

Chapter I

IMPORTANCE OF LANGUAGE IN SOCIETY

Language is basically a system of communication where sound or signs convey objects, actions and ideas. The history of language dates back to many thousands of years. Language is primarily spoken not written. But the development of the writing medium and later the printing system went a long way is the dissipation of knowledge and without which humans would have remained in the dark about the ways of life and the thought processes of their ancestors. Language is the key to human lives. They can eliminate misunderstanding by using it as an instrument to transfer communication among people. Malinowski suggests, language is "the necessary means of communion; it is the one indispensable instrument for creating the ties of the moment without which unified social action is impossible."¹ Language can thus be said to be at the core of humanity.

Language is an extraordinary gift of God. It is part of what makes man fully human. In fact, Aristotle says man is a rational animal and that what sets him apart, what raises him above the animals, is that he has the ability to reason, and it is very clear that he cannot reason without language. "Aristotle was convinced, however, that meaning was no less an integral part of language than the sounds which bear the meaning and that language depends no less on the rational powers of man by which meanings are constructed than on the

physiological organs by which sounds are formed."² Language is necessary in order for man to be a rational creature.

In other words language is what made the growth of civilizations possible. The only means of understanding the great minds of the past is by studying the contemporary written documents of the time. Language is a means of forming and storing ideas as reflections of reality and exchanging them in the process of human intercourse. Language is social by nature and thus inseparably connected with people who are its creators and users; it grows and develops together with the development of society. Stalin observes about language, "It arises and develops with the rise and development of a society. It dies when the society dies. Apart from society there is no language."³

Much has been said about the relationship between language and society. In the history of linguistics, it is rare to find investigations of any language which are entirely cut off from concurrent investigations of the history of that language, or of its regional and social distributions, or of its relationship to objects, ideas, events, and actual speakers and listeners in the 'real' world. It is believed that "Man's relation with the society is so intimate and close that it is very difficult to isolate him from the social environment in which he is born, nurtured and grown to be a man."⁴

The legend of the Babel's tower tells that at the very beginning of the world, the human beings had only one and unique language.⁵ Now there are

over 5000 languages in the world but on the other hand around 25 languages die every year. According to Jean A Laponce: "When the protections cost of its language does not have any more sufficient compensation in the form of social and psychological earnings, languages disappear".⁶

Nobody really knows how human speech evolved from animal grunts. But it is true that language the distinguishing characteristic of man and not only differentiates him but also makes him superior to other animal species. Influential US linguist Noam Chomsky argued that humans are born with the ability to speak a language. He even went on to say that some very general aspects of grammar are built into every human mind irrespective of nationality.

"Chomsky believed that humans acquire language through an instinctive knowledge. He thought that there was deeper meaning to words and that was how people learned them so easily."⁷ Professor Lloyd James on the other hand said that many animals also have the necessary speech organs and had they tried to develop the aptitude to use them like primitive men did, then even they would have developed speech of their own.⁸ Sir G. Elliot Smith has rightly remarked that the discovery of speech marked the beginning of man.⁹

S.Pit Cordor, an eminent British linguist says - "The first way we can approach language is as a phenomenon of the individual person. It is concerned with describing and explaining language as a matter of human behaviour. People speak and write; they also evidently read and understand what they hear. They

are not born doing so; they have to acquire these skills. Not everybody seems to develop them to the same degree. People may suffer accidents or disorders which impair their performance. Language is thus seen as a part of human psychology, a particular sort of behaviour, the behaviour which has as its principle function that of communication."¹⁰

FEATURES OF LANGUAGE

Language is a means of conveying ideas to others. This can also to a certain extent be done by the use of gestures and signs. For instance nodding of the head as a substitute for the word 'yes' or shaking the head from side to side instead of saying 'no'. Language is different from signs and gestures because it employs sounds which have meaning for the users as well as the hearers. The sounds of speech are deliberately and intentionally uttered and are therefore to be distinguished from the emotional cries which are mechanically and intentionally uttered under the influence of joy, fear, anger or surprise. There are two aspects of language namely the inner one relating to the meaning one wishes to express, and the outer one relating to the expression of that meaning through the medium of speech. When speaking a language, words are used which serve as outer symbols of the ideas in the minds. The distinction between speech and language is often associated with De Saussure whose work "Cours de Linguistique generale" was published posthumously in 1916. The distinction had been recognized earlier by Puttenham who in his work "The Arts of English Poesie" (1589) wrote -"After a speech is fully fashioned to the common understanding and accepted by consent of a whole

country and nation, it is called a language."¹¹ Mario Pei says that language becomes meaningful when understood by others and the entire community decides to accept it. "If the community changes its mind the language symbol changes or loses its value".¹²

If sounds of speech are regarded as the symbols of inner thoughts and ideas, written words can be considered to be the symbols of these sounds. Thus writing becomes the symbol of a symbol. Words are written in such a way as to make them serve as exact symbols of the pronunciation at the time. But the pronunciation of the words of a language keeps changing over time. Spellings usually do not keep pace with the changes in pronunciation. In language the spoken form gains in importance to the written form. In language pronunciation does not follow the written form but the written form in fact follows pronunciation.

Another important feature of language is that it is evolutionary and never static. Change is the golden rule in pronunciation, grammar, and usage of words, in any language. Persons, who live to a ripe old age on looking back at the kind of language he had learnt in school and comparing it with the language of the new and upcoming generation, can easily understand how the language has evolved over the years. Language is thus in a constant state of change. It ceases to change only when it has ceased to be spoken or has become a dead language.

A spoken language may be said to be a system of arbitrary vocal symbols by means of which human beings communicate and co-operate with one another. In human speech vocal organs are used for the articulation of definite sounds, which when arranged according to set patterns, form the words of a given language. It is generally the case that there is no 'natural' connection between a linguistic form and its meaning. The connection is quite arbitrary. When the word dog is said there is no way of actually identifying the animal just by looking at or saying the word. The linguistic form has no natural or 'iconic' relationship with that hairy four-legged barking object out in the world. However because of the peculiarities in the movements of the vocal organs and also a variety of other causes, the sequences of ideas used to express different ideas, may vary gradually from time to time. Hence the spoken form of language is liable to undergo change and development from time to time. If a passage of Old English writing is compared with a passage from Modern English the development that the English language has undergone in the last one thousand years will become evident.

The spoken form of any language is followed by its written form. In its most primitive form writing meant the carving, drawing or painting of various experiences or of symbolic elements representing it. Over time certain elements in the pictures acquired fixed meaning and came to be used as symbols for corresponding words in the spoken language and arranged in the order that these words have in speech. When the association between the written symbol

and the spoken word becomes fixed, the symbol may lose its original pictorial value and to deviate from its older form. At this stage the association has come to be one of written symbols and spoken sound, regardless of the meaning borne by the sound. Later the symbols are used purely in their phonetic value and the number of symbols may be lessened to such an extent that there is a particular symbol for every syllable in the spoken language.

When comparing the written and spoken forms of a language it is found that while writing has some advantages over speech, the latter enjoys certain other advantages of its own. While speaking, a person can make use of his hands and eyes to ensure a wider range of expressiveness than is possible in using the written language. Speech has been able to achieve subtler variations of meaning than can be expressed in writing. Writing has the advantage of being the more easy to preserve and reproduce. In the spoken language a listener has to adjust himself to the speed of the speaker, while in writing and reading one can either linger over difficult passage or skip over simple or less important ones.

By identifying similar words or structures that occur in different languages, it is observed that many languages are relations and probably developed from the same ancestor. For example, Russian is similar to many languages in Europe and Central Asia: People in these areas perhaps adopted the language of nomads who migrated from Southern Russia 6000 years ago.

Almost half the world's people speak the 10 most widespread languages. Many of these languages originated in Europe, but spread around the world as Europeans colonized other countries. For example, the Portuguese spread their language to Brazil.

Language can be said to be a medium of expression and also a means of communication. Any sound which emanates from the lips gains significance only when it is understood by others. The individual happens to be the key figure in the development of language. But he cannot do this by excluding himself from society. R.L. Varshney in his book *An Introductory Text Book of Linguistics and Phonetics* defined language in the following way-

Language is the 'species-specific' and 'species-uniform' possession of man. It is God's special gift to mankind. Language is ubiquitous. It is present everywhere - in thoughts and dreams, prayers and meditations, relation and communications, and sanskars and rituals. Besides being a means of communication and store-house of knowledge, it is an instrument of thinking as well as a source of delight (e.g. singing). Language dissipates superfluous nervous energy, directs motion in others, both men and animals, sets matter in motion as in charms and incantations, transfers knowledge from one person to another and from one generation to another. Language is also the maker or unmaker of human relationships. It is the use of language that makes a life bitter or sweet. Language is an 'organised noise' used in actual social situations. It has also been defined 'contextualised systematic sounds'.¹³

Society is responsible for shaping an individual. Everyone is familiar with the adage that "No man is an island". This goes to say that man is a social being and thus he imbibes social norms, tradition and culture. Language is essential in establishing and maintaining relationships with other people. It is language which makes conversation possible between any two individuals. Conversation in turn helps in collecting information about the speaker. Language enables men to convey their feelings, desires and emotions to others. It is true that gestures and signs can to a great extent also convey ideas. Language however employs sounds which have meaning. Edward Sapir in his book, *Language, "An Introduction to the Study of Speech"* has defined language as "a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions and desires by means of a system of voluntarily produced symbols."¹⁴ The capacity of human beings to express themselves through speech differentiates them from other animal species. Animals too have their own language by which they express fear, anger, joy and sex impulse but none have developed speech like man has. It is noticed however that in animal communication there is very little scope for creativity. Human beings are creative and therefore using a few basic principles of construction they create endless number of constructions. Human language is called an open-ended system because the signals of human language can be combined in a variety of ways.

One very interesting fact about human language is that they are able to relate incidents or experiences which they have not actually lived and also of objects and incidents not physically present at the time of speaking. This is because human language is not directly controlled by stimulus. Humans can refer to past and future time. This property of human language is called displacement. It allows language users to talk about things and events not present in the immediate environment. Human beings can convey precise information through their speech. Moreover apart from describing real objects human beings can also describe objects that are unreal or imaginary.

Language has a symbolic character and this itself makes language arbitrary. It is in fact quite difficult to explain the connection between the word (sound combination) or a sound unit itself (symbol for the sound unit) and the thing it stands for. The relation is purely arbitrary and has no logical explanation. There is apparently no inherent connection between a word and what it stands for. In a word like 'tree', or 'river' there is little in the written or spoken symbolisms that reveals anything about the object they stand for. The arbitrary character of language is also evident in the gender category to which different words belong. In Indian languages like Hindi it is too cumbersome. Language is thus a system of conventional symbols, where each symbol represents a stretch of sounds with which a meaning is associated. However arbitrariness does not give the speaker the liberty to use whatever sound or sequence of sounds that comes to his mind to represent a given meaning.

All the symbols of language have a particular system of arrangement. The symbols of human language are finite but they can be arranged infinitely. This means that men can produce an infinite set of sentence by a finite set of symbols. Language is the systematic composition of arrangement of linguistic units which correlate words and meanings. Each language therefore can be said to be a special system suitable for conveying message within its own framework of structure and meaning and having very little direct physical relation to the meaning or acts which it involves.

BASIC FUNCTIONS OF LANGUAGE

Language is often said to be a tool because it is used to perform the function of letting other people know the thoughts, ideas or emotions. Language serves a multiplicity of purposes. In accordance with the different purposes to be served language is used in different ways. For example, there is the language of science, journalism, advertising, political oratory, prayer and worship. In these instances language is used as a multipurpose tool and put to various uses as and when required.

The basic function of language is to communicate information of some kind or other. Propaganda of all kinds and even deliberate misinformation could come under the term information. In order to describe the world and reason about it people may make use of true or false propositions, correct or incorrect arguments and pass on information which may or may not be

important. It becomes evident however that language is informative in function. Language is used to inform others, to ask them to do certain things and to express feelings, moods, ideas, information, experiences etc. Language undoubtedly has a very important social purpose because it is mainly used for linguistic communication. It is difficult to envisage a society without language which is the basis of human progress. It is the flesh and blood of human culture. Language is an extremely complex and highly versatile code that is used to communicate thoughts, desires and experiences to other persons. It is central to one's identity as an individual and as a marker of a social group. The use of a particular language variety identifies each of us as belonging to a particular social group. Language like society is constantly evolving and is subject to growth and change in much the same way as a living organism.

There are several possible relationships between language and society. One is that social structure may either influence or determine linguistic structure and/or behaviour. Certain evidence may be used to support this view. One of the evidences is that young children speak differently from older children and, in turn, children speak differently from mature adults. The varieties of language that speakers use reflect such matters as their regional, social or ethnic origin and possibly even their gender. It is also seen that particular ways of speaking, choice of words, and even rules for conversing are in fact highly determined by certain social requirements.

Socrates and Plato consider language to be a mechanism which provides truth and knowledge. When engaging in argument, Socrates is given a definition of a word such as courage, justice or piety. Socrates instead of coming up with his own definition, offers a situation in which the given definition is incorrect and then challenges his opponents to find something which is common to all courageous, just or pious acts. What Plato and Socrates aim at is to locate the commonality in things. Knowledge is to know what isn't evident in the object or action, but to identify what it is that makes all objects and actions of the sort be what they are, despite all of their internal differences. According to Plato and Socrates this knowledge can be attained only through proper language use.¹⁵

In Plato's 'Republic', his cave analogy describes a prisoner who has spent all of his life in bondage looking at nothing but shadow puppets on the back of a cave wall. For him, all, which he believes to be true, are the actions and reactions of the shadow puppets. His entire reality is essentially a shrouded image of the truth. Now it so happens that the prisoner is released from bondage and, for the first time stands up, exits the cave and sees the light of the sun. The prisoner gazes on his body and on all the things in the sunlight and for the first time sees the truth of what actually is and realizes the falsities with which he has lived for all of his life. Plato is here using the sun as a metaphor for the focusing lens provided by dialectic. The sunlight provided the prisoner the ability to see the incompleteness of his reality. Thus according

to Socrates and Plato language not only enables man to see the incompleteness of his own way of thinking but also provides a means with which to view things in their completeness. Socrates devised the Socratic method of argumentation wherein he uses language in argument to enhance and expound upon a given definition, and then to amplify and refine what is said until all parties understand and agree.¹⁶

Language is different from the sign language even amongst humans at any point of social and biological evolution. It restricts itself to recognized 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 and pets to convey a particular feeling or emotion. The communication, therefore, has to be from man to man, from a person to another by means of speech and hearing. The sounds produced by a man, conventionally recognized 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.

Language constitutes of both linguistic and communicative competence. It is an abstract set of psychological principles and sociological consideration that constitutes a person's competence as a speaker in a given situation. These principles make available to him an unlimited number of sentences he can draw upon in concrete situations and provide him with the

ability to understand and create entirely new sentences. Language is a set of principles that a speaker masters and not anything that he does. In short, a language is a code which is different from the act of encoding; it is a speaker's linguistic competence rather than his linguistic performance. However linguistic competence has to be coupled with communicative competence. Sociolinguists stress the use of language according to the occasion and context, the speaker and listener, the profession and social status of the speaker and the listener. Thus language is the result of social interaction.

Language also has an expressive function. The expressive function is best demonstrated by poetry. When composing a poem a poet is not really concerned with passing on information. Poets only attempt to communicate their personal feelings and sentiments. Expressive language is used not just by poets but by all people when they are keen on giving expression to their deep and innermost feelings. In chanting prayers devotees make use of this function of language in order to give vent to their feelings of awe and adoration.

Expressive language has two component elements. The first is used to express the feeling or attitude of the speaker. Secondly, it can be used to evoke the same feeling or attitude in the hearer. It can also serve both purposes simultaneously. If a person mutters curses to himself or prays to God in solitude or writes a love poem, his language expresses his own feelings.

Language is the prerogative of man and distinguishes him from animals.

Man is a social animal by virtue of language. Society and language are correlative terms. Language is a social product, springing up with the first community, developing with the increasing needs of culture and civilization, and disappearing when society disappears. Thus language happens to be the index of the progress of society. The longer a society exists, the richer is the language. Edward Sapir says that, "It is difficult to see adequately the functions of language because it is so deeply rooted in the whole of human behaviour that it may be suspected that there is little in the functional side of our conscious behaviour in which language does not play its part".¹⁷ Language thus happens to be a great force of socialization.

Language is thus more than simply a means of communication; it constitutes a world view by splitting up and arranging the sense of social reality in humans into meaningful units. Language carries culture, and culture carries, particularly through orative and literature, the entire body of values by which men come to perceive themselves and their place in the world. How people perceive themselves affects how they look at their culture, at their politics and at the social reproduction of wealth, at their entire relationship to nature and to other human beings. David Crystal has said, "Language is the repository of the history of a people. It is their identity. Oral testimony, in the form of sagas, folktales, songs, rituals. Proverbs, and many other practices, provides us with a unique view of our world and a unique canon of literature."¹⁸

It is evident that language is intimately tied to a man's feelings and activity. It is bound up with nationality, religion, and the feeling of self. It is used for work, worship, and play by everyone, poor or rich, savage or civilized. Language does not passively reflect reality; it also creates a certain way in a person's mind about his/her understanding their world. Wittgenstein said, "the limits of my language are the limits of my life".¹⁹ This statement certainly encompasses the importance of language and the ability of it to affect a person's critical thinking. Language opens up a world of understanding as pointed out in the book, "Critical Thinking". "Language is the landscape of our mind; it is the mountains and forests as well as the cities and roads. It both carries the content and structures the form".²⁰

Language is to be learnt as it does not come automatically like walking, running, eating etc. A child isolated from society will learn to walk but will never learn to talk. Moreover, the child picks up the language of his environment. A baby born in Assam but brought up in Bengal will learn Bengali with the felicity of the natives.

When two strangers come face to face they normally start talking about some neutral or general topic like the weather. This is how human beings strike up a relationship. Moreover by making small talk or beginning a conversation it is possible to collect information about the concerned party. Language also plays a very important role in group identification, group solidarity and the signaling of difference.

With regard to the influence of language on society, linguists have developed a view which they refer to as the 'Sapir-Whorf hypothesis' after the two linguists, Edward Sapir and Benjamin Lee Whorf. This hypothesis is concerned with the possibility that man's view of his environment may be conditioned by his language. Whorf argued that the Hopi (Native Americans) considered clouds and stones to be living entities whereas for the English speakers they were inanimate objects. Thus Whorf believed that there would be a difference in the way the English and the Hopi viewed the world. In Whorf's words, "We cut nature up, organize it into concepts, and ascribe significances as we do largely because we are parties to an agreement to organize it in this way- an agreement that holds throughout our speech community and is codified in the patterns of our language."²¹ He also says that "We dissect nature along lines laid down by our native languages".²² physical environment surrounding a particular society innately gets reflected in its language. It is noticed that the English language has only one word for 'snow' whereas the Eskimo has several. This is because the Eskimo must be able to differentiate between different types of snow. In the words of Sapir: "Human beings...are very much at the mercy of the particular language which has become the medium of expression for their society. ... The fact of the matter is that the "real world" is to a large extent unconsciously built up on the language habits of the group".²³

There is also the possibility of the social environment being reflected in language. As far as relationships are concerned it is found that in the English speaking societies these are referred to by single vocabulary terms like son, daughter, husband, wife, father, mother, brother, sister, aunt, uncle, grandson, grandfather, grandmother and the like. Though there is a reference to maternal and paternal aunt/uncle etc, this differentiation does not hold much importance. But when Indian languages are taken into account be it Hindi, Punjabi, Assamese, Bengali and others this differentiation becomes very pronounced.

Language itself is a mirror of society. The values of society can be reflected in its language. One way in which this happens is through taboo words. Taboo is concerned with behaviour which is supernaturally forbidden, or regarded as immoral or improper. In language taboo words refer to words not said or not used. Every language has taboo words and if the particular rules regarding the use of taboo words are not adhered to, it can lead to punishment or public shame. In fact taboo words reflect the values and beliefs of a particular society. In the English language taboo words are associated with sex, excretion and Christian religion. Words like 'fuck' and 'cunt' could at one time lead to prosecution though it is now believed that 'fuck' is no longer legally tabooed. At one time Shaw's use of 'bloody' in Pygmalion sent shock-waves through society though now this is such a common term. Language thus reflects social change. At times alternate words come into vogue because of similarity of pronunciation to taboo words. For example

Americans prefer to use the word 'rooster' rather than 'cock' because of its sexual connotations.

As mentioned earlier language undoubtedly holds the key to socialization. Common speech can serve as a symbol of social solidarity amongst the speakers of that language. Moreover there are certain sub forms of a language which can be identified with a particular group like a family unit or maybe a young college group, club members, underworld dons, a labour union. These groups develop their own peculiarities of speech and this in turn differentiates them from the larger group. Within the confines of a family a particular name or term like 'ba' could be mispronounced as "babba" and then retain that particular form forever. Within that particular family unit this form becomes symbolic of their solidarity. Similarly certain short forms or abbreviated terms are understood within a particular group of friends or maybe the members of a club.

LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

Language is a social institution, both shaping and shaped by society at large, or in particular the "cultural niches"²⁴ in which it plays an important role. Language is not an "autonomous construct"²⁵ but social practice both creating and created by the structures and forces of the social institutions within which men live and function. Duranti defines culture as "something learned, transmitted, passed down from one generation to the next, through

human action, often in the form of face-to-face interaction, and, of course, through linguistic communication".²⁶ It becomes evident from this that language plays a pivotal role in culture transmission.

It is true that there are various forms of culture preservation like architecture, painting, music, etc. However language is the most dynamic of them all. Facts about language are handed down from person to person and from one generation to another through cultural transmission. Man's competence helps him to master the unique features of a particular language. Thus it is seen that language is the outcome of evolution and convention. Like most human institutions language also change and die, grow and expand. Language is acquired by human beings and is non-instinctive. It is believed that due to language man became man.

Language also has a great role to play in cultural accumulation and historical transmission. "A great deal of the cultural stock in trade of a primitive society is presented in a more or less well defined linguistic form. Proverbs, medicine formulae, standardized prayers, folk tales, standardized speeches, song texts, genealogies are some of the more overt forms which language takes as a culture-preserving instrument."²⁷ When modern civilization is viewed, it is found that it is replete with schools, libraries and other stores of knowledge, opinions and sentiments but at the same time the realization dawns that all this would be impossible without language made eternal as document.

Every system of storing uses language, be it drama, printed books, proverbs, symbols or music. It has been the constant endeavour of human beings to gain more knowledge about this world. Language makes this possible by providing a medium to express, reason and make sense of human perceptions.

By the very act of talking men assume social and cultural roles. However these processes are so deeply entrenched in men that they go almost unnoticed. 'Language does not exist apart from culture, that is, from the socially inherited assemblage of practices and beliefs that determines the texture of our lives'.²⁸ Culture and communication are inseparable because culture not only dictates who talks to whom, about what, and how the communication proceeds, it also helps to determine how people encode messages, the meanings they have for messages, and the conditions and circumstances under which various messages may or may not be sent, noticed, or interpreted. Culture in this sense becomes the foundation for communication.

SMS LANGUAGE

SMS or the Short Message Service was not known a couple of decades back. It is the birth of mobile technology which gifted people with this useful and convenient way of communication. All mobile phones offer this technology and it happens to be one of the most inexpensive means of communication. This application has become a favourite among students who use it to send

compact text-based messages. At present 'texting' as it is usually referred to is prevalent amongst the younger generation but as this generation ages they will carry their SMS familiarity and expectations with them and then even older generations will make use of this system to communicate with their friends, family members and colleagues.

SMS, which is an almost instantaneous communication medium that connects people worldwide, is now a phenomenon that has grown and spread around the globe at an amazing speed. It is a highly interactive medium and enables the recipient of the message to reply immediately. Apart from it being a low cost mode of information delivery what makes this application interesting is that it has a store and forward capacity.

Cyber space communication through chat, facebook and other electronic forms provides an important platform for language contact in social space where the use of language often takes place in real time and demonstrates wide variations from the standard or accepted form of language. This type of language makes use of abbreviations, symbols, emoticons and the like. As a result this language shows wide deviation from the standard language and also brings in its wake the beginnings of language change.

SMS and Chat forums use highly coded language which is incomprehensible to outsiders. Whole sentences are condensed into one abbreviated word, and numbers are used because of their shorter form for

spoken words. Some Chat and SMS abbreviations include LHO (Laughing Head Off), ^5 (High Five), <0><0> (staring), gr8 (great), 4 (for), LOL (Laugh Out Loud), ROTFL (Roll On The Floor Laughing), TTYL (Talk To You Later), teme (tell me), 2mrw (tomorrow), g2g (got to go), 4wrld (forward) and many more. A typical Sms text would read something like this - Hey hws ya? How wer holz? Hrd u had a gr8 trip....plz teme evrythn bout it...lets meet up 2mrw at ur plc or myn...wat say?? Hav 2 tlk 2 u bout loadz of thngs... c ya 2mrw den hopefully...tc..b'bye.. :) :D

Language and culture are closely intertwined and young people quickly adopt universal chat and SMS codes and communicate globally. However, there is a remarkable decline in etiquette in SMS language and other online conversation and correspondence. Use of traditional greetings like "hello" and "goodbye" are slowly disappearing and use of slang and universal loanwords have become more prevalent. At times it becomes difficult to digest this loss of "netiquette" as it is now called.

Language is evolutionary and the vocabulary and phrases which are used depend on a number of factors like place of residence, age, education level, social status etc. Through human interactions new words and phrases are picked up and integrated into human speech. Hence it is often noticed that teenagers and young adults speak differently from their parents or elders.

New technologies, industries, products and experiences simply require

new words. New communication gadgets like cell-phones and the Internet are important items of necessities nowadays as they bridge great distances and provide fast communication. In modern times language change is being brought about by the need to communicate faster and to convey more in each message. So with recent technological advances the use of abbreviated language has become a necessity in order to get across in reasonable time.

LANGUAGE AND NATION BUILDING

Language is known to be as old as human society whereas the concept of nation is of fairly recent origin. Language facilitates social communication and helps nurture mutual cooperation. Nation is a product of intense social communication and cooperation. Jespersen equates nation with a linguistic community. He asserts "You must understand by 'nation' merely a linguistic unit, a linguistic community." "Linguistic Unity", writes Jespersen, "depends always on intercourse, on a community of life."²⁹ The development of any nation will come to a standstill without a medium of communication like language. Karl Deutsch in his book 'Nationalism and its Alternatives' has defined nation as "a community of shared meanings or more broadly still, a group of people who have interlocking habits of communication."³⁰ Joseph Stalin has also held a similar view when he states "a national community is inconceivable without a common language".³¹ Deutsch has made it clear that without communication social structuring amongst human beings would become

impossible. Thus he states that "The richer their cooperation in producing tangible goods and services, in developing highly developed societies, and developing and sharing intangible treasures of knowledge, art, and values, the greater their need for rich, varied, quick and accurate communication."³² A nation today may be of two types: a monolingual or culturally homogeneous nation or a multilingual and culturally heterogeneous nation i.e., a nation with multiple of nationalities. The important fact is that whether monolingual or multilingual what is essential is social communication. As Stalin suggests, "A nation is formed only as a result of lengthy and systematic intercourse as a result of people living together generation after generation."³³

To make a nation globally competitive the study and knowledge of foreign language is important. There has been a mushrooming of English-medium schools all around the world. In spite of the fact that the continuous use of English as the nation's lingua franca is tantamount to perpetuating colonialism or imperialism, yet there is no alternative indigenous language that can assume the role of English.

"Whoever controls the language controls the culture."³⁴ Liberman states that it is impossible to think of any aspect of human culture or human behaviour that would be unchanged if language did not exist.³⁵ This informs the submission of Isayey that "language is a nation's most obvious and most important attribute. There is no such thing as a nation without a common

linguistic basis."³⁶ The dominant inference from Isayey's observation is that for national integration cohesion and development, there must be a language acceptable to all in running a nation's affairs. However as Stalin argued that a common language for every nation "does not mean there cannot be two nations speaking the same language."³⁷ For example English is in vogue both in the UK and USA yet they are different nations.

In Protagoras' view language is nothing more than a tool of power, capable of creating civilizations and controlling them, Protagoras believed that man is the measure of all things. That they are that they are. That they aren't that they aren't. What he means is that what man say makes what is be what it is. For Protagoras, to bring something into words is to bring it into being.³⁸ He brings forth the point that were it not for language, a civilization would not be possible. Had humans lacked the skills necessary for interpersonal communication, each man would live like animals, barely able to provide for himself all the necessities for survival.

According to Thomas Hobbes, language is used, to describe the world, but also to convey attitudes, as well as make promises and contracts.³⁹ When human beings come together in large groups, contracts and laws must be made to maintain the well-being of the population. The making of contracts is simply to ensure that each citizen in the state uphold their promise to contribute in a meaningful way, to the provision of the needs of the state as fully integrated

whole. It is easy to visualize an idealistic, self-providing utopia, where everyone is trusting and trustworthy. However humans cannot function together in a society with a great number of people, because, man has been known to be deceitful, untrustworthy, malicious, benevolent and sometimes violent. This being the case, law makers and law-enforcers must be put into place to uphold the laws and contracts, thereby upholding the ideals and well-being of the fully integrated community.

In a multilingual society the problem of 'forging ahead' is of crucial importance. Among the competing languages that scramble for official status, whether indigenous or foreign, one must emerge as the official language (the language of administration and education at some levels), for the purpose of uniting the nation. Many countries have encountered the challenge of nation building in the face of a variety of languages. The choice of a language becomes very difficult when multiple languages coexist in a country. Sometimes colony-into-nation states retain the colonial language for official communication. This is true for a country like India and also for a country like Zimbabwe. In Zimbabwe a great variety of languages were available but none could assume the role of a national language. "These languages", writes Mkanganwi, may well be closely associated with ethnic identity and as a consequence are regarded, by at least some Zimbabweans, as derisive rather than unifying elements in the work of nation building."⁴⁰ Therefore "Zimbabwe relies to a considerable degree on English(the former colonial language...) for

administration, economic, social and educational purposes, and, as a unifying factor, in nation-building."⁴¹

It must be remembered that no nation is an island. In the modern scenario this gains importance as the globe has shrunk and become a global village. Multilingualism arises out of language contact. Factors such as political annexation, marital relation, economic transaction, cultural association, educational acquisition and religious affiliation bring about multilingualism. In today's global society the ability to speak more than one language can be a valuable asset. Multiculturalism inspires global communication and also helps to maintain political and security interests. In addition it also helps promote tolerance and intercultural awareness.

The flip side of the coin reveals that with globalization there is the fear of homogenization with regard to local cultures and customs. One of the negative consequences of globalization is that popular culture is being broadcast everywhere and likewise widely imitated. The end result of this is that the entire world has started to look, sound, smell, and even taste the same. With globalization, imported cultures can push out the indigenous ones - wiping out the smaller cultures and languages while homogenizing the local linguistic varieties. One such extreme example is Canada. In the early 1600s when Canada was first colonized it had over 60 languages being spoken. Now, with the domination of English and French, only one native language has managed to

survive: Inuktitut, spoken in the Northern regions of Canada by approximately 35,000 Inuits.

Language or languages are an essential means to allow people to fully exert their rights and participate in a democratic society. A contribution of multiculturalism to intercultural dialogue must be guaranteed. Languages will help man move from a multicultural society to a truly intercultural one.

LANGUAGE AND EDUCATION

Education and language are closely interrelated because the content of education is passed on through the medium of language. Education is a dynamic process which helps to mould the personality, the character and behaviour of a person in a positive direction. It helps young people to mould themselves and also carve a niche for themselves in society. According to Ottaway, "Education is the process of preparing people to fit into this complex social structure, and to play particular social roles as members of more than one institutional group."⁴²

Education can be said to be a social institution charged with Cultural and Social reproduction, that is, with the education of children and youth for individual and social survival. Recent scientific and technological advancements have given a totally new dimension to education. Without the help of language there is no way in which education can be imparted in modern times. In ancient times there was the oral transmission of knowledge and even that

would not have been possible without the help of language. In developed societies there is the stress on formal education which is imparted in schools and other institutions of higher education.

Language is representative of the culture and psychological make up of a speech community. The society has precious cultural heritage in the form of arts, science, language, literature, philosophy, religion, values, customs and traditions. It has already been seen that language and culture are interlinked. Preservation of culture for the forthcoming generations is one of the first functions of education. The invention of the printing machine has enabled the publication of literatures which in turn has helped in the preservation of knowledge. In fact language itself apart from being a medium also happens to be the subject matter of education.

LANGUAGE DIVERSITY

Language is the main resource which has been gifted to all humans. Human beings have broken the code in this unique and complicated diverse world that they live in. Language diversity contributes to the very existence of man. It clearly demonstrates the will and perseverance for survival that is continuously changing in varied conditions. The loss of any language brings a potential threat to the existence of human beings as a collective.

Globally the role of languages has become increasingly vital and a sensitive subject. Language is such a powerful tool that it can build or destroy

a person or a country. The ability to have a huge databank of words and to be able to formulate the words intelligently is part of critical thinking. It is language which paves the way and develops the process of thinking and expressions. It is essential to know what it means, and how to use and interpret the meaning.

Language empowers man and without it they would not be able to deal with conflicts, make decisions, and argue. Words man chooses to use can tell the truth, lie to, mislead or bamboozle others. It is imperative to differentiate words that are used to communicate the way of thinking and ideas, instead of controlling the thoughts and behaviour. Language only limits empowerment when men allow themselves to not care about anything, not be interested in facts, have low esteem and be close minded or insensitive.

Language can have great persuasive effects in human life. Persuasion changes attitudes, motivation, behaviour, compliance and helps develop a different outlook of the world. Reading the daily newspapers, watching television, surfing the internet are methods of persuasion whether intentionally or not. The environment is full of influencing ingredients. The skill to persuade and to resist is related to an individual's accomplishment in life. There are some who are able to resist and others who are gullible and unable to resist.

Diversity in the languages, its persuasive effect in the day to day life, and knowing how to use language to empower people, all require a critical thinker to know how and when to use the knowledge to reach the objective.

DIFFERENT USES OF LANGUAGE

Language is undoubtedly a vital means of verbal communication and it is often said that it is language which makes "humans". Language involves interpersonal communication which includes language within the individual and language and society.

Together, as a family, a society, or a country, speakers of the same dialect all share an immediate sense of recognition. As a result, men inevitably transcend and perpetuate their traditions, myths and religion via the societal functions of their respective language. Language is used in everyday thought processes and also to blend into societies and perpetuate lifestyles. The pillar stones of any society are its population and human potential, both of which rely greatly on the presence of communication in the form of language. Communication of ideas and emotions is essential for the development of society and this has been made possible because of the formation of language. Language has assisted society in many ways due to the domino effect of the benefits achieved from the opportunity to communicate. The common conversations and exchange of words and thoughts that forms and maintains societal relationships in everyday lives is intentional communication. Language has a great role to play in interpersonal communication and also in communication within individual humans and within human society.

Therefore, language plays a very important role in human lives.

Communication can be either intentional or unintentional. Succinctly, language within the individual, supports thought, rationalization and attribution, creativity, memory, self-direction, self-expression, humour, and perhaps even aspects of consciousness.

With human evolution the need for language and communication became evident. It became almost like an organic need. Communication is necessary and vital to man just like the intake of water and food is essential for survival of mankind. In an essay 'A Word for Everything' written by Helen Keller she describes her experiences as a deaf and blind child trying to understand language and communication. After she learns that words have meaning and symbolic messages she is able to use language not only to communicate her ideas but also to expand her knowledge, "I learned more words, my field of inquiry broadened, and I would return again and again to the same subject eager for more information".⁴³ As she learns the basic concept of language she is able to experience scholarship that helps her become an intelligent person.

Malcolm X describes how his knowledge and intellect was expanded through his studies of language in his essay 'Homemade Education'. When imprisoned in jail he feels a need to be able to express himself better and more accurately, so he studies the language by memorizing words and their meanings from a dictionary. Just like Keller through language he is able to broaden his

knowledge, "Anyone who has read a great deal can imagine the new world that opened".⁴⁴ Both of these scholars became knowledgeable through their studies and exposure to language.

When a person reads about history or mechanics or even reads the newspaper he or she begins formulating their own ideas. This causes a person to take action to improve a certain situation. Because of this humans have evolved as a highly intelligent society, and are able to use language not only to communicate with each other but are able to enlighten and educate themselves. They are able to not only share ideas but also to formulate their own thus helping the human race to continue evolving.

Language distinguishes men from the animal world. Because of language we can share ideas, educate ourselves and improve their lives. Language helps the society to keep evolving. Language has allowed for societies to be built not upon strength and physical domination, but on co-operation and the exchange of ideas. Language is omnipresent throughout human society today. Without language men would have been like apes pointing fingers at what they see.

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