

Literary Luminaries and English Vocabulary: An Analysis

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Abstract

The intention of the paper is to exhibit a comprehensive reading of literary luminaries who contributed to the stock of English vocabulary. English language has the most enriched vocabulary of the world. It is famous for its derivative, assimilative, structural and flexible features. English people have inquisitive mind and they add to their stock what they found essential for them. So I shall show indebtedness of English language towards the great luminaries. It has influence of foreign vocabulary. English language can be called a language of massive efforts and it is a collage. It has got influenced and it has also influenced several languages.

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Introduction

Literature and linguistic aesthetics are two phase of a single paper, without one other has no value. English luminaries do not only created great works but also enriched its vocabulary. English is a living and growing language. The vocabulary of English is so rich because of its digestive, assimilative, inventive and derivative features. It has assimilated words and phraseology from Greek, Latin, French, Scandinavian, Hindi, Urdu and American dialects. It did not only assimilate but made everything of its own. Time to time essayists, poets, novelists, philosophers, scientists and thinkers added its treasure with words and phrases. It has discarded, replaced, and modified a large number of words. It is remarkable to note how a dialect became an international language. It has become the language of international communication and business.

Analysis and Discussion

During old English period (450-1150), Middle English period (1150-1500) and Modern English period (1500 -1945) a large number of words were borrowed from French, Latin, and Celtic Civilization and other foreign languages; if we talk about its borrowing nature. The old English vocabulary, despite minor borrowings, remained overwhelmingly Teutonic. The vocabulary of English was enriched by means of combination and external borrowings. It was only through Norman Conquest (1066) that a large number of foreign words entered the English vocabulary. There are several foreign words

and expressions English language but there is no problem in understanding it because they have become common.

Conquests are not only conquests of countries or cultures or races but also a great mixture of their languages. The conquest of the Celts (1066) did the same thing. The result can be seen in the name of places like- Devonshire, Cornwall, Cumberland, and so more.

English vocabulary is much indebted to Latin. The introduction of Latin words into English vocabulary has taken place over a considerable period. It was result of Britain's contact with Latin civilization.

A bundle of words were transmitted into English vocabulary with Christianizing of England in 597 A. D. Several words regarding religion came into English vocabulary like- church, bishop, angle, psalm, hymn, minister, canon, anthem, pope, canonization, monastery etc.

During the renaissance period a number of Latin, Greek and Italian words were directly loaned as- affidavit, agenda, alibi, exit, extra, memorandum, propaganda, deficit, veto etc. The terms renaissance itself is a Greek word which mean in English rebirth, revival, and reawakening of classical learning. In England during Elizabethan age there was a renaissance of learning which enhanced English vocabulary.

The influence of French commenced during middle ages. Today we can perceive how numerous French words have become pulp and seed of Modern English vocabulary.

Several words regarding religion, government, legal terms, medicine, military affairs were borrowed during those days and were assimilated in English vocabulary. Religious words like miracle, mercy, grace, passion, charity, sacrament, saint are direct borrowings from French vocabulary. Words regarding legal terms like- judge, jury, bail, perjury, plaintiff, plead, etc. have been borrowed from French language. Terms related to national government like chancellor, country, minister, reign power, council, subjects are French in origin. A great deal of military vocabulary was introduced into English language. Here are some most important words regarding military services- assault, enemy, lieutenant, sergeant, soldier, troops, captain, colonel and so like which are treated in modern time as English words.

English vocabulary is enriched by German, Italian, Spanish, Arabic, Hebrew, Latin, Greek, Persian, African, Indian and other languages of the world to the great extent. Italian words like motto, fiasco, opera, balcony, attitude, isolate, stanza, piano, portico, soprano, umbrella, replica, studio, cameo, portico, tempo, extravagant etc. are well circulated in modern English language. From Arabic language it borrowed alcohol, alchemy, sugar, elixir, fakir, gazelle, mosque, cipher, syrup and so more. From German vocabulary it borrowed several words like kindergarten, cobalt, zinc, quartz, girl, luck, boy, leitmotif, luck, mud, scoff, freight etc. From Portuguese language it borrowed banana, cobra and molasses. From Persian language it took magic, paradise,

tulip, Lapis-Lazuli, orange, azure, scarlet and lilac etc. From Mexican words it inherited chili, chocolate, and from the West Indies vocabulary cannibal, maize, tobacco. From Spanish it borrowed renegade, armada, cargo, guerrilla, matador, mosquito and vanilla.

Apart from several borrowings, conversions, assimilations, derivations English vocabulary owes much to its great luminaries who contributed new words. The etymological meaning of a poet is 'creator' or 'maker'. Orthography of English language is varied and multifarious with several dimensions. The first great poet of England; Geoffrey Chaucer was instrumental in introducing new words and phrases. He is called pioneer and father of English poetry. He is also called the father of coining of new words. He was a man of great learning. He had fine balance of French, Latin, and classical languages. He was also well versed with local dialects. His art of characterization is well accepted in modern age. Although several of his words have been modified and replaced yet there are a number of words which are still in use in modern English as; attention, duration, fraction, position, location and so more. In *Prologue to Canterbury Tales* he has devised several new words. Chaucer's contribution to English language is original and par excellence. He took, converted and modified several words from French and known dialects of the time. He introduced new genre of literature in English. Langland was a great contemporary poet of Chaucer whose contribution to English vocabulary is

also considered valuable. But his words have been replaced and modified due to their inarticulate nature and modernistic replacing sensibility.

In the 16th century William Shakespeare, Edmund Spenser, Tyndale, Coverdale and The university wits scholar coined several new words to express their ideas. With the renaissance influence there was a flood of learning in England. There was rebirth, reawakening and revival of Classical and Greek literature. It was a high time of discoveries, through new words were imported. People were full of enthusiasm and grasped and coined a huge number of new words. It is said that one third of the Elizabethan English vocabulary was coined by William Shakespeare. He was a man of great imagination and practical wisdom. He wrote thirty seven plays, one fifty four sonnets and some longer poems. His plays are full of new words. Only in *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *Tempest*, and *King Lear* he has introduced nine hundred new words. In all his plays there are a bucket of new words present. He framed words for himself; like the verb "articulate" (from one of the meanings of Latin word *articulus*, 'an article or condition in a covenant') to express concisely 'enter into articles;' and "articulated," to express 'set forth in articles.'

You are much more *attask'd* for want of wisdom than prais'd for harmful mildness. -- *Lear*, i. 4.

In the above passage, the word "attask'd" succinctly expresses 'taken to task. He framed the vigorous word "forc'd" to express

'reinforced,' 'provided with forces'; and yet the emendators have sought to deprive us of it by proposing various substitutions.

A good sherries-sack hath a twofold operation in it. It ascends me into the brain: dries me

there all the foolish and dull and cruddy vapours which environ it; makes it apprehensive, quick, *forgetive*, full of nimble, fiery, and delectable shapes. -- 2 *H. IV.* iv. 3.

The word succinctly expresses 'capable of mentally forging.' He coined the word "immoment" to express 'unmomentous,' 'of no moment or importance.' The word "incorps'd" more compactly expresses 'incorporated,' while "demi-natur'd" poetically suggests the dual formation of the centaur -- half-man, half-horse. From the Latin word *indigestus*, 'disordered,' 'confused,' he framed the term "indigest," which he uses as a noun, in the first of the above passages, to express 'a mass of confusion or disorder,' 'a chaos or chaotic state'; and as an adjective, in the second of the above passages, to express 'unformed,' 'shapeless. He has coined the word "needly" to express 'needfully,' 'necessarily;' and has used it here in combination with "will be" as a form of our modern idiom 'needs must be.' Here is a host words which were coined by Shakespeare- academe, addiction, bloodstained, assassination, bandit, blushing, blanket, compromise, discontent, drugged, impede, frugal, exposure, jaded, hurried, grovel, pedant, scuffle, radiance, negotiate, hint, gust, madcap, majestic,

generous, fashionable, epileptic, dishearten, countless, dauntless, unreal, varied, birthplace, metamorphose, lustrous, invulnerable, laughable, secure, torture, monument, zany, cold-blood, amazement and so more.

The Authorized Version of the Bible (1611) brought a host of new words, proverbs and phraseology. It was an effort of combined venture by a host of scholars. The scholars were engaged by King James that is why is also called as King James Bible. By it new words came into currency with radical sensibility. It was a combined effort of forty seven scholars who worked on it for long time. They translated, discussed, proposed and coined new words. They did so by using affixes. They used Latinized words. The translation influenced English Prose to a large extent.

In 17th century John Milton formulated various new words. His words like pandemonium, irradiance, dimensionless, emblazoning ensanguined and pantheon are still in use. He used pandemonium to show the new residence of fallen angels. In *Paradise lost* there are five and new words and Latinized borrowings. He was a man of great classical and religious learning. He converted several words from noun into adjective, from verb into noun and from noun into verb. John Donne also contributed new phases and words tinged with religious odor.

In 18th century great poets like Dr. Samuel Johnson, Alexander Pope, and other poets and dramatists coined new words which are

not in currency in modern English language because they have become obsolete.

In 19th century poets like John Keats, P.B. Shelley, William Words Worth, S.T. Coleridge also tried to coin new words but are not in general use in modern English language because they do not suit to modern sensibility. But few words which were coined by John Keats are still in circulation. He compounded words. 'Full-throated ease', 'magic-casements', 'perilous-seas', and so many have become irreducible part of English vocabulary which were coined by John Keats.

In modern age there has been no single literary personality whose coinage have got familiarity. Among the prolific writers like Carlyle, James Joyce, Henry James, Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot, W.B. Yeats, Lawrence, and Gertrude Stein coined new words and phrases but could not get common acceptance.

Not only poets but also essayists, novelists and other sort of personalities, writers, and scientists contributed a large for English vocabulary. Essayists and prose writers like William Wycliffe, Thomas Malory, Caxton, Sir Thomas Moore, John Lyly, Robert Greene, Sir Thomas Browne, Lord Chesterfield Sir Walter Scott, Samuel Peppsy, and others contributed to the treasure of English Vocabulary.

The Renaissance, Reformation, Puritanism, French revolution and other religious and literary movements gave currency to several words. These were radical movements of

and other countries England which influenced not only England but also the whole world. Modern English vocabulary is the riches the vocabulary of the world. From it has taken several words like jungle, curry, coolie, pundit, bungalow, lathi, etc. They reigned upon India for a long time. They influenced and got influenced from Indian, culture, language and various dialects and sensibility.

Conclusion

To conclude it can be said that English is an international language whose vocabulary is so enriched and prosperous. It has become an indistinguishable part of our daily communication. India like developing countries is performing their official work in English. In India English has been recognized as the second language and is being used as second language.

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