

## **Language**

**Language** is a part of culture, is a part of human behavior – It is an acquired habit of systematic vocal activity representing meanings coming from human experience.

### **Language definition implies:**

- i) It operates in a regular & systematic fashion.
- ii) It is basically oral and the oral symbols representing meanings as they are related to real life situation & experiences.
- iii) It is a controlled system.
- vi) It has a social function without language, society would not exist.
- vii) It is the most fundamental means of human communication..

### **Definitions of language according to:**

**Anthropologist:** is a form of cultural behavior.

**Edward Sapir** for example, defines it as (a purely human and non – instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions, and desires by means of a system of voluntarily produced symbols:

1. Language is a purely human activity.
2. All human beings use language to interact with other member of the same speech community.
3. Language is not only an instrument of communication, but as a means of individual expression.

4. Language is not instinctive, learnt as an arbitrary symbols produced by the organs of speech and produced by other systems like writing.

**Sociologist:** is an interaction between members of a social group.

**Students of literature:** view language as an artistic medium.

**Philosophers:** is a means of interpreting human experience.

**Teachers:** is a set of skills.

**Language as an act of communication:**

Language  $\Rightarrow$  human

Communication  $\Rightarrow$  non – human

Transmission: a message from a source to a receiver (both are human)



transmitted vocally through the air



graphically by marks on a surface "a paper".

**Forms of communication not human:**

1. Instinctive voices.
2. By touch or with their mouths or other parts of their faces or any other senses.
3. Body language (e. g. gestures).
4. Sign language (e. g. railway signals & traffic lights).

5. Language of ants, bees & birds.

**Semiotics:** is the science that deals with the scientific study of the properties of signaling systems whether natural or artificial.

**Esperanto:** a language based on pre – existing natural languages which was invented in the late 19<sup>th</sup> c. for the purpose of international communication.

**Speech community:** a group of people who form a community, e.g., a village, a region, a nation, and who have at least *on speech variety* in common.(= to understand each other)

**Spoken language:** (alive & changes by introducing new terms to it).

**Written language:** (a fossil & something artificial).

**Language as a controlled act of communication:**

1. We must think before we speak.
2. Language is based on rules governing our speech.
3. We cannot breathe, snore or sneeze at our will, but we can control our language.
4. We can speak or not at our will or we can use certain words any time we like.

**Uncontrolled vocal noises:** (sneeze or a snore) - don't communicate a message, i.e., lacking any internal structure or conventional meaning are not part of language.

## **Voice Quality**

- It is not language.
- It is idiosyncratic feature excluded from language.
- It only alters with age or physical change.
- It tells us who people are.
- It represents a personal quality.
- Normally, people can do nothing about their voice quality nor do they usually want to change it – unless by means of mimicry or acting.

### **Accent & Dialect:**

#### **Accent:**

1. It is not excluded from language.
2. It is more general phenomenon referring to the totality of sonic features a person has including his voice quality.
3. It is restricted to non – idiosyncratic features of pronunciation.
4. By it, we can know that someone comes from a particular region or social group.

#### **Dialect:**

1. Regional (local or geographical) spoken by the people of a particular geographical area within a speech community.
2. Social (class dialects) spoken by the members of a particular group or stratum of a speech community, e.g., dialect of Nobles in old English or the dialect of the working class.
3. Temporal (historical dialect), e. g., mid 19H. British English.

Accent	Dialect
Refers to variety of a language differing from the standard, particularly in pronunciation, e.g., in the speech of foreigners.	Refers to a variety of a language differing in pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary from the standard language which is in itself a socially favored dialect.

### **Difference between Dialect & language:**

#### **Dialect:**

- a) It is entire variety of language.
- b) It is sub – division of languages.
- c) It is of three kinds (regional, social, and temporal).

e.g. Chinese (mandarin, Cantonese, Pekingese).

#### **Language:**

e.g. Swedes , Norwegians & are able to understand each other

— They have separate histories, cultures, literature & political structure which make them being referred to as different languages.

### **Pidgin & Creole:**

#### **A. Pidgin:**

1. They are specialized languages.
2. It is used for trade or similar purposes by those who have no other common language.
3. They have simplified grammar & a highly restricted vocabulary.
4. It is used in very restricted purposes.
5. When originated as a "pidgin", it comes to be as the mother tongue of a speech community.
6. It becomes creolized when it becomes the mother – tongue of the communities.

**B. Creole:**

1. A dialect of French, Spanish, or English spoken by persons of mixed European & African descent in North & south America and West Indies.
2. It arises from a contact between different languages, often in situation of unequal power between the groups of speakers who use the languages.
3. It is a native language of no one.
4. It is formed by two speech communities attempting to communicate each approximating to the more obvious and common features of other's language.

**Some Characteristics of Human Language**

1. **Language is sound:** it is oral the common experience most humans have of language in speaking and listening to it.
2. **Language is systematic:** All languages are systematic; each language has its own system. For example, SVO is permissible in English but not in Arabic where the order VSO is permissible.
3. **Language is a system of system:** languages have both a phonological & a grammatical system, each with its proper units and rules of permissible combination and order, e.g. no such a word as "gstable" in English.
4. **Language is meaningful:** the sounds produced in speech are connected with almost every facet of human life and communication.
5. **Language is linear:** it is so called, since the sounds of language are produced by successive movements of the speech organs, for example, when we say (cup), first we pronounce /k/ then /ʌ/ and finally /p/ one following the other.
6. **Language is arbitrary:** there is no natural connection between a linguistic form its meaning; there is no intrinsic connection, for example between the word elephant and the animal it symbolizes.
7. **Language is conventional:** the use and information of linguistic units is so regular that these units almost seem to be employed according to an agreement among the speakers.
8. **Language is a system of contrasts:** Language is a system of differences to be observed, e.g., (record) /reko:d/ and (record)/ riko:d/, the stress tells that the former word is 'noun' and the latter is a 'verb'

9. **Language is unique:** Languages are unique because they are arbitrary and systematic networks of contrast.
10. **Displacements:** this not found in animals, but in humans. That is, most animals can communicate about things in the immediate environment only. For example, a bird utters its danger cry only when danger is present.
11. **Productivity:** It is a feature of all languages that novel (new) utterances creativity is continually being created.
12. **Cultural transmission:** Brown eyes and dark hair are inherited from the parent, but the parent's language is not inherited. A language is acquired in a culture through contact with other speakers and not from parental genes. The process in which language is passed on from one generation to the next.
13. **Discreteness:** refers to that the sounds used in language are meaningfully distinct. Each sound in language is treated as discrete, i.e., /p/ & /b/ are different sounds as when we consider the difference in meaning between the two words "pack" & "back".
14. **Duality:**
  - Level (1)** speech production: producing particular sounds like /t/, /æ/, /k/ = /took/ = (tack). They different from ⇒
  - Level (2)** producing a meaning: combinations 'act' = /ækt/, cat = /kæt/.

**The structure of language:** (the formal side)





### **Expression & content:**

- **Expression:** Linguistics deals with form or shape of linguistic elements without necessarily taking their meaning into account. For example, 'colorless green ideas sleep furiously' (a nonsense sentence made up by Chomsky) is a well-formed utterance.
- **Content:** deals with semantics – the study of meaning, from the view point of semantics the above sentence is rejected it is meaningless.