



## A study on language and its characteristics

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### Abstract

Language is one of the most important and characteristic forms of human behaviour. Language consists of words, idioms and syntax and it is through language that we learn to think, feel, judge and express. The rich heritage of great ideas and actions passes over to the young generation in terms of its language. It is thus a great preserver of old experiences and wisdom through which new generation is transformed. Language helps Nature of Language the past come to be true in terms of the present and helps us to our own future.

**Keywords:** language, communication

### Introduction

Man's great achievement and the sign that he is above all other creatures and what distinguishes him from the great ape is language. He has rightly been called as 'a talking animal'. All of us live in a world of things and persons. Similarly, we have built a world of words and we live in it. And it is through language that the dead are enabled to collaborate in the education of the living, and in the transformation of man, the ephemeral biological unit, into man, the historic person. Language makes possible the communication of meanings and the sharing of experiences among a people, enabling them to form an enduring society and to create and transmit a distinctive culture. Learning of a language entails a deliberate and diligent effort and consists of meaningful patterns that make one intelligible to the group.

These patterns did not originate overnight but are traced over the entire expanse of human history and civilization. Language is a system of arbitrary vocal symbols commonly shared by a group or community. It performs the basic function of meaningful expression within the group by means of these vocal symbols and, therefore, has a social relevance and utility. Being specific to a group, language not only has a common social setting but also a commonly shared cultural and experiential background. The operating word throughout this analysis has been patterns.

The word, 'language' appears to have been derived from the Latin word, 'Lingua', which implies 'tongue'. French terms, 'langue' and 'parole' also bear impression of 'language'. It is a specific form of speech which evolved over a period of time. It is a kind of conventional arrangement, a common usage, and mutually intelligible patterns of words and idioms which help the group to effectively communicate. It is why, language is called a social phenomenon, because it has relevance only in a social setting.

Language undergoes a continuous, though unnoticed, process of growth and change. It becomes sharp, crisp, refined and versatile with the passage of time. It is not a static affair. Pick up the historical background of any language; you will be

astonished to notice the major changes in spelling, meaning, pronunciation and its connotation and denotation. Hence, language is a living phenomenon. It is a means of "expression and communication uttered or heard being so combined in systems evolved, conventionalized and recognized by common usage at any given period of time in the history of human race within a given community or within given communities that are mutually intelligible to all approximately normal members thereof." (Louis Gray) In its broadest and most general sense, language may be said to be any means of expression or mental concepts by any living beings whatsoever and of communicating them to, or receiving them from other living beings. Language is the entire complex of communication of emotions and ideas. It includes the first cries of connections with physiology, psychology, history, etc. It appertains to individual and society.

### Review of Literature

Ahmad *et al.* (2011) conducted a research program on the nature of difficulties in Learning English by the Students at Secondary School Level in Pakistan. The present study was undertaken evaluate the difficulties of 645 secondary school students. These student belonged to 8 Federal schools and 8 provincial governments' schools. Test was used to collect data which was later analyzed by SPSS 17.0 software. By investigating the research it was concluded that that the students of provincial govt. schools faced more difficulties in learning grammar, whereas the students of Federal government school face less problems in learning English as second language.

Akram *et al.*, (2012) conducted a research in Burewala & Vehari. They worked on the topic of Problems in Learning and Teaching English Pronunciation in Pakistan. A set of questionnaire was given to the teachers. The data was collected obtained from the questionnaire test. And analyzed by SPSS software with basic statistics. The present study revealed that student faces some problems in identification of different sound and also unavailable to express these sound.

Due to this reason it was found that they needed a specific training for resolving the problems. The research concluded that to improve pronunciation of students, teachers should be aware of their weakness and strength regarding English pronunciation, and they should present themselves as role model for the students.

Bilal *et al.* (2013) conducted a research on communicative English skill of the Learners of Rural Areas School of Pakistan and found that these students feel problems and difficulties while speaking of English language. Questionnaire was used to point out the problems. Data collected from fifty students both male and female from high and higher secondary level. Students were found to have problems in speaking Skill. In Pakistan, even after studying English from eleven years, they still faced lack of confidence. By learning of so many years students came to know the adequate knowledge of subject and that is sufficient for passing the examination but on the same time skill for oral communicative English does not develop. It is because that the syllabus does not include any oral test which will enhance their language proficiency and oral communicative English skills. It is very important to teach the skills of oral communicative English of the language. Writing capability of the students taught only forms of linguistics but fails to develop student creativity. The study reveals that the syllabus should be planned. Trained teachers should be appointed. Learning environment should also be developed to overcome these problems.

Teevno (2011) conducted a research about challenges in teaching and learning of English at secondary level class (x). He worked on the population of 11 English teachers including 7 male and 4 female, 70 students including 40 male and 30 female and also; 6 English experts including 4 male and 2 female. He involved teachers and students in focus group discussion and administered questionnaires and experts were interviewed. The study concluded that Teachers had no proper training in teaching English. It also revealed that proper facilities were not provided and curriculum was not up to the needs of the students. According to research, these reasons create flaws in teaching and learning process.

Yulia Morozova (2008) out of four major skills (speaking, reading, writing, listening), speaking was one of the most important skills. It was recommended that speaking skill should be developed and enhanced so that efficient communicative English skills can be developed. For ELT (Elementary Level Teaching) the question of how to increase communicative competence was and tends to be the most crucial one. Eventually English language has become the most widely accepted language throughout the world. Moreover this is the only language which is used in most of the countries and in all areas of working. Due to these reasons English language has replaced all other languages and also dominating all others continuously. The modern world of media, mass communicative English, and Internet demands good knowledge of English, especially of spoken English. Nevertheless, most Russian students are not able to communicate in English fluently for many reasons. The present research is mainly focused to problems and facts that students feel while speaking in English language. More over this paper was concerned with problems in oral communicative English of the language of today's students in

Russia and to the existing methods of enhancing speaking skills of elementary level students. The present study also evaluated the reasons of unwillingness to communicate and what strategies should be used to sort out the problems, it is also studied in the research.

H Azman (2016) elucidated the implementation of English as a second language (ESL) learning and teaching programmes at the primary school level, spanning three decades of English language education (ELE) in Malaysia. The present study also reform for the initiatives as well as evaluate the arising realities. The realities highlighted underscore the paradoxical challenges experienced with each ELE reform that are introduced, arising from the multilingual and plural socio-political circumstances of the country. In particular, among recent reforms that are examined, is the consequence that the new Primary School Standards-Based Curriculum for English language education (SBELC), which was introduced in 2011, has on the literacy performance of year three pupils when they sit for the LINUS LBI (literacy and Numeracy Screening for English Literacy) test, and the extent to which the English teachers and these young learners are ready to embrace the new curriculum. Concurrently, a review of the Malaysia Education Blueprint (2013-2025) as well as the Malaysia English Language Roadmap (2015-2025), is undertaken and their implications for yet another major language in education reform juxtaposed against existing problems related to teacher's language proficiency, inadequate trained and skilled teachers, mismatch between curriculum and practices, limited language exposure, and most significantly, the foreboding view of the English language as a threat towards maintaining multilingual plurality, are duly extrapolated. By way of conclusion, this article draws upon selected innovative practices to illustrate the creative pathways that have emerged from these multifarious circumstances and have ironically shown potential in strengthening the young learners' English language proficiency, notwithstanding identified impeding factors.

### Characteristics of Language

**1. Language is vocal and Verbal:** Language is a systematic verbal symbolism; it makes use of verbal elements such as sound, words, and phrases, which are arranged in a certain way to make sentences. Language is an organisation of sound, of vocal symbols - the sounds produced from the mouth with the help of various organs of speech to convey some meaningful message. It also means that speech is primary to writing. There are several languages in the world which have no writing systems, yet they are languages because they are spoken. Music and singing also employ vocal sounds, but they are not language. Language is vocal in as much as it is made up of sound which can be produced by the organs of speech.

It recognises the expression and communication to or from human beings by means of speech and hearing. This means that the communication and expression of emotions, feelings and desires should be from man to man and that too by means of speech and hearing.

**2. Language is Systematic:** The speakers of language use only certain combinations. Language is the systematic composition or arrangement of linguistic units which correlate

words and meanings. Each language, therefore, can be described as a special system, suitable for conveying message within its own framework of structure and meaning, and having very little direct physical relation to the meanings or acts which it involves. It should also be remembered that language is meaningful. Its symbols are arranged in a particular system. All languages have their system of arrangements. Though symbols in each human language are finite, they can be arranged infinitely; that is to say, we can produce an infinite set of sentence by a finite set of symbols. Every language is a system of systems. All languages have phonological and grammatical systems, and within a system there are several sub-systems. For example, within the grammatical system we have morphological and syntactic systems, and within these two sub-systems we have several other systems such as those of plural, of mood, of aspects, of tense, etc.

**3. Language is Speech:** Language is distinct from the sign language even amongst the humans at any point of social and biological evolution. It restricts itself to recognised expression and communication to or from human beings by means of speech and hearing, and is distinct from the signs, gestures and sounds produced by animals or pets to convey a particular feeling or emotion. The communication, therefore, has to be from man to man, from a person to another person by means of speech and hearing. Speech, therefore, is language. The sounds produced by a man, conventionally recognised and understood mutually by a group of people, or between community and community, is called language. This is the social aspect of language in that it facilitates communication.

**4. Language is a Means of Communication:** Language is a powerful form of communication. Non-linguistic symbols such as gestures, signals, traffic lights, etc. are also means of communication, yet they are not so flexible, comprehensive, perfect and extensive as language is. It is through it that humans interact. It is language again that joins the present, the past and the future together. Language is the best means of self-expression. It is through language that humans express their thoughts, desires, emotions and feelings; it is through it that they store knowledge, transmit messages, knowledge and experience from one person to another, from one generation to another. Most of the activities in the world are carried on through or by it.

**5. Language and Society:** Language exists in society; it is a means of nourishing and developing culture and establishing human relations. It is as a member of society that a human being acquires a language. Language in this sense is a possession of a social group, comprising an indispensable set of rules which permits its members to relate to one another, to interact with one another, to cooperate with one another; it is a social institution.

We are not born with an instinct to learn a particular language. Language is a social event. It can be fully described only if we know all about the people who are involved in it, their personalities, their beliefs, attitudes, knowledge of the world, relationship with each other, their social status, what activity they are engaged in, what they are talking about, what has

gone before linguistically and non-linguistically, what happens after, what they are and a host of other facts about them and the situation they are placed in. We learn a language as members of the society using that language, or because we want to understand that society or be understood by that speech-community. If a language is not used in any society, it dies out. Language is the outcome of evolution and convention.

Each generation transmits this convention on to the next. Like all human institutions languages also change and die, grow and expand. Every language then is a convention in a community. It is non-instinctive because it is acquired by human beings. Nobody gets a language in heritage; he acquires it, and everybody has been provided with an innate ability to acquire language. Animals inherit their system of communication by heredity, humans do not.

A language is clearly a kind of code to the extent that it is a symbolisation of the phenomena of existence and imagination. It is more than a code because it is capable of change to meet new circumstances and to express variations of individual personality. Language offers a signaling system which can be put to many uses over and above the encoded information. A language is primarily an instrument of communication among human beings in a community. Language in its most common, pervasive, representative and apparently central manifestation, I involves oral-aural communication. Language is essentially speech. No species other than humans has been endowed with the gift of language. Animals cannot acquire human language because of its complex structure and their physical inadequacies. A language is an abstract set of psychological principles and sociological considerations that constitute a person's competence as a speaker in a given situation. These psychological principles provide him an ability to understand and create a system of rules establishing correlations between meanings and sound sequences language has creativity and productivity. The structural elements of human language can be combined to produce new utterances, which neither the speaker nor his hearers may ever have made or heard before any yet which both side understand without difficulty.

### Conclusion

Language changes according to the needs of society. Old English is different from modern English; so is old Hindi different from modern Hindi. Lokik Sanskrit, Pal and Prakrat are the various forms of Sanskrit arisen from a number of changes. It is a set of principles that a speaker masters; it is not anything that he does. In brief, a language is a code which is different from his linguistic performance. But mere linguistic or communicative competence is not enough for communication; it has to be coupled with communicative competence. This is the view of the sociolinguists who stress the use of language according to the occasion and context, the speaker and the listener, the profession and the social status of the speaker and the listener. That language is the result of social interaction; it is an established truth.

A language is more than a means to communicate with other people or nations. Man has to communicate with other persons of the society. He wants to not only express himself but also listen and understand the feelings of others. This interaction is the necessity of social life and it is possible only through

language. Language is basic to our culture. It is language through which we are able to understand others and ourselves. We are able to know our culture and cultures of others. It is very difficult to imagine man's life without language. The language of a country is the heart of its civilization. It is having an opportunity to share in the thinking and also the heritage of people of some of the advanced and free countries of the world. The importance of language in human life has to be sought for its use. Language plays an important role in giving affection to the child. It is a means of socializing the child who, in his own turn, displays affection for his fellow creatures through language and other actions. Language is an essential pre-requisite for human growth and development. The highest forms of philosophical thinking, reasoning and falsifying the old ones have been the result of language - the only highly evolved form of communication. It is through this means that we inherit the culture of the past; take part in the civilization of the present and we are able to make civilization of the future. Language is essential to gain access to the educational doors which help us in establishing contacts with the educated members of society. It is through language that an educated person becomes aware of literature, art, science and technology of his own country and also of other countries of the world.

Language undergoes a continuous and unnoticed change for it's -sidemen and depth. It responds to the demands and requirements of the pup that it represents. As the human utterances become complex and a language, in order to be living, must move with the group, must with the group, and should be alive to their needs and aspirations. In this process of change and growth, language acquires new shape, new approach, new significance and new application. Stand apart from or run parallel to direct experience, but completely interpenetrates with it. It is not possible for 'objective reality' and 'our linguistic symbols of reference to it' may stand apart. For the normal person, every experience, real and potential, is saturated with verbalism.

There is a constant interplay between language and experience and thus language is more than a symbolic system as mathematical symbolism or flag-signaling is, or the communication of message by flags as practiced by boy scouts. Language substitutes our experience, in addition to referring to it, molding it, interpreting it and discovering it. In our everyday life, speech and action go on supplementing each other (the uttering which prompted the action of plucking the fruit, or pushing a heavy article, should be remembered.

Language is an important part of our life and it operates at different levels. Therefore, it would be prudent to understand its diverse forms in brief so as to cultivate our learning in proper perspective. We shall discuss its different aspects under the following headings. When a child is born, he comes into contact with the speech as spoken by the family members, and it is from here that he cultivates understanding of different aspects of life. He may take a little time to understand all these, but then he goes on to cultivate different views through it. Thus, language remains the medium of understanding for a small infant.

As a child grows, language helps to expand his knowledge about diverse aspects of life and subjects. However, language is not similar which he uses in different contexts. Though the

wider connotation of language remains the same, yet we know that there is a distinction between the language he speaks at home and what he uses at school. Similarly, there is a difference in the language he uses in his peer group or what uses in communication and interaction with the elderly. This difference is like what we feel when we write a letter to a friend, or when we write an official letter to the principal or government officer.

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