



# Editorial

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## On Language: Its Birth, Its Growth, and Its Fragile Immortality

One often hears the casual accusation—sometimes spoken with frustration, sometimes with intellectual arrogance—that *English is an unscientific language*. The charge is usually supported by its unruly spellings, its inconsistent grammar, and its abundant exceptions to rules that seem to promise order but rarely deliver it. Yet such an accusation rests on a fundamental misunderstanding—not merely of English, but of language itself.

No language is scientific. And for a simple reason: science has never invented a language.

Languages are not engineered in laboratories; they are born in human breath, gesture, need, and imagination. They emerge

organically among people bound by geography, culture, and shared experience. To judge a language by the standards of scientific exactitude is to judge a living organism as though it were a machine.

Language, like life, does not obey immutable laws. It evolves.

Every language carries within it a life cycle—birth, growth, transformation, and, sometimes, death. It is born when a community begins to share meaning through sound and symbol. It grows when that community expands, migrates, or comes into contact with others. It flourishes when it learns to adapt, to borrow, to absorb difference. And it dies—not suddenly, but quietly—when it is no longer transmitted, no longer written, no longer spoken with urgency or pride.

A language restricted to a narrow geography, to a shrinking population, or to rigid forms risks extinction. History is replete with such losses. Languages do not perish because they are inferior; they perish because they fail to travel—across borders, across generations, across texts.

The idea that when a language is spoken by a limited group it remains a dialect, and when embraced by many it becomes a language, is not merely semantic. It reflects a sociolinguistic truth: **languages gain legitimacy through collective use**. Numbers matter. Mobility matters. Cultural exchange matters. A language grows powerful not through purity but through participation.

This is precisely why flexibility is not a weakness of language—it is its greatest strength. A language that borrows survives. A language that resists influence stagnates. English itself is a testament to this truth: Germanic at its core, enriched by Latin, French, Greek, Arabic, and countless other tongues, it stands not as a monument to order, but as an archive of encounters.

At the heart of this process lies grammar—often misunderstood, often maligned. Grammar is not science; it does not function like Newton's laws, which remain universally

true regardless of context. Grammar comes later. It follows usage. It attempts to describe what speakers already do, not to dictate what they must do.

This is why grammar tolerates exceptions. These exceptions are not failures of logic; they are evidence of history. Each irregular verb, each anomalous plural, each syntactic oddity carries the residue of past usage, contact, and change. Grammar is not a law of nature; it is a **social agreement**, refined over time to provide structure, intelligibility, and pedagogical clarity.

Without grammar, a language becomes difficult to transmit. Without grammar, learning becomes chaotic. Yet without flexibility, grammar becomes a prison. The vitality of a language depends on this delicate balance: enough structure to be learnable, enough freedom to remain alive.

Equally central—perhaps even more so—is literature.

Literature is not merely the ornament of a language; it is its laboratory. Through literature, words are tested, meanings stretched, syntax bent, and style refined. Literature transforms language from a tool of survival into a medium of thought, memory, and imagination. It is through poetry, fiction, drama, and criticism that a language learns to reflect upon itself.

A language without literature remains functional but fragile. It may communicate needs, but it cannot sustain identity. Literature grants a language cultural depth and temporal continuity. It preserves voices beyond their time and enables a language to speak to generations yet unborn.

From an editorial standpoint, this relationship between language and literature is not abstract—it is urgent. As editors, critics, and scholars, we are not passive observers of language; we are participants in its evolution. Every article we publish, every poem we curate, every critical essay we endorse contributes—however subtly—to the shaping of language.

When literature thrives, language thrives. When literature declines, language retreats into mere utility.

The comparison between scientific theory and grammatical rule is instructive. Newton's First Law of Motion remains valid regardless of who observes it or where it is tested. Grammar does not enjoy such universality because language itself is not universal in that sense. It is local, historical, contingent. Grammar adapts because people adapt. Language bends because life bends.

This is why the search for a “perfectly logical” or “purely scientific” language is both futile and dangerous. It ignores the human element—the messiness, creativity, contradiction, and emotion that language exists to express.

Languages grow when people speak them widely, write them boldly, and allow them to change. They die when confined, when frozen, when denied the freedom to evolve. The death of a language is not merely a linguistic loss; it is a cultural amputation.

As Editor-in-Chief, I see language not as a system to be policed, but as a living inheritance to be nurtured. The role of a literary journal is not to enforce rigid correctness, but to encourage thoughtful, imaginative, and responsible engagement with language. Our task is to ensure that language remains expressive, inclusive, and alive.

To call a language “unscientific” is, ultimately, to misunderstand its purpose. Language was never meant to obey equations. It was meant to carry human experience—complex, contradictory, and endlessly evolving.

And in that sense, language is not unscientific at all.

It is profoundly human.

— Khurshid Alam, Founder-Editor, Contemporary Literary Review India.

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