

LANGUAGE AS MOST ESSENTIAL TOOL FOR HUMANS ACTIVITIES

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ABSTRACT

Language perhaps is the most essential to human life. And also most far-reaching of human capabilities in relation to the whole span of mankind's achievements. Therefore, these paper intense to look at language in three perspectives vizly: theological, under this aspect two holy books are going to be look into, these are, the holy Qur'an and also the Bible. And under the second perspective which is the hypothetical, the views of philosophers are going to be taken into consideration. And lastly views of linguists about the concept of language. All these are to be done with the view to bring to light the essential of language to human life.

INTRODUCTION

Language is a very important means of communication between humans. A can communicate his or her ideas, emotions, beliefs, or feelings to B as they share a common code that makes up the language. No doubt, there are many other means of communication used by human e.g gestures, nods, winks, flags, smiles, horns short-hand, alphabet, mathematical symbols, sirens, sketches, maps, dancing and so on. But all these systems of communication are extremely limited or they too, in turn, depend language only. They are not so flexible, comprehensive, perfect and extensive as language is. Language is important as form of communication between humans that it is difficult to think of a society without language. It gives shape to people's thoughts, and guides and controls their entire activity. It is a carrier of civilization and culture as human thoughts and philosophy are conveyed from generation to the other through medium of language. Language is ubiquitous in the sense that, it is as important as the air we breathe and is they most important and valuable possession of man. In scheme of things all humans are blessed with language and it is the specific property of human only. Language is thus species specific and species-uniform. It is because of the use of language that human are called "Talking animals" (Homo loquens).

Animal too have their system of communication but their communication is limited to a very small number of messages to there fellows beings. It is through language that they store knowledge, transfer it to the next generation and yoke the present, past and the future together. Now language will be look into in three perspectives theological, theoretical or hypothetical, and of course the views of linguists about language.

THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Under this perspective, the holy Qur'an and Bible are going to be look it, with a view to trace the origin of language in the holy books.

In the holy Qur'an there are some places where almighty Allah implies that, language is from him and also there are some place where Allah obvious stated that, language is a natural gift from him. Now to start with the places where Allah implies language is from him. In the Qur'an chapter 55:4 Allah says: "I taught him (Man) an intelligent speech.

Another verse in that respect is chapter 49: 13 the almighty Allah says:

"O mankind indeed we created you from a single (Pair) of male and female and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know each other the most honored of you in the sight of Allah is he who most righteous of you"

Now the verse that is clearly explain that the origin of the language is from almighty Allah Qur'an chapter 30:22 Allah says: "And of his signs are the creation of the heavens and the earth and the diversity of your languages and your colors indeed in that are signs for those of knowledge.

In the Bible there are similar instances whereby God communicated in language with Adam even before the creation of mankind Genesis 3:9-3 explains that:

"But the Lord God called to the man where you are? He answered I heard you in garden and I was afraid because I am naked so hide and he said who told you are naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not eat from".

A gain Genesis 11:1-9 explain that God is the controller of human language when he destroyed the tower of barbell. He said now the whole world had one language and common speech. As man moved east ward they found a planning Shi'nar and settled there. They said to each other come let make bricks and bake them thoroughly. They used bricks instead of stone, and then said come let us build our selves a city with a tower that reaches to the heaven. So that we may make for our selves and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth. But the Lord came down to see the city and the tower that men were building. The Lord said "If as one people, the same language have begins to do that, nothing they plan to do will be impossible to them. Come let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other. So the Lord scattered them from there over all earth and they stop building the city. That is why it is called barbell because there the Lord confuse the language of the whole world from there, the Lord scattered them over face of the whole earth".

The hypothesis about the origin of language. There is no doubt language owes it is origin to the imitation and modification aided by signs and gestures, of various natural sounds, the voices of other animals and man's own instinctive cries.

In 1861, historical linguist Max Muller published a list of speculative theories concerning the origin of spoken language.

- Bow-wow. The bow-wow theory which Muller attributed to the German philosopher Johann Gottfried Herder saw early words as imitation of the cries of beasts and birds.
- Pooh-pooh. The pooh-pooh theory saw the first words as emotional interjections and exclamations triggered by pain, pleasure, surprise etc.

- Ding-dong. Muller suggested what he called the Ding-dong theory, which states that all things have a vibrating natural resonance, echoed somehow by man in his earliest words.
- Yo-he-ho. The yo-he-ho theory claims language emerged from collective rhythmic labor, the attempt to synchronize muscular effort resulting in sounds such as heave alternating with sounds such as ho.
- Ta-ta. This did not feature in Max Muller's list, having been proposed in 1930 by Sir Richard Paget. According to the ta-ta theory, humans made the earliest words by tongue movements that mimicked manual gestures, rendering them audible.

Now the final perspective, which is the view of linguists about language.

Every human knows one language, spoken or signed. But to define language concept is where the problem is, it is a situation like trying to define the term life. Every body knows what life is but one can not present a satisfactory definition of life. In order to understand a term like life, one has to talk of the properties or characteristics of living beings (e.g motion, reproduction, respiration, growth, power of self healing, excretion, nutrition, mortality etc). Similarly, the term 'Language' can be understood, better in terms of its properties or characteristics. Some linguists, however have been trying to define language in their own ways even though all these definitions are far from satisfactory, here are some of these definitions:

According to Robins (1985) says: language is a symbol system based on pure or arbitrary conventions infinitely extendable and modifiable according to the changing needs and conditions of the speakers.

Language according to Sapir (1921) says: Language is a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions and desires by means of a system voluntarily produced symbols.

Another respective scholar who defines language is Noam Chomsky (1957) he says: A language is a set of (Finite or infinite) of sentences, each finite in length and constructed out of a finite set of elements.

Therefore, language is neither an organism, as many nineteenth century linguists saw it, nor an edifice, as was regarded in the early modern 'structuralist' period of linguistics. It is an activity basically of four kinds: speaking, listening, writing, and reading.

So the importance of language cannot be overemphasized, considering what we have discussed above. There is nothing that can be performed or executed without language involved directly or indirectly.

Conclusively, language is, today, an inseparable part of human society. Human civilization has been possible only through language. It is through language that humanity has come out of the stone age and has developed science, art and technology in a big way.

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