

The Functions of Language

The most obvious function of language is to fulfill the communicative needs of mankind. But this communication is multi-faceted and varied. Apart from working as a tool of direct communication language serves many other functions that may be enumerated as follows;

(i) On the basis of the language used by an individual we come to know about his/her socio-cultural and even educational background as the language of a taxi driver differs in many ways from the language of a professor. Hence, it functions as a tool of identification.

(ii) Language reveals the psychology and above all the personality of an individual. The way a speaker uses language discloses his/her inner self. This function of language proves to be very helpful in identifying the anti-social elements, especially when they are interrogated in police custody.

(iii) Language transmits culture from one generation to another through various means. Since culture is largely manifested through language, it is carried on to posterity in written forms through literature. Today we know about our ancient cultural traits basically due to the availability of some texts that portray the contemporary culture in details. Many religious texts are the main sources that enlighten the current generation about the grandeur of the past. Language, thus, plays a very vital role in this act of transmission.

(iv) Language encourages inter and intra-cultural activities, and, thus, strengthens inter-human relationship. Modern world is a good example of it. People are migrating to different parts of the world leading to the expansion of inter-cultural activities. This inter-mixing of cultural traits has increased partly with the growth of translation and the emergence of global languages like English that facilitates this practice.

(v) Language shows the state of advancement of any society in all respects. A developed language is a distinction of a developed society. The material prosperity and the aesthetic exuberance are the hallmarks of excellence of an advanced society which can't be realized without a fully developed language. So, language functions as a vital agency that executes the realization of overall richness of a society.

(vi) The different forms of language such as music, dance, caricature, etc work as the source of entertainment to mankind.

Thus, it is seen that language renders many kinds of valuable services to mankind in addition to its well established function of fulfilling all sorts of communicative needs.

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