



National Journal of Hindi & Sanskrit Research

ISSN: 2454-9177

NJHSR 2024; 1(54): 219-223

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www.sanskritarticle.com

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Sources of Language: An Analytical Study on the Origin, Growth, and Classification.

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Introduction

Since the emergence of life on Earth, living beings have used various sounds, gestures, and signals for communication among themselves. Unlike other beings, the ability of humans to speak and laugh is a great blessing. With the influence of reasoning to think and act, humans began to form a precise language for communication. According to different regions, we have many different languages. Human language is both cognitive and behavioural. Cognitive aspects of human language include the ability to understand and use language to communicate, think and reason. The natural aspects of human language include the skill to produce and understand spoken and written language.

There are many questions like- what is language? How did language begin? How are new words formed? The different branches of linguistics that examine the origin, development and interrelationship of different words and languages. The word "Language" comes from the old French word 'language', which itself comes from the Latin word 'lingua', meaning 'tongue' or 'speech'. The system of language developed through the grammatical rules that regulate how sounds, words, and sentences are combined. It uses many symbols of sounds, gestures, and characters. These are known as spoken languages, sign languages, and written languages in respectively. The first function of language is to communicate thoughts and ideas.

The Evolutionary Journey of languages

Communication through Language is one of the most significant achievements of human society. The power of language is a beautiful and strong way to express ideas, share emotions, and communicate knowledge. The study of languages gives insight into human history, culture, and intellectual growth. Understanding their origin, development, and classification help us trace the path of human communication over time. Human societies migrated and settled in different regions, their languages adapted to new environments, and cultural and social needs. Sometimes words were invented, borrowed, and modified. New grammatical methods and systems were developed. Oral traditions eventually led to written forms, preserving knowledge across generations. Historical and social events like trade, victories, migration, colonization, and globalization also influenced language development. For example, Latin influenced many languages like French, Spanish, and Italian. Sanskrit shaped several Indian languages like Hindi, Bengali, Marathi, Guajarati, Kashmiri, Malayalam, Telugu, and Kannada. About one and a half lakh years ago, the language developed through oral communication. Communication between humans begun with gestures and several sounds, and gradually evolved into words and sentences. Language developed into written form about 6000 years ago. The development of language and types of linguistics, historical linguistics, linguistic ontology, contrastive

linguistics, etc. are detailed study subjects.

The successive phases of Vāk or word are referred in R̥gveda and Vākya-padīya of Bhartṛhari. In R̥gveda:

“Catvāri Vāk parimitā padāni tāni vidurbrahmaṇā ye maṇiṣiṇa:

Guhā trīṇi nihitā: neṅgayanti turīyam vāco maṇuṣyā vadanti.”¹

‘Vāk has four measured divisions or Padas. The bright Brahmins know them Three of these are hidden in secret, indicate no meaning; men speak the fourth grade of speech.’ In R̥gveda the four stages of speech are mentioned. But the exact words- Parā, Paśyanti, Madhyamā and Vaikharī are not clearly mentioned. In Vākya-padīya we can find the details of them. (1-142). Moreover,

“Parā vāñ mūlacakrasthā paśyantī nābhisamsthitā
Hridisthā madhyamā jñeyā vaikharī kaṇṭhadeśagā.”²

The four types of speech are Parā, Paśyantī, Madhyamā and Vaikharī. Parā means eternal and divine sound beyond words. Paśyantī is known as the seeing stage or inner vision of thought. Madhyamā which means, intermediate stage of silent mental speech. Vaikharī is the outer speech from the mouth. In the ancient Sanskrit texts, we can find such thought-provoking ideas behind the origin and development of words and languages. Without the light of words, the world would be in deep darkness. Says Īśvara Pratyabhijñā-kārikā :

“Idamandham tama: kṛtśnam jayeta bhuvanatrayam
Yadi śabdāhvayam jyotirasamsāram na dīpyate.”³

“All three worlds would be in a great darkness if there were no light of words.” These all verses are showing the importance and value of language, and it is an inseparable element of this world.

In Sanskrit literature, Panini’s Aṣṭādhyāyī, (about 5th-4th cen BC) Pathanjali’s Mahabhāṣya, (about 2nd Cen. BC) and Vararuchi’s Vārthika (about 3rd-2nd Cen.BC) form the foundation that strengthens the Sanskrit language. Panini, an Indian linguist, scientifically analysed language. Aṣṭādhyāyī explains the scientific origin, structure, and development of words making it the foundation of Sanskrit and linguistic science. Panini’s Aṣṭādhyāyī is the earliest scientific study of grammar and language. This text explains how words are formed from roots (dhātus) and suffixes (pratyayas) using exact rules. Moreover, it shows how sounds (śabdās) combine to express meanings and giving a logical origin of words.

Example: Dhātu (root) is the base of a verb, from “gam” (to go) dhātu, the verb gacchati (goes) will come. Pratyayas (suffixes) like – “Tin” Pratyaya (verb ending), “Krt” Pratyaya (Primary suffix), “Taddhita” Pratyaya (secondary suffix) and “Sup” Pratyaya (case ending) are very important in the formation of words in Sanskrit. Each Sanskrit word derived from dhātu or base with the addition of pratyaya.(suffix) Panini’s Aṣṭādhyāyī gives exact sutras for every formation. Yaska’s Nirukta, (about 7th-5th Cen.BC) one of the six Vedāṅgas, or limbs of the Vedas, is a pioneering text on etymology, semantics, and philology, focusing on how words get their meaning within a specific context. Yaska explains the philological

Principle that most words are derived from verbal roots, a core concept for understanding Sanskrit vocabulary. Nirukta provide an etymological and semantic analysis of Vedic words to help in the understanding of the Vedās.

In Vākya-padīyam of Bhartṛhari, the author sees language (speech or Vāk) as a divine, eternal power, and Śabda-Brahma. (Śabda-Brahman) This divine speech or śabda manifests as language, allowing humans to express thought and realize truth. Vākya-padīya is a philosophical-grammatical treatise about language, meaning, and consciousness (Śabda-Brahman). This verse from Vākya-padīya is very important and remarkable-

“Anādinidhanam Brahma Śabdatattvam yadaḥṣaram.

Vivartate arthabhāvena prakriyā Jagato yatah”⁴

“The eternal Brahman, (śabda or word) is beginningless and endless-the imperishable essence of Śabda-Tattva. (Word-principle) It manifests in dual form- as word (Śabda) and meaning (Artha) due to practical purpose, in the form of sentence, speech and language.”

“Ātmarūpam yatha jñāne jñeyarūpam ca driśyate.

Artharūpam tatha śabde swarūpam ca prakāśate.”⁵

This verse shows that Bhartṛhari’s view that just as pure awareness reveals what is to be known, so too the power of sound (śabda) reveals its inner meaning. The importance of śabda or speech is referred in Vākya-padīya—

“Na varṇavyatirekeṇa padamanyad ca driśyate

Vākyaṃ varṇapadābhyām ca vyatiriktam na kincana.”⁶

It means-words are not separate from letters or syllables. A sentence is not separate from letters and words. The essence of sound or śabda is Brahman itself, there is nothing higher than that. Regarding the word and sentence, Diamond A.S. in his work,⁷ refers as- “The smallest separate unit of speech which has meaning is called a ‘word’. This may consist of only one sound, but generally of a group of

sounds. The minimum complete communication is a 'sentence'."

Languages – The Pillars of Human Connection

Languages are fundamental pillars of human connection because they serve as the primary tool for communication. Language not only helps to communicate but to acquire knowledge and culture and to develop our nation and to cultivate inter-national relationships, agriculture, trade and business. Phonological texts, vocabularies and encyclopaedias are detailing the origin, usage and validity of sounds have emerged in all languages to maintain a proper understanding of those languages. Communication becomes possible through language. Additionally, language is needed for education, culture, history, national development, international relations, trade, and more. Language is not just a means of communication, it is the foundation of human progress, culture, and cooperation in society. The language one speaks often signals belonging to a particular social group and is a powerful signal of identity. There are so many signed languages in the world for the deaf. In the words of Ellisa.L.Newport- "Extensive Linguistic research has focused on signed languages that have evolved spontaneously within communities of deaf users. These are generally considered 'natural' signed languages. These also exist several artificial gestural languages or codes. Much of research has been conducted in the United States, it has concentrated heavily on one particular language, American Sign Language (ASL), which is used by the Deaf community of the United States and parts of Canada.

However, researchers have also begun to investigate other natural sign languages of the world, including Nicaraguan Sign Language, Japanese Sign Language, Swedish Sign Language, British Sign Language, and many others." ⁸

The Linguistic Diversity: Major Divisions of World Languages

According to Ethnologies, there are approximately 7159 living languages in the world, and in Asia has the highest number of languages, with about 2300. The number of languages is not static. India is the home of 1600 languages. In 2011 census recorded 121 languages spoken by 10000 or more people. Only some of these languages are currently in use. There are only 22 languages accepted by the central Govt. of India as recognized languages. These include Assamese, Bengali, Bodo, Dorgi, Gujarati, Hindi, Konkani, Kannada, Kashmiri, Maithili, Malayalam, Manipuri,

Marathi, Nepali, Oriya, Panjabi, Sanskrit, Santali, Sindhi, Tamil, Telugu, and Urdu. Languages are divided into many families. There are several languages in Indo-European language family.

There are eight languages in the Indo-European family, which branched into various branches. They are-Albanian, Armenian Balto-Slavic, Celtic, Germanic, Hellenic, Indo-Iranian, and Italic. The Indo-European languages are found in Europe, the Iranian plateaus, and the northern Indian subcontinent. Some European languages include English, French, Portugese, Russian, Dutch and Spanish. Indo-Aryan is a branch of the Indo-European language family. In India, more than 700 languages belong to four language families. Indo-Aryan, Munda, Dravidian and Sino-Tibetan. The Indo-Aryan language family is a sub-division of Indo-European language family. Sanskrit, Hindi, Kashmiri, Marathi, Panjab, Urdu, Bengali, Odia, Sindhi, Assamese, Bhojपुरi, Maithili and others are Indo-Aryan languages. The main branches of Indo-Aryan languages are Indic and Iranian. Sanskrit is included in the Indic branch. Sanskrit is similar in its grammatical structure to the early Indo-European languages such as Greek and Latin. Munda is known as the language of the undeveloped. Malayalam, Tamil, Telugu and Kannada, which belong to the Dravidian language family of South India, are known as literary languages. There are many other Dravidian languages that are less popular. The Sino-Tibetan language family includes 400 languages such as Chinese, Tibetan and Burmese.

The eight schedule of Indian constitution contains 22 languages. These are known as scheduled languages and are given recognition, status and official encouragement and support. Among the 22 languages of India Tamil (in 2004), Sanskrit, (2005), Telugu (2008), Kannada (2008), Malayalam (2013), Odiya (2014), Marathi (2024), Bengali (2024), Assamese (2024), Pāli (2024) and Prākṛit (2024) are got the distinction of classical languages because of their rich heritage and wealthy content.

The Art of Word formation: How Languages Create Words It is important to know the formation of words in our languages. Several words originated from roots with appropriate meanings. It is necessary to create new words in language according to the needs of the time. The invention of new words is required for the new tools, objects and terms of this era. The word 'Viṣṇu' in Sanskrit is derived from the root VIS', which means 'one who entered everyone' and 'Kṛṣṇa' is derived from the root

KR̥Ṣ, Ākarṣaṇe, which means 'one who attracts everyone'. In Sanskrit Dūravāṇī means 'word from far', it is commonly using for the tool phone. The word Jangama, which denotes portable or mobile. So, for the tool, mobile phone, equal Sanskrit word is Jangama dūravāṇī. Huge difference in total number of languages is based on the fact that the source and methodology used to define a 'language' versus a 'dialect'. Various words to signify 'language' clear the facts about the usage of such methods. For example, "Bhāṣā" in Sanskrit came from the root 'Bhāṣā vyaktāyām vāci', which means- the method that we use to express our thoughts. So many words are derived from the roots and adding prefix or suffix with the roots. These types of words will be increased the wealth of language. We can contribute apt words for each thing and enrich the language. When new objects and subjects arise according to the time, there must be appropriate words to introduce them. Names can be given to such objects based on their origin, use, nature and form. Whether they are nouns, place names, or personal names, most of these Sanskrit terms and words have evolved according to their specific characteristics. The development of the Sanskrit language is closely linked to how words are derived from the root sounds and root verbs (dhātus). Sanskrit language follows a systematic process to develop meaningful words from the roots. Pāṇini's Aṣṭādhyāyī explains the origin of the words 'Sanskritam' and 'Prākṛitam'. (Samyak Kritam /Samskāra śuddham or well-made, refined speech) and Prākṛitam (Prākṛtam/ Prakṛtyā bhavam or natural, original speech) Yaska's Nirukta, following Pāṇini's and Patanjali's grammar tradition, explains the origin of the word 'Sanskrita' from the verbal root 'Kr'. ('Kr' Karṇe iti, meaning "to do" or "to make"), when the prefix "Sam" is added, it becomes "Sanskritam". Like this, the word "Prākṛitam" comes from "Pra" + "Kr" (to do), meaning that which is natural/original.

Vedic Sanskrit is the earliest recorded Indo-Aryan language, around 1500 BC. Classical Sanskrit standardized by Panini in his Aṣṭādhyāyī around 500 BC. Prākṛit languages represent natural, spoken languages of the common people and originated from the Indo-Aryan family. It was used in Jain, Buddhist and early literary works around 300 BC. Pālī, Mahāraṣṭrī, Śaurasenī, Ardhamāgadhī, Paiśācī, etc. are the examples of Prākṛit languages. Apabhramśa languages a group of late middle Indo-Aryan dialects that developed from Prākṛit around 600 AD to 1000 AD. Main Apabhramśa dialects are Śaurasenī

Apabhramśa, Māgadhī Apabhramśa, Ardhamāgadhī Apabhramśa, Mahāraṣṭrī Apabhramśa, etc. These dialects later gave rise to modern Indo-Aryan languages (from 1000 AD onwards) like Hindi, Gujarati, Marati, and Bengali. Examples of word development in different languages. The word dharma is used as 'Dharma' in Sanskrit, "Dhamma" in Prākṛit, and "Dhamo" in Apabhramśa. Language is a unique human tool for communication. It likely began from sounds, gestures, or emotions, as explained by theories from the west. In 19th cen.A.D, German philologist and Orientalist, Friedrich Max Muller in his work,⁹ categorized such theories based on

the presumed source of early human speech sounds. The Bow-Vow theory, Ding-Dong theory, Pooh -Pooh theory, Yo-He-Ho theory, Gesture theory, and Musical theory were well-known theories on the origin of human language. The Bow-Vow theory proposed by Max Muller. This states that language originated by copying natural sounds, such as animal cries or the sounds of wind and water. Words like cuckoo, crow, quack, etc. are examples. These are called onomatopoeia words. Primitive people imitated such sounds from nature. They gave words that resembled those sounds. Ding-Dong theory also associated with Max Muller. It explains that language originated from humans by imitating natural sounds, linking sounds with meaning. Words were formed as a response to the sounds around, like 'ding-dong' representing ringing or resonance. Pooh-Pooh theory proposed by Jean-Jacques Rousseau. This theory suggests that language started from the emotional expressions and natural cries – like 'oh! Ah! Ouch! etc. These sounds deeply expressed feelings such as pain, joy, or surprise, and eventually developed into words. Yo -He-Ho theory proposed by Noire. It explains that language originated from rhythmic chants and sounds produced by people working together. When early humans did hard physical work then they made rhythmic sounds such as 'Yo-He-Ho' to coordinate their effort. These sounds slowly developed into speech and words as humans began to communicate while working. Gesture theory introduced by Wilhelm Wundt and Richard Paget. Language started with hand signs and body movements to convey ideas and feelings. Before speaking, ancient men communicated through gestures. Musical theory of Otto Jespersen says that early communication was musical or melodic. Language grew from emotional, musical expressions-not from need, but from feeling. Early humans expressed feelings of love, joy, or sadness through melodious sounds rather than

practical speech. Later, these musical expressions slowly changed into meaningful words and sentences. This theory states that language began through musical sounds, such as singing, humming, and emotional expressions. These theories offer interesting perspectives, but modern research suggests that language likely developed through a combination of factors, including social interaction, cognitive development, and environmental influences.

Conclusion

Language is a powerful medium of communication for the heart. Due to the mutual influence of languages, many languages have enriched their vocabulary by borrowing and giving words. Language development should cultivate the richness of vocabulary in new generations and enrich the language with new words. According to the change of time, some words have entered languages. They add to the linguistic wealth. Language is dynamic; it is a living, changing system that grows with human society. Its origin is rooted in our early need to communicate, its development reflects human creativity and interaction, and its classification explores the different culture and heritage. The study of language allows us to appreciate the richness of human expression and the deep connections among people across time and space. Language is a unique human trait that has evolved over thousands of years. Its origin reflects human creativity, emotions, feelings, social interaction, and the need to communicate ideas. Understanding the origin and development of languages helps us appreciate human culture, thought, and the continuous development of communication. Languages connect people, preserve traditions, express thoughts and emotions, and enable learning and progress. Without language, social interaction and the transfer of knowledge and ideas would be impossible.

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Footnote

- 1 RV 1-164-45
- 2 Bhartrhari-Vakyapadiyam (1-142 Vyakhya)
- 3 Iswara pratyabhijnakarika (1-5-14)
- 4 Bhartrhari-Vākyapadīya Brahma kānda- verse-1
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