

The Nature of Language and its Purposes: A Brief Review

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Abstract: *Language is a particular human cognitive capability. Language is the expression of ideas by means of speech-sounds combined into words. A language is a system of arbitrary vocal symbols by means of which a social group cooperates. Language enables us to express our thoughts, ideas, and emotions to other people as soon as possible.*

Keywords: Nature of Language, Purposes of Language

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Introduction

Language, in the opinion of many authors, is a means of communication. Though many animal species can communicate very well without words, it is still possible to do so without language. Professor Rao (2021) says, “Language is a particular human cognitive capability yet the intellectual processes answerable for the storage and recovery of linguistic and non-linguistic knowledge are fundamentally the alike”, (Rao, CS, 2021).

Here are some definitions of language:

“Language is the expression of ideas by means of speech-sounds combined into words. Words are combined into sentences, this combination answering to that of ideas into thoughts.” (Henry Sweet, an English phonetician and language scholar)

“A language is a system of arbitrary vocal symbols by means of which a social group cooperates.” (Bernard Bloch and George L. Trager)

“Language, a system of conventional spoken, manual (signed), or written symbols by means of which human beings, as members of a social group and participants in its culture, express themselves. The functions of language include communication, the expression of identity, play, imaginative expression, and emotional release” (Britannica).

Aristotle defines, “A language is a structured system of communication used by humans. Languages consist of spoken sounds in spoken languages or written elements in written languages. Language is a speech sound produced by human beings in order to express their ideas, emotions, thoughts, desires and feelings”. “Language is the inherent capability of the native speakers to understand and form grammatical sentences” (Chomsky); and Encyclopedia Britannica gives its definition as, “Language is a system of conventional or written symbols by means of which human beings as members of social groups and participants in its culture, communicate”. (as cited by Rao, CS, 2021).

Thus, communication between people requires language which is a crucial component of human interaction. All species have their own means of communication, but only humans have perfected the use of cognitive language. We may communicate our thoughts, feelings, and ideas to others using language. Language has symbolism and is composed of symbols. A symbol is anything that represents another thing. The things that we represent with symbols are not directly related to the things that they represent; instead, they serve as a stand-in for something else, such as a concept or a real object. We can hold abstract dialogues about things that are not currently part of our immediate world because symbolic communication is a trait that is unique to humans. Our usage of symbolic language is arbitrary, ambiguous, and abstract, which are three distinct characteristics.

Primary Purpose of Language

According to the majority of theories, language's main purpose is to ease communication, or the transfer of information from one person to another. There are several other uses for language, moreover, as noted by sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic studies. One of these is the use of language to represent a national or local identity, which is a frequent cause of conflict in environments where there are multiple ethnic groups present. Every facet of human life in society interacts with language, and only when this relationship is taken into account can language be comprehended.

The use of language is its primary purpose. It enables us to express our thoughts, ideas, and emotions to other people as soon as possible. However, by examining language's structural features, we can advance a more thorough understanding of it such as:

Informative Purpose: When we use language to convey information, we are using it for its informative purpose. Its main purpose is to educate others by being able to effectively communicate the facts.

Expressive Purpose: The expressive role of language is another fundamental feature. It serves as a means of self-expression by providing ways for us to communicate our sentiments, emotions, and attitudes to others (or ourselves).

Directive Purpose: A fundamental feature of language that enables us to direct or command is considered the directive purpose. For instance, it enables us to direct ourselves or another person in any given circumstance.

Language Types

Language has many diverse forms and interpretation techniques in addition to its various cognitive abilities. It will be easier for you to comprehend other aspects of language's significance if you can distinguish between these.

Oral communication, in general, refers to spoken language used for interpersonal communication. Writing down ideas is how written language expresses ideas. While written language is more official and slow, oral communication is typically more informal and quick.

Denotative and Connotative Meanings

Nearly all words in the English language have both denotative and connotative uses. The most fundamental or specific meaning of a word is referred to as its denotation. Contrarily, a connotation is an idea that a word implies or is connected to. Connotation encourages originality in literature by allowing for the use of figures of speech like metaphor, simile, symbolism, personification, etc.

Words carry a lot of meaning, and that meaning changes depending on the context in which the term is used. Denotative and connotative meanings exist for this reason. Connotative meaning refers to when words have positive or negative meanings or connotations as opposed to denotative meaning, which is a word's literal definition or intention. Depending on the context, words can generally have positive or negative connotations. Word usage can give off positive or negative senses, impressions, experiences, feelings, etc. For instance, in order to effectively convey their message, politicians and advertisers may favour terms having favourable connotations. A word with negative connotations may be used to describe unpleasant feelings.

Conclusion

Language, in the opinion of many authors, is a means of communication. Language is a particular human cognitive capability. Communication between people requires language considered a crucial component of human interaction. We may communicate our thoughts, feelings, and ideas to others using language. Thus, the majority of theories indicate that language's main purpose is to ease communication. There are several other uses for language, moreover, as noted by sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic studies.

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