

ENGLISH LANGUAGE COURSE (Basics)

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IMPORTANCE OF ENGLISH

Bilingual people like Pakistanis have to take up the study of a major foreign language for purposes of international communication. Their national languages are minor languages in the sense that they are not extensively used as a means of exchange of ideas beyond the boundaries of the Indo-Pakistan sub-continent.

English is indispensable because of the following reasons:

- It is the foremost medium of international communication.
- It is a store house of world knowledge.
- It is a custodian of standard terminology.
- It is a language of commerce and industry.
- It is a language of diplomacy.
- It is necessary for our technicians.
- It is essential to keep abreast of modern developments.
- It is an effective means for promoting international understanding.
- It has a great market value.
- It is needed for higher education and research.

Language

Language distinguishes man from the rest of the animal world. Other animals communicate with one another by means of cries etc. But these various means of communication differ in important ways from human language. Animals' cries are not articulate and lack structure.

“A language may be said to be a method by which a person expresses his thoughts and feelings in such a way that they can be understood by others. It is a system of communication by written or spoken words, which is used by the people of a particular country or area”.

In other words, “A language is a signalling system which operates with symbolic vocal sounds, and which is used by some group of people for the purposes of communication and social co-operation.”

Some languages such as English or Russian or Chinese are used both in speech and in writing; others, for example some of the African languages, have not yet got an accepted orthography and are used mostly, or only in speech.

In short, language is a series of sounds, usually strung together in groups, which convey meanings to listeners.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Of all the major languages, English has the largest vocabulary ...800,000 words. Of these the longest one syllable word with eight consonants and only one vowel is 'strengths'.

There are 7,327 known languages and dialects spoken in the 191 countries in the world. Fewer than 2,000 have writing systems (the others are only spoken) and currently over 250 are represented by on-line dictionaries.

These are Abenaki , Apache , Ekegusii , Faroese , Frisian , Gullah , Hausa, Karuk , Khakas , Kituba , Nanticoke , Sardinian , Sinhalese , Tamasheq , Twi , Yoruba , Wyandot .

Abenaki ,Aklanon ,Albanian ,Algerian,Amharic, Apache ,Arabic ,Armenian ,ASL, Avestan, Ayapathu , Aymara, Bamwe , Bantu, Basa, Basque, Belarusan, Bemba, Bengali ,Berber, Bicol Bisaya, Bobangi, Brahui , Breton, Butuanon, ,Bukusu, Bulgarian, Burmese ,Cantonese ,Catalan, Catawba,Cayuga, Cebuano ,Chamorro etc

DIALECT

When we listen carefully to the sounds that people make when they speak, we shall notice that different speakers of the same language do not always speak alike. The chief cause of these differences is geographical dispersion; many languages are spoken over a wide area, and people from different parts of the area speak somewhat differently. For example, Australians may say 'arvo', while, others say 'afternoon'.

"The various local types of a language are known as dialects".

In every country several dialects are used by the local population comprising the various linguistic units, and the greater the territory of a country, the more likely it is that a great variety of dialects are spoken by its people. In Pakistan, for instance,numerous dialects are being spoken Urdu, Pushto, Punjabi, Sindhi, Balochi etc.

A dialect is not the same thing as an accent, which is the way a person pronounces words.

STANDARD ENGLISH

Standard English is the dialect of English used by most educated English speakers and is spoken with a variety of accents.

It is an institutionalized form of English; that is to say, it is the form that is socially most acceptable throughout the society in which English is used. It is the form that foreign learners seek to learn, and it is the form that is most widely taught in schools.

ALPHABET

Alphabet is a set of letters, arranged in a particular order, used in writing language.

The letters of the English language are twenty-six in number. In a perfect alphabet there should be special symbol or letter for each sound, and no sound should have more than one symbol or letter. But our alphabet is not like that, and is a very poor guide to pronunciation. Certain letters such as 'c', 'q', and 'x' are unnecessary and could be taken away; 'c' could be replaced by 'k' or 's', 'q' by 'k', and 'x' by 'ks' or 'gs'.

So many of the letters are overworked and have to stand for several sounds. The letter 'g' for example, has to do duty for three different sounds in the words garden, gentleman and prestige. The letter 's' has to represent three different sounds in the words 'this', 'these', and 'sugar.'

To make matters worse we have about five hundred ways of writing our forty-three sounds.

LETTERS

The twenty-six vowels and consonants of the alphabet.

WORD

It is a sound or group of sounds that expresses a meaning and forms an independent unit of a language.

In other words, it is the smallest unit of language that people can understand if it is said or written on its own.

When we speak, we produce a succession of sounds arranged in groups which we call words, and each word has a definite meaning in the minds of the persons using that language. But to somebody who does not know that language, the words convey no meaning; every language on earth has its own particular set of words, most of which are quite different from those of any other language.

Examples:

Word can be very small like 'he', 'so', or very long, like 'antidisestablishmentarianism'.

Etymology

The branch of language study dealing with the meaning, formation, and origin of words.

SYLLABLE

A word or a part of a word uttered by a single effort of voice is called a syllable.

In other words, it is a word or a part of a word, which contains a single vowel sound.

For example,

'Cheese', 'cat', and 'fought' have one syllable,
'but-ter', 'rating', 'deny' have two syllables,
'mar-ga-rine', 'excitement', 'superman',
'telephoned' have three syllables,
'American', and 'complicated' have four syllables,
'examination', and 'uncontrollable' have five
syllables.

CLASSIFICATION OF SOUNDS

The sounds, which the organs of speech are capable of uttering, are of

many different kinds.

VOWELS

It is one of the human speech sounds that we make by letting our breath flow out without closing any part of *our mouth or throat*.

In English, the vowels are ‘a’, ‘e’, ‘i’, ‘o’, ‘u’, and sometimes ‘y’.

DIPHTHONGS

The word diphthong means “a double sound”, from the Greek *di*, “two” or “twice”.

Two vowel sounds pronounced as one syllable.

For example,

‘ei’, ‘ou’, ‘ai’, ‘au’, ‘oi’, ‘ay’

It is a vowel sound consisting of intentional glide, the organs of speech starting in the position of one vowel and immediately moving in the direction of another vowel.

Exercise:

Way, away, boy, four, tour

CONSONANT

It is a speech sound made by partly or completely stopping the flow of air through the mouth. A letter that represents one of these sounds is called consonant.

The blockage may be in anyone of a large number of places, at the lips, at the teeth ridge, or further back in the mouth. The blockage may be complete, so that no air can pass, or only partial, so that some air escapes, but with a frictional noise.

All the letters except the vowels are consonants.

Exercise:

PLOSIVES *P, T, K* (voiceless) as in pin, tin, kin.

B, D, G (voiced) as in bin, din, begin.

NASALS *M, N, NG* as in met, net, netting

LATERALS Clear **L** as in along, (before vowels)

FRICATIVES (1) **F, TH** (voiceless) as in fifty, thirty.

V, TH (voiced) as in have, there.

(2) **S, SH** (voiceless) as in six, suga

Z, ZH (voiced) as in zero, pleasure

(3) **R** as in red

H as in house

5. **AFFRICATES** **TCH, TR** (voiceless) as in catch, train

J, DR (voiced) as in age, drink

6. **SEMI-VOWELS** **W** as in with.

Y as in yes

CONSONANT CLUSTER

A group of two or more consonants together in a syllable is called a 'consonant cluster'.

It is called a "Releasing Cluster" if it precedes, and an "Arresting Cluster" if it follows the vowel.

The greatest number of consonants possible in a releasing cluster in English is 'three', and the greatest number of consonants possible in an arresting cluster is 'four'.

Examples: Handkerchief, Grandfather, Sandwich, Almond