
UNIT 1: WHAT IS LANGUAGE? UNIQUE FEATURES OF HUMAN LANGUAGE

Structure

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

“Man is man through language alone”, said Humboldt.

What then is this unique facility called language, which sets us apart from other creatures, helps us respond to our environment and above all, enables us to reflect on the very essence of our being? Language is that system by which sounds and meanings are related (Fromkin and Rodman, 1974). Language communication and human needs are unquestionably linked. Human beings have various needs “ individual, social, emotional, economic, political and cultural “ and it is to fulfill these that human beings need language. Even the youngest infant expresses its needs which are primarily biological to begin with. As the infant grows and his/her needs become more complex, so does its language. From the stage of whimpering in discomfort or gurgling with pleasure, the individual reaches the stage where s/he starts reflecting on his/her needs.

Language does not exist in a vacuum. It serves and is moulded by other systems in the human mind. Since language is used to convey ideas, its structure and function must reflect these ideas. Besides, since it exists within a complex social and cultural system, it is moulded by these aspects as well. Language pervades and is pervaded by all aspects of our lives.

1.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you should be able to:

- critically analyze the definitions of language given by various linguists and scholars;
- understand the functions of language;
- discuss various theories of the origins of language;
- distinguish language from other forms of communication, especially animal communication.

1.2 DEFINITIONS OF LANGUAGE

Language is a term, which due to its range of applications, has prompted innumerable definitions. Some of these focus on the general concept of 'language', others on more specific aspects of 'a language' and yet others on its more formal features like phonology, grammar and semantics. Then there are also those which emphasize on its range of functions or those which stress the differences between language and other forms of human and animal communication. The range of definitions given below amply illustrates this point. 'Language is a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions and desires by means of voluntarily produced symbols.' (E. Sapir, 1911)

'A language is a system of arbitrary vocal symbols by means of which the members of a society interact in terms of their total culture.' (G. Trager, 1949)

'A language is a set (finite or infinite) of sentences, each finite in length and constructed of a finite set of elements.' (N. Chomsky, 1957)

'Language is the institution whereby humans communicate and interact with each other by means of habitually used oral - auditory arbitrary symbols.' (R.A. Hall, 1964)

'Audible, articulate meaningful sounds as produced by the action of the vocal organs.' (Webster's Third New International Dictionary, Vol.2, 1971)

'Language is the most sophisticated and versatile means available to human beings for the communication of meaning.' (Brown, 1984)

'Language is patterned system of arbitrary sound signals, characterized by structure dependence, creativity, displacement, duality, and cultural transmission.' (Aitchison, 1987).

Check your progress 1

1 You've read the various definitions of language. Now, write your own definition of language.

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2 What are the functions of language which emerge from these definitions? Name at least two functions.

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1.3 THE ORIGIN OF LANGUAGE

Language seems to be a highly developed form of animal signaling. But how and when did we start to talk? Numerous philosophers have speculated on the origin of language, resulting in the extensive collection of theories that we have with us. It is a question which even today attracts much attention.

In the early part of the eighteenth century, theories of the origin of language proposed that language was of Divine Origin. According to them man was created and at the moment of his creation, speech was provided to him as a divine gift. In the biblical story about the Garden of Eden, God created Adam and speech simultaneously, for God spoke with Adam and Adam answered him – the language they used was **Hebrew**.

Other cultures too propagated the divine origin of language “ the Egyptians, for example, considered themselves the oldest civilization and therefore theirs was the original language, passed down through their god-ancestor. One of their rulers – Psammetichus is said to have tried an experiment to test this theory. He had two babies from an ordinary family raised in isolation. When they were two years old, the babies abruptly said “becos”, which in Phrygian means “bread”. Psammetichus believed that this proved his theory that **Phrygian** was the original language.

In the latter part of the eighteenth century, speculation on the origin of language moved from the realm of divine origin and fancy to what is called the “organic phase” with the publication of Johann Gottfried von Herder’s ‘On the Origin of Language’ (1772). According to him, language was too imperfect to have been a divine gift; it

came about through human being's own groping efforts towards reasoning. "Language", he argued, "was the result of an instinctive impulse, similar to that of an embryo pressing to be born."

Darwin argued against any distinctly "human" quality of language. In his **Descent of Man** (1871), he proposed that there is only a difference of degree between the language of man and the cries of animals. According to him, human language came from a more primitive form, probably expressions of emotions. For example, a feeling of contempt is accompanied by the action of puffing air out through the nose or mouth and this makes sounds such as "pooh", or "pish". Darwin's contemporary Max Muller, disagreed with him and scornfully named this the **Pooh-Pooh** theory.

Muller proposed what he called the **Ding-Dong** theory of the origin of language. According to his theory there was a mystic correlation between sound and meaning. Primitive man had an instinct by which every impression from without received vocal expression from within. Just like every object when struck by a solid body gives off a particular sound, so also a human being's mind gives off a particular response to the various impacts the world makes upon it. Muller later rejected his own theory.

Muller proposed another theory called the **Bow-Wow** theory – also referred to as **Onomatopoeic** or **Echoic** theory. The theory suggests that first words were imitative of natural sounds – the cry of birds, the call of animals, etc. Although Muller rejected this theory too; it is true that virtually every language has some percentage of echoic words in its vocabulary – 'babble', 'rattle', 'ripple', etc., are some English examples. An argument against this has been that we hear and imitate the sounds of nature within the limitations of our first language. A popular example of this cultural influence is the roosters crowing – in English it is cock-a-doodle-doo; in French, coquerico; in Russian, kukuiku; in German, kikeriki, etc.

Modern theorists propose that speech is not simply a manipulation of physical organs. Concomitant psychological development was essential to the development of language. Each person has different impressions of the world that s/he perceives. In order to formulate a credible theory of the origin of language, it is important to learn about the psychological development of early man.

Anthropologists believe that the factors that led to the development of the species *Homo sapiens*, also led to the development of language – the upright posture gave humans additional visual range, their eyes became stereoscopic, further improving their vision. The cerebral cortex, virtually non-existent in the lower creatures, developed tremendously in the evolving human. It was with this major development that the human being graduated to reasoning powers – and began to speak.

Language evolved from the human need to communicate. It developed in a social situation and was needed to spread information amongst the members of a group. Each benefitted from the others' experience and communicated through language. Subsequently the whole working of the human society, through a division of labour has been due to language. With an increase in the complexity in society, there was a concomitant increase in the development of language.

Check your progress 2

1 What is the name given to the theory which holds that the origin of human speech comes from the sounds heard by humans in their environment?

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2 Suggest three reasons why people talk.

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3 Can you think of any onomatopoeic sounds in your mother tongue? List them

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1.4 FUNCTIONS OF LANGUAGE

How language began continues to be somewhat of a puzzle but why language evolved seems clearer. Perhaps as Jean Aitchison says, it began because human beings needed to cooperate in order to survive, and for efficient cooperation a satisfactory mode of communication was required.

Language is a complex phenomenon with multiple functions. Various linguists have tried to understand and elucidate the functions of language. Roman Jakobson defined six primary functions of language according to which an effective act of verbal communication can be described. These functions are:

The referential function:

This function is primarily used to convey information which was one of the primary reasons that language was discovered. Descriptions of situations, objects and even mental states come under this.

The expressive function:

This function reports feelings or attitudes of the speaker or writer and it is also meant to evoke feelings in the listener or reader. This form of communication can also happen when we are alone. For example, if my mobile phone falls into a bucket of

water, what do you think I'm likely to say to myself? Probably use a swear word. We can also utter emotive utterances of a positive nature, especially when we sight something of great beauty "Wow, isn't that beautiful!"

The directive function:

This function engages the addressee directly and is usually used for the purpose of **causing** or **preventing** an action. It is therefore found in commands and requests and requires the use of vocatives and imperatives, example, "Ajit, come here at once", "Please shut the window."

The phatic function:

This involves language for the sake of social interaction. This function can be observed in greetings "Hi, how are you" and casual discussions about the weather, i.e. "It's so hot these days".

The poetic function:

This function focuses on the message for its own sake, and is used in poetry as well as in slogans. This is an aesthetic function of language.

The metalingual function:

This function is used to talk about language itself as we are doing in this unit.

However, it is very rare for any piece of discourse to serve only one function, unless it is a very specialized and restrictive piece of discourse; most ordinary kinds of discourse are mixed.

Check your progress 3

Given below are sentences expressing one of the functions. Indicate the appropriate function against each.

- i "It looks like it may rain, doesn't it?"
- ii Tired eyes,
Aching feet,
The commuters scramble
For a seat.
- iii Don't touch my papers.
- iv India has a long tradition of grassroots bilingualism.
- v The picture looks so pretty!
- vi The place looked neat and clean.

1.5 KNOWING A LANGUAGE

When people come together they use language. We use language to communicate our thoughts and ideas amongst our friends and acquaintances. It is this facility which is said to distinguish humans from animals. But we rarely reflect on this superior ability that we possess “the basis of our humanness. In fact, our use of language is so spontaneous and natural that we pay no more attention to it than we do to our breathing or to the beating of our hearts. We take language too much for granted. Just for a brief while, try and imagine what our life would be like without language. Extremely difficult, if not impossible! What then is this unique thing called language. What does it mean when we say we “know” a language?

Normally when we say we know a language, it implies that we can speak to and be understood by people who know that language. This means that we are able to produce certain sounds, which are naturally interpretable as having a certain meaning.

Since all of us know at least one language and are able to use it without making much of a conscious effort, why do we need to discuss it? Exactly this is the objective of the unit “to make us aware that the ability to carry on the simplest conversation requires a profound knowledge of the language of which speakers are unaware. A speaker can produce the most complicated sentences without being aware of the principles and rules that govern their formation.

So what is this specific knowledge possessed by speakers of a language? In other words, what does knowledge of a language mean?

1.5.1 Knowledge of the Sound System

When we say we know a language, we imply that we know the sounds which are a part of that language, and by default which sounds are not. This fact becomes quite clear when speakers of a particular language pronounce words from another language. For example, a speaker of Bengali, Assamese or Oriya is not able to articulate the distinction between the sounds ‘b’ and ‘v’. When they say the word ‘**Vivek**’ it comes out as ‘**bibek**’. The very fact that they mispronounce it reveals they are unconscious of this fact. They are able to distinguish it when they encounter it in the written form or when another person is speaking those words, but are unable to articulate the distinction properly themselves.

It is not enough that speakers of a language know only the permissible sounds of their language “they also possess an unconscious knowledge of the permissible sound combinations and also the position in which these sounds can occur in a word. When a speaker of one language encounters a word which has a different sound combination than that which is permissible in his/her language, s/he will in all probability mispronounce that word.

1.5.2 Knowledge of the Meaning of Words

Knowing a language also means that you know how to relate sound to meaning, i.e., apart from a knowledge of the sounds and sound patterns, it is important to know

that certain sound sequences signify certain meanings. This is obvious to us when we hear a “foreign” or unknown language “the string of syllables that the speaker of that language produces are incomprehensible to us, but the speakers seem to be conveying a lot to each other. This then also tells us that the relation between sound and the meaning it signifies is arbitrary.

Many languages share many sounds but the way in which they combine them to form words and the meaning that they assign to even a similar combination is not the same. This at times can have amusing consequences. For example, Bulgarian and Hindi share a sound sequence ‘kutia’, which in the former means a ‘box’, while in the latter it refers to a ‘female dog’. This shows very clearly how sound and the meaning attached to it is arbitrary. The corollary to this is that a particular concept will be represented in different languages by different sound sequences.

There are some words in most languages whose pronunciation suggests the meaning – these are referred to as **onomatopoeic** or **echoic** words. Sounds of these words imitate sounds of nature. But even here there may be a variation from language to language. The most well known example is the cock’s crow that we referred to earlier on in this unit.

Sometimes particular endings suggest a certain meaning. For example, in Hindi, the /l/ ending suggests a diminutive or feminine aspect – /dibbi/, /ladli/, etc.

But even if a person knows all the correct sound combinations and their meanings in a language, one could not say that s/he “knows” the language. Knowledge of a language also means that you know how to combine words to form phrases and further to be able to combine phrases to form sentences. Since it is not possible for a person to memorize all the possible sentences of a language, it is obvious that using language also means being creative – there are many sentences a person speaks which s/he has never spoken or heard before. This is essentially what is meant by **creativity** of language, i.e. **the ability to “create” and understand novel sentences which one has never uttered before.**

1.5.3 Knowledge of Appropriate Social Context

Just being able to create novel sentences is not enough, one must know exactly where they can be used i.e., one must have a knowledge of the appropriate contexts for their use. This is the social aspect of language. To communicate effectively, we should know what kind of response is expected in a particular situation. If you respond by saying “the weather is very fine”, when someone asks you your name, it would not be appropriate, although your answer would not be grammatically incorrect. Words and tones have the property of bringing to mind associations with things and ideas, and communication is possible to the degree that the speaker and hearer have similar associations. Words and tones are therefore symbols with meanings. Since context determines and modifies the meanings of what is said, we must attribute meaning potentials to the contexts also.

A language then, consists of the sounds, words and possible sentences. When we say that we know a language, we mean that we know the sounds and the words and the rules for their combination and use in appropriate social contexts.

Check your progress 4

1 Can knowledge of a language exist without knowledge of the social context?
Discuss with examples.

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2a Make a list of the sounds in your mother tongue.

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2b Now identify which of these sounds are absent in another language, say English.

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2c Do you have a problem in pronouncing words with the sounds of 2 (b) above.
If you do, then why do you think it happens?

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1.6 THE UNIQUENESS OF HUMAN LANGUAGE

It is language which more than anything else distinguishes human beings from animals. We frequently refer to language as being unique to humans. What then is human about human language and how is it different from the forms of communication produced by other forms of life?

It is generally accepted and understood that language deals with communication. Now the nature and scope of this communication is influenced by various factors – physiological, environmental, social and need-based. Increasing complexity of information content calls for a correspondingly complex message-generating system. Therefore, species in which behaviour is mediated by complex social interrelationships evolve, by virtue of this fact, a communication system which can fulfill the needs generated by this level of interaction.

If we view language only as a communication system, then many other species also communicate. Communication involves active intentional transmission of a signal as well feedback from the receiver, creating a closed loop between the participants.

Language, spoken and written, is a human being's chief instrument of communication, but it is not the only one. Gestures have a similar role, as also other forms of symbolism. Giving flowers to someone has a meaning, particular clothing or ornament is a device to make known ones' affiliation and loyalties. Thus, communication is a pervasive manifestation with many forms. Our concern here is primarily with spoken language, but to understand it we need to see how it is related to other communicative behaviour.

1.6.1 Animal Communication

It is evident that different animal species show different forms of vocal and gestural behaviour. One of the most remarkable species is the bee, which is capable of communicating with great accuracy the location of nectar by carrying out a series of motions which have been described as a 'dance'. The bee moves in alternate directions around a constant axis, so as to describe an approximate figure 8. The axis of movement indicates the direction of the find, the speed of the circling is related to the distance, and the agitation of the animal reflects the abundance of the find. While the dance is being executed near the hive, the other worker bees form a circle around the dancer. After witnessing the movements for a few moments, the other bees make off in the proper direction and fly the correct distance before descending on to the flowers.

Another form of bee communication occurs when part of a colony is ready to swarm. The bees assemble at a convenient point outside the hive, apparently long enough to establish a centre of operations. Then workers go off in different directions. Those bees that come upon a suitable location return to the main group and indicate by their excitement that they have found a site. Bees that fail to find a suitable location also return. If favourable reports come in from a number of directions, the swarm shows indecisiveness, moving to one side and another until a weight of opinions has formed in favour of one of the locations. In their communicative behaviour bees do not employ vocal sounds, but the buzzing made by the vibrating wings apparently plays a role in conveying excitement and emphasis, perhaps comparable to degrees of conviction in human beings.

Another interesting form of vocal behaviour is imitative. There are several classes of birds that engage in sound imitation as far as conservation of the species is concerned. Perhaps it is merely an exceptional manifestation of the echoic tendency, common, in lesser degrees to many animal species. Imitation usually occurs within a species.

In contrast to the phonetic ability of the lower species, human beings are definitely superior. Many animal species pronounce only vowels and even here perhaps only one or a few particular ones; some manage one consonant, especially fricatives of outgoing breath. The ability to produce stops or plosives is far less frequent, and the combination of stoppage and vibration of the vocal cords may be entirely lacking. The human being's superiority consists in being able to manage a great number of resonant, fricatives and stop consonants; to make click and inbreathed sounds as well as outbreathed ones; and above all to produce complex combinations and sequences of varied sounds. Their abilities go far beyond the demands of any single language, as is evident from the richness of exclamatory and imitative sounds in all languages with phonetics that go beyond the language in question, as well as, the ability to learn foreign words.

1.6.2 Instinctive-Intuitive vs. Formal Communication

Communication is normally an intentional and planned activity. However, at times we say things we do not mean to say, or our tone of voice tells things we had planned not to reveal. If we trace communication back to the lower animals we find that there can be such a thing as instinctive communication. If one member of a species experiences pain, fear or any other emotion because of a physical stimulus and utters a cry, makes a grimace, or moves away, and if this reaction evokes an analogous or related emotions in other individuals, an act of communication has taken place, whether or not any conscious intention has been involved. If the reaction pattern follows a strict inborn tendency, it is instinctive. If the tendency is generalized and is subject to conditioning by experience, it may be better described as intuitive. In so far as a code language has been developed, requiring considerable learning and involving many arbitrary associations between the sound and its meanings, we are dealing with a formal system. Human spoken languages constitute such codes.

Thus, two main levels of communication can be distinguished: the instinctive-intuitive found in all animals, and the formal, conventional or arbitrary found only in the human species. The formal systems of communication include gestures, language and pictorial symbols. Art forms are complex behaviour system involving features of intuitive and formal communication. The formal system of communication may have evolved out of the intuitive, and very primitive art forms may have played a role in the process.

1.6.3 Features of Human Communication

There have been a number of attempts to determine the defining properties of human language, and different lists of features can be found by different writers. We have taken six core features and described how they are manifested in human language. We have also shown how these features are uniquely a part of human language and unlikely to be found in the communication systems of other creatures.

Arbitrariness:

In animal communication, there is frequently a connection between the signals and the messages sent. For instance, an animal who wishes to warn an opponent may simulate an attacking attitude. A cat, for example, will arch its back, spit and appear ready to pounce.

In human language, the reverse is true, and there is no 'natural' link between a linguistic form and its meaning. That is, the symbols used are arbitrary. For example, there is no connection between the word DOG and the four legged animal it symbolizes: it can equally be called kutta (Hindi), chien (French), hund (German).

The need for learning:

It appears that the role played by 'learning' in animal communication is very little. Their language is more or less genetically inbuilt. For example, bee-dancing, which is used by the bees to convey information about the course of nectar, is quite the same in bee colonies all over the world. And since, we do not expect the bees all over the world to be holding international conferences, we have to agree with the hypothesis that they are born with the language.

Another interesting thing to notice is that if a human child is brought up in isolation, s/he does not acquire language, whereas birds reared in isolation sing songs that are recognizable. Human beings require a long exposure to language in order to acquire it. This does not mean that human language is totally conditioned by the environment. According to Chomsky, human beings are born with an innate 'language acquisition device' (LAD), but environment plays an important role in triggering this innate ability. We should note that every normal child learns an extremely complex grammatical system before s/he is 3 years old. Language is certainly one of the greatest wonders of human societies; it cannot be accomplished unless we were endowed with an innate language faculty.

So we can say that although both humans and other animals seem to be genetically predisposed to acquire language, it seems in humans, this latent potentiality can only be activated by long exposure to language, which requires careful learning.

Displacement:

Most animals can communicate about things in the immediate environment only. An animal utters its cry of danger only when danger is present. It cannot give information about a peril which is removed in time and place. Human languages, on the other hand, can communicate about things that are absent as easily as about things that are present. This property of human language is called displacement.

However, it has been proposed that bee communication does have the property of displacement. For instance, when a worker bee finds a source of nectar, and returns to the hive, it can perform a complex dance routine to communicate to the other bees the location of this nectar. This ability of the bee to indicate a location at some distance must indicate that bee communication has some degree of displacement as a feature. The crucial factor, however, is that of degree. Bee communication has displacement in an extremely limited form. Human language is much more comprehensive where this property is concerned. Human beings can talk of events remote in space or time from the speaker or hearer.

Duality of Structure:

Animals have a stock of basic sounds (a cow has under ten, while gorillas and chimpanzees have between twenty and thirty) which they can use only once. That is,

the number of messages an animal can send is restricted to the number of basic sounds, or, in the more complex systems such as the dolphins, a few simple combination of sounds. And there is no known internal organization within this system.

In contrast, human language works very differently. Every language has a set of thirty to forty basic sounds which are called phonemes. These phonemes are generally meaningless in isolation. Imagine a person uttering the basic sounds 'a..k..u..t..v..r..l..j..h... Do you think it would be possible for this person to convey any meaning? These basic sounds or phonemes become meaningful only when they combine with each other in accordance with the rules of a language. So we can say that human language is organized into two levels or layers, i.e., a layer of individual sounds which combine with each other to form the second layer of bigger units like words. This kind of organization into two layers is called duality or double articulation.

At one time, it was thought that duality was a characteristic unique to human language. But now some people claim duality is not unique to humans as it is present in bird song where each individual note is meaningless. It is the combination of notes which conveys meaningful messages. However, the complex ways in which words are combined to create an infinite number of sentences may indeed be unique to humans.

Patterning:

Close to the phenomena of duality is patterning. As you are aware most animal systems of communication comprise a simple list of sounds. There does not seem to be any internal organization within the system.

Human language, on the other hand, has well defined internal patterns. There are firm restrictions on which elements (sounds, words, etc.) can occur together, and in which order. For example, take the sounds 'o', 'p', 't', and 's' in English. These sounds can be arranged in the following seven ways only: 'spot', 'stop', 'opts', 'pot', 'pots', 'top' and 'tops'. Other possibilities like 'tsop', 'ptos', 'opst', are not possible because the rules of English do not allow these.

Similar kinds of patterns are followed when words are combined to form sentences.

A similar kind of internal organization occurs at the sentence level. Human beings can automatically recognize the patterned nature of language and manipulate structured chunks of language. For example:

That beautiful woman gave me flowers.

That woman gave me flowers.

She gave me flowers.

Human beings can understand that these sentences are structurally equivalent. Animals, as far as we know, do not use structure-dependent operations.

Creativity:

The most important distinction between human and animal communication is that human beings are essentially creative in their use of language. On the other hand,

animals have a limited number of messages that they can send or receive. For example, bees can communicate only about nectar. Dolphins, in spite of their intelligence, use a large number of clicks, whistles and squawks, to communicate merely about the same thing over and over again.

This type of restriction is not found in human language which is essentially a creative process i.e., human beings can produce absolutely new utterances whenever they feel like it. A person can utter a sentence which has never been said before, in the most unlikely circumstances, and still be understood. Even in everyday routine communication, a person does not say the same thing over and over again.

Other features:

Human language does have many other properties, but they may not be unique to it. Some of the other features may be:

Vocal-Auditory channel:

Human linguistic communication is typically generated via the vocal organs and perceived by the ears. However, linguistic communication can be transmitted without sound, via writing. Moreover, many other species, example dolphins also use the vocal-auditory channel.

Broadcast transmission and directional reception:

A signal can be heard by any auditory system within earshot, and the source can be located using the ear's direction-finding ability.

Rapid fading:

Auditory signals are transitory, and do not await the hearer's convenience (unlike animals or writing).

Interchangeability:

Any speaker/sender of a linguistic signal can also be a listener/receiver.

Total feedback:

Speakers hear and can reflect upon everything that they say (unlike the visual displays often used in animal courtship, which are not visible to the displayer).

Specialization:

The sound waves of speech have no function other than to signal meaning (unlike the audible panting of dogs, which has a biological purpose).

Check your progress 5

1 Explore the communication system in at least one other animal system and compare it to human language. Do you see any links?

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2 Suggest at least three properties which are very rare or absent in animal communication.

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3 What is meant by the terms creativity and arbitrariness as is used to describe a property of human language?

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4a The property which relates to the fact that a language must be acquired or learned by each new generation is

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4b The term used to describe the ability of human language users to discuss topics which are remote in space and time is

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1.7 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have seen that one of the most distinctive characteristics which set us apart from other life forms is the highly evolved mode of communication which we call language.

Philosophers and scientists have long debated on the nature and use of language and even today there is no consensus as to when exactly human beings started to speak.

Several principles operate, at the level of learning of language. These involve knowledge of the sound system, and that of the meaning of words and appropriate social context of use.

We have attempted to place in a proper perspective the origin of language and looked into the reasons that make human language unique.

1.8 ANSWERS

Check your progress 1

2 Interaction with other members of society; expression of emotions.

Check your progress 2

1 Bow-Wow theory

2 Some of the reasons why people talk are:

- to convey information

- to communicate feelings and emotions

- social small-talk: example 'How are you?'

Check your progress 3

- i Phatic function
- ii Poetic function
- iii Directive function
- iv Metalingual function / Referential function
- v Expressive function
- vi Referential function

Check your progress 4

- 1 No, social context is very important for effective communication. For example, you will behave formally with your boss in the office, but much more informally at a picnic.

Check your progress 5

- 2 Arbitrariness, displacement and duality of structure.
- 3 Read 1.6.3 for the answer.
- 4a The property which relates to the fact that a language must be acquired or learned by each new generation is **need for learning**.
- 4b The term used to describe the ability of human language users to discuss topics which are remote in space and time is **displacement**.

1.9 SUGGESTED READING

Akmajian, Adrian. et al. 2003. *Linguistics: An Introduction to Language and Communication*. New Delhi: Prentice-Hall of India Private Limited.