

LANGUAGE AND ITS FORMS

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Language is the human capacity for acquiring and using complex systems of communication, and a language is any specific example of such a system. Estimates of the number of languages in the world vary between 6,000 and 7,000. However, any precise estimate depends on a partly arbitrary distinction between languages and dialects. Natural languages are spoken or signed, but any language can be encoded into secondary media using auditory, visual or tactile stimuli, for example, in graphic writing, braille or whistling. This is because human language is modality independent. When used as a general concept, "language" may refer to the cognitive ability to learn and use systems of complex communication, or to describe the set of rules that makes up these systems. All languages rely on the process of semiosis to relate signs with particular meanings.

Human language is unique because it has the properties of productivity, recursivity and displacement, and because it relies entirely on social convention and learning. Its complex structure therefore affords a much wider range of possible expressions and uses any known system of animal communication. Language is processed in many different locations in the human brain, but especially in Broca's and Mernicke's areas. Humans acquire languages through social interaction in early childhood, and children generally speak fluently when they are approximately three years old. The use of language is deeply entrenched in human culture. In addition to its strictly communicative uses, language also has many social and cultural uses, such as signifying group identity, social stratifications, as well as for social grooming and entertainment.

The English word “language” derives ultimately from Indo-European “dngwghzs” “tongue, speech, language” through Latin lingua, “language; tongue”, and old French language “language”. The word is sometimes used to refer to codes, ciphers and other kinds of artificially constructed communication systems such as those used for computer programming. A language in this sense is a system of signs for encoding and decoding information.

Language has two primary meanings, an abstract concept, and a specific linguistic system,

Eg. “French”, de Saussure, who defined the modern discipline of linguistics.

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Language is a formal system signs governed by grammatical rules of combination to communicate meaning. This structuralist view of language remains foundational for most approaches to languages today.

Noam Chomsky, the originator of the generative theory of grammar, has defined language as a particular set of sentences that can be generated from a particular set of rules. Language is a system of communication that enables humans to cooperate.

Human language is unique in comparison to other forms of communication, such as those used by non-human animals. It is open ended and productive ; meaning that it allows humans to produce an infinite set of utterances from a finite set of elements and to create new words and sentences.

Origin:

Theories about the origin of language differ in regards to their basic assumptions about what language is. Some theories are based on the idea that language is so complex that one cannot imagine it simply appearing from nothing in its final form.

Some theories say that it must have evolved from earlier pre-linguistic systems and our pre-human ancestors.

Study of language, linguistics has been developing into a science since the first grammatical description of particular languages in India more than 2000 years ago. Today, linguistics is a science that concerns itself with all aspects of language, examining it from all of the theoretical viewpoints.

Early history:

The formal study of language is often considered to have started in India with Panini, the 5th Century B.C. grammarian who formulated 3,959 rules of Sanskrit morphology.

However Sumerian scribes already studied the differences between Sumerian and Akkadian grammar around 1900 B.C. In the 17th Century A.D., the French Port Royal grammarians developed the idea that the grammars of all languages were a reflection of the universal basics of thought, and therefore that grammar was universal. The Scientific study of language was broadened from Indo-European to language in general by Wilhelm von Humboldt. Early in the 20th century, Ferdinand de

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Saussure introduced the idea of language as a static system of interconnected units, defined through the oppositions between them.

Languages evolve and diversify over time and the history of their evolution can be reconstructed by comparing modern languages to determine which traits they share with their ancestral languages. The languages that are most spoken in the world today belong to Indo-European family, which includes languages such as English, Spanish, Portuguese, Russian and Hindi. The consensus is that between 50 and 90% of languages spoken at the beginning of the twenty first century will probably become extinct by the year 2100.

Hodge and Kress point out, "Language is an instrument of control as well as of communication". Language policies in education represent a critical arena in which society's expectations for the success of its future members are simultaneously expressed, enabled and constrained. At times, choices about matters such as the language of instruction become controversial, as in the case of bilingual education. More often, though, the social values and mores shaping the curriculum, materials, methodology and even the language of instruction are implicit part of the "hidden curriculum" by which schools function. Furthermore, all social policies, including more related to language and education, operate in a dynamic social environment where other currents of social, political, economic and psychological changes carry their own momentum and interact with official decisions and the day to day activities of schools and classrooms.

Bilingual education challenges some deeply held values, such as a belief in a common historical experience, the belief that cultural integrity requires linguistic unity, the belief that language use is a private matter better left to families to decide. Language is conditioned by equality and national unity.

Access to education remains an important avenue of personal progress. Is the purpose of formal language education only for principally to get a job?

Education is "a program for social survival which is relative to society for which it is designed".

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In 1953, a UNESCO resolution held that every child should have a right to attain literacy in his or her mother tongue.

It is a war of words that began close to a century ago, and the debate is still alive today. Is language a binding force, or is it divisive? Does the sense of cultural identity it forges transcend national identity and secular ideas?

Mahatma Gandhi believed that the states should be carved on linguistic lines because language was the basis of identity. In a piece in the Times of

India, in 1947, which also appeared in 'Harijan', he wrote, "without linguistic redistribution, it would be very difficult to enforce all teaching through provincial languages in our schools and colleges and it would not be easy to oust English from the position it unlawfully occupies today."

J. Nehru and Vallabhai Patel stood strongly against linguistic divisions. They bereaved the nation that had just been torn apart by religious differences and the way forward was to promote secular ideas of peace and economic development.

In the end, language and popular sentiment prevailed. The Reorganization Commission was set up to draw more such lines on the Indian Map. But Patel asked at a public meeting "Why should you have the idea that you are separate? We should cease thinking in terms of people of different states; instead we should think that we are all Indians."



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