

Course One: An Introduction to Language Characteristics

1- What is Language?

Language is a very complex human phenomenon; all attempts to define it have proved inadequate. In common parlance it may be said that language is an organized noise used in actual social situations. That is why it is defined as contextualized systematic sounds.

2- Characteristics of Language

Language is human so it differs from animal communication in several ways. Language can have scores of characteristics but the following are the most important ones: language is arbitrary, productive, creative, systematic, vocalic, social, non-instinctive and conventional.

1-Arbitrariness

Language is arbitrary as there is no logical connection between the nature of things or concepts the language deals with, however by which those things and concepts are expressed. There is no reason why a 'single term' pronounced differently by different communities.

The decision of a word chosen to mean a specific thing or idea is absolutely arbitrary. It might be noticed that if a language is not been arbitrary, there would have been just a single language remained throughout the world.

2. Language is a Social Phenomenon

Language should be considered as a social phenomenon. It is as a means of nourishing and developing culture and establishing human relations. As a member of a particular social group, we human beings interact with each other, which allows us to identify with one another, to connect with one another and to coordinate with one another. This is how language is the part and parcel of our society.

3. Language is a Symbolic System

Language signifies as a symbolic system. It consists of different types of sound symbols for concepts, things, ideas, object etc. Language has sounds and words as their symbol.

4. Language is Systematic

In spite of the fact that language is symbolic, its symbols are arranged in specific systems. All languages have their arrangement of plans. Each language is an arrangement of systems. Furthermore, all languages have phonological and syntactic systems and within a system, there are also several sub-systems.

For instance, inside the linguistic system, we have the morphological and syntactic system, and inside these two sub-systems, we have systems, for example, those of plural, of mindset, or perspective, of tense, etc.

5. Language is Vocal, Verbal and Sound

Language is a system of vocal and verbal symbolism. It is essentially comprised of vocal sounds just created by a physiological articulatory component in the human body. First and foremost, it shows up as vocal sounds only. Language takes verbal elements such as sounds, words and phrases which are fixed up in certain ways to make several sentences.

Language is vocal and sound which is produced by different speech organs. Writing can be considered as an intelligent platform to represent vocal sounds. It is the graphic representation of the speech sounds of the language.

6. Language is Non-Instinctive, Conventional

No language was made in multi-day out of a commonly settled upon the recipe by a gathering of people. Language is the result of advancement and tradition. Every age transmits this tradition on to the following.

Like every single human organization, languages may also change and pass on, develop and extend. Each language has a circulation in a particular community around the globe. However, we can consider language as non-instinctive because naturally it is acquired by us.

7. Language is Productive and Creative

Language has its own efficiency and innovativeness. The auxiliary components of human language joined to created new expressions, which neither the speaker nor his/her listeners may ever have made or heard previously.

8. Language is a System of Communication

Language is strong, convenient and the best form of communication for no doubt. It is the best way to express everything. It is through language that we human beings express our thoughts, desires, emotions and feelings. Further, we can interact with each other easily through the welfare of language. After all, we may say that language is the best system of communication around the world.

9. Language is Human and Structurally Complex

Human language is open-minded, extendable and modifiable in contrary to animal language. Language should be modifiable through time to time. No species other than human beings have been endowed with the language. So we can say that language is naturally human and in some cases, structurally complex and modifiable.

10. Language is Unique, Complex and Modifiable

It's true that language is a unique phenomenon in the world. Every language has its own characteristics and distinctive features. Furthermore, each language has its own creativity and productivity to deliver the best ways in order to communicate with each other. And this is how language has its own potentiality to be unique, complex and modifiable by the change of time and culture.

