English has accepted words and material from all over the world.
- It has made new elements of language, its own.
- In the fifth and sixth centuries, English was a pure and unmixed language.
- It could make its own new words.
- It has now become the most mixed language.

Heterogeneousness

The most obvious and the most important characteristic of English is its extraordinary receptive and adaptable heterogeneousness - the varied ease and readiness with which it has assimilated material from almost everywhere in the world. English, which evolved from the dialects of the Jutes, Saxons and Angles during the fifth and the sixth centuries, was almost a pure, homogeneous tongue, depending in a very large measure on its internal, intrinsic resources for word-building and enrichment. Then it had a negligible sprinkling of words borrowed from Greek, Latin and Celtic.

Now English has become the most heterogeneous of languages having received from the seventh century downwards all kinds of foreign elements with ease and assimilated them all to its own character. This unique tendency of the English language has invested it with an amazingly copious vocabulary and an even more amazing variety and heterogeneity.

The assimilative power of English and its general receptive remains almost unparalleled in the history of human languages. It is this trait, more than anything else, that has contributed to its cosmopolitan character making it a suitable and attractive vehicle in several parts of the world. The following remarks of C.L. Wrenn (p.33) capture the extent of the copiousness and variety of English:

All the peoples with whom its speakers have come into contact during more than thirteen centuries of its growth, whether these contacts have been deep and lasting like those of France and ancient Rome, or casual like those of Spain or Czechoslovakia, have almost without exception left permanent marks on the vocabulary.

The Romans with whom the ancient Germanic tribes had dealings, the Romanized Britons, the Latin Fathers of the Church who were once so eagerly studied, the Danish and Norwegian invaders, the Norman French conquerors, the revived ancient Latin and Greek Classics at the Renaissance, the Italian artists and men of letters of the sixteenth century, the great colonizing nations of the same century-all these have made their contribution to the English vocabulary. Arab mathematicians from Spain have enriched our language, as have American redskins and Indian sepoy.

More than half of its vocabulary is derived from Latin, some words being direct borrowings, a great many through French, and some more through the other Romance (Italian, Spanish, Portuguese) languages. (We shall be discussing these loan words in detail in a later lesson). English, marked by an unusual capacity for assimilating outside elements, has borrowed words from several other languages outside of Europe. Look at the following loans:

American Indian : moose, raccoon, skunk.

Words brought from the Arabs : algebra, cipher, saffron, cotton, amber, arsenal, assassin, magazine.

From India : nirvana, karma, yoga, sahib, mongoose, bungalow, juggernaut, bangle, chit, shampoo, dinghy.

Persian : azure, jasmine, khaki, shawl, checkmate.

In Modern English the subject and the object do not have distinct forms, nor do they have, except in the possessive case (e.g., boy's), inflectional endings to indicate the other relations marked by case endings in Tamil and Latin. Instead, we make use of a fixed order of words in English, in which there is a great deal of difference between Nero killed Agrippina and Agrippina killed Nero. The order of words remaining fixed is a direct consequence of the reduction and loss of inflections in English. The fixed word-order in relation to meaning in a sentence has thus taken the place of freedom made possible by the system of inflections.

THE SIMPLICITY OF INFLEXIONS.

- It means English can indicate with ease the relationship of words in a sentence with the minimum change in the shape words.
- Inflexions are suffixes which inflect a word.
- barring the Chinese language, English has reduced the inflexions to a minimum.
- This has led to simple inflexions by reductions.
- These inflexions show the relationship of words to each other.

RELATIVELY FIXED WORD ORDER.

This can eliminate ambiguity .

If there are plenty of inflexions ,this can be done with the help of inflexions .

But in English inflexions are reduced and it does not change words to show their relationship.

So the order of words is fixed in relation to meaning.

This fixed word order takes the place of inflexions.

ANOTHER CONSEQUENCE OF THE REDUCTION OF INFLEXIONS IS THE GROWTH OF PERIPHRASES.

- The round about way of speaking the use of prepositions to replace inflexions.
- An elaborate system of tenses existed but now the English simplified verb uses periphrases and compound tenses made with auxiliary verbs.
- Moreover English which had many case ending one time, now uses prepositions.
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The simplification of inflections has yet another consequence :
The growth of the use of periphrases or the roundabout ways
of saying things, and of the use of prepositions to take the
place of the lost inflections.

Look at the sentences below: Periphrases

1. What we need is your words of encouragement.
(It could well be 'we need your words of
encouragement').
2. It is unwise to entrust him with so much of
responsibility.

(To entrust him with so much of responsibility is unwise).

Prepositional use

1. The branches of the tree,
(for *tree's branches*).
2. The friend of Sita's niece.
{*Sita's niece's friend*}.

ENGLISH HAS DEVELOPED A VARIETY OF INFORMATION TO EXPRESS SHADES OF MEANING.

- Intonation is the pitch and intensity and the tone of voice.

Natural Gender

- English now enjoys an exceptional advantage over all other major European languages in having adopted natural in the place of grammatical gender. In the Romance language, there are two genders; masculine and feminine, with distinctive endings for each. In the other Germanic languages, there are three genders arbitrarily distributed.

The gender in these languages determines the form of inflection and the agreement of adjectives, and also affects the reference of pronouns. In the English language all this was stripped away during the Middle English period, and today gender in English is determined by meaning. All nouns naming living creatures are masculine or feminine according to the sex of the individual, and all other nouns are neuter. Obviously, this trait is one of the chief assets of the English language.

Lack of correlation between spelling and pronunciation

A serious criticism of English is the chaotic character of its spelling and the lack of correlation between its spelling and pronunciation. That is, the same sound is not regularly represented by the same character, and a given character does not always represent the same sound. For instance

The vowel sound i: in believe, receive, leave, machine, be, see is in each case represented by a different spelling

On the other hand, the symbol a has different phonetic values as in *father, hale, hat*, etc.

The sound of sh has 14 spellings :

shoe, sugar, issue, mansion, mission, nation, suspicion, ocean, nauseous, conscious, chaperon, schist, fuchsia, pshaw.

Obviously, one cannot tell how to spell an English word by its pronunciation, or how to pronounce it by its spelling.

Idiomatic expressions

This is largely due to the simplification of inflections. A language which has reduced its word endings to the minimum has to naturally depend on idioms, the stereotyped expressions peculiar to the given language. An idiom is by definition a construction standing apart from the rest of the language on account of its irregularity. One class of idioms in English is illogical.

Examples

The use of the word *fast in go fastis* not the same as *stand fast*. We describe a person as being 'as fit as a fiddle' or 'as bold as brass'. But in what sense can a fiddle be called fit, or brass bold?

Another class of idioms involves breach of grammar or syntax. There is the idiomatic expression 'It is me' while grammatically the correct form is 'It is I'.

Questions

- I. Describe the characteristic features of English.
- II. Discuss the general character of English. What are the unique characteristics of the English language?
- III. Discuss, heterogeneity, inflectional simplicity, fixed word order, periphrases, grammatical gender and intonation.

Write short notes on the following in about 30 words each:

1. Heterogeneity of English
2. Word order in English
3. Simplicity of inflections
4. Periphrases
5. Gender system in English
6. Intonation
7. Spelling and pronunciation in English.

CONCLUSION:

- ❑ The copiousness and heterogeneousness of English leads to lack of clarity.
- ❑ Only the well educated can use all the resources at the same time we meet everywhere vagueness, woolliness of expressions and inexact speech so 'English is among the easiest languages to speak badly but most difficult to use well.
- ❑ Follow this link for examples :
https://prezi.com/lfszfow__o3a/the-characteristics-of-the-english-language/

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THANK YOU