

FEATURES OF LANGUAGE.

No definition of language is adequate enough to include all the elements, because language is a very complex human phenomenon. It is defined as contextualised systematically sounds. Linguists like Spier, A. H. Gardiner, R. H. Robins and Ronald W. Langacker have defined it differently. Spier points out, "Language is a primarily human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions and desires by means of a system of voluntarily produced ~~syntactic~~ symbols. For Spier language means the sum total of such signs of our thoughts and feelings are capable of external perception. R. H. Robins observes, "Language is a device that establishes bound meaning correlations pairing meaning with signals to enable people to exchange ideas through observable sequences of sounds."

To understand what language is, it is fruitful to study the characteristics or properties of organisation of sounds of vocal symbols. - The sounds produced from the mouth to convey some meaningful message. This means that speech is primary to writing. It is a systematic verbal symbolism that exploits sounds, words, phrases etc to make sentences.

Language is not merely verbal or vocal, it is also a means of communication. Non linguistic symbols such as traffic lights, road signs and other codes are not perfect a means of communication, as language is. Language is the best means of self-expression. Language enables a human being to communicate his vision, perception, thought and emotion. It is also instrumental in making past, present and future.

Language is a social event, as it exists in society. It is a means of nourishing and developing culture and establishing human relations. In other words, language is a set of conventional communicative signals used

by the human beings for communication in a community. Language in this sense is a possession of social group. It is an indispensable set of rules which permits its members to relate to each other.

Language is an outcome of evolution and convention. Like other institutions, language also change and die, grow and expand. Every language is a convention in a community. A man has acquired it.

Language is arbitrary in character. It is so because there is no inherent or logical relation or similarity between its meaning. There is no reason why the quadruped animal should be called 'dog' in English, 'kutta' in Hindi, 'Kukkur' in Sanskrit, 'chien' in French and 'Kalb' in Arabic etc.

Language is characterized by symbolic verse; a symbol which serves as a substitute. It is representative in character and signifies a system of arbitrary symbols.

Language is a systematic arrangement of linguistic units which correlate word and meaning. Each language has a special system suitable for conveying message within its framework of structure and meaning.

Language is a unique phenomenon. They do not have any similarities or universals. Despite their common features and language universals, each language has its peculiarities and distinct features.

Language is both linguistic and communicative. It is an abstract set of psychological principles and sociological considerations that constitute a persons competence as a speaker in a given situation. Thus, language is not just a verbal behaviour. It is a system of rules establishing correlations between meanings and sounds sequences. It is a set of principles

that a speaker masters. In short, it is a code which is different from the act of encoding or decoding. It is a speaker's linguistic competence.

Language is structurally complete. This is why animals cannot acquire it because of its structure and their physical inadequacies. Besides their brain and articulatory organs are also different from that of human beings.

From the characteristics of language, we come to the conclusion that language is "a patterned system of arbitrary sound, symbols whose characteristic features of displacement, cultural transmission, productivity and quality are rare or absent in animal communication."

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