

Unit - 2

Question - 1

Nature of English Language: Some implications for organizing teaching of English as a second language, role of English language in India today, objectives of teaching English at junior and senior stages of school.

Answer -

The Nature of English Language —

Language is the expression of thought by means of spoken or written words.

The English word language comes (through the French langue) from the Latin lingua - the tongue. But the tongue is not the only organ used in speaking. The lips, the teeth, the roof of the mouth, the soft palate (or uvula), the nose and the vocal chords all help to produce the sounds of which language consists.

These various organs make up one delicate and complicated piece of mechanism upon which the breath of the speaker acts like that of a musician upon a clarinet or other wind instrument.

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Saathi

Spoken language is composed of a great variety of sounds made with the vocal organs. A word may consist of one sound (as Ah! or O or I) but most words consist of two or more different sounds (as go, see, try, finish). Long or short, however, a word is merely a sign made to express thought.

Thought may be imperfectly expressed by signs made with the head, the hands etc. Thus, if I grasp a person's arm and point to a dog, he may understand me to ask, "Do you see that dog?" And his nod in reply may stand for "Yes, I see him." But any dialogue carried on in this way must be both fragmentary and uncertain. To express our thoughts fully, freely and accurately, we must use words - that is signs made with the voice. Such voice-signs have had meanings associated with them by custom or tradition, so that their sense is at once understood by all. Their advantage is twofold they are far more numerous and varied than other signs and the meanings attached to them are much more definite than those of nods and gestures.

Written words are signs made with the pen to represent and recall to the mind the spoken words (or voice-signs).

Written language (that is, composition) must, of necessity, be some what fuller than spoken language as well as more formal and exact. For the reader's understanding is not assisted by the tones of the voice, the changing expressions of the face and the lovely gestures which help to make spoken language intelligible.

Most words are the signs of definite ideas. Thus, Charles, Captain, cat, mouse, bread, stone, cup, ink, call up images or pictures of persons or things. Strike, dive, climb, dismount, express particular kinds of action; green, blue, careless, sticky, triangular, muscular, enable us to describe objects with accuracy. Even general terms like goodness, truth, courage, cowardice, generosity, have sufficiently precise meanings, for they name qualities or traits of character with which everybody is familiar.

By the use of such words, even when not combined in groups, we can express our thoughts much more satisfactorily than by mere gestures.

The utterance of the single word "Charles!" may signify... "Hallo, Charles! Are you here? I am surprised to see you."

4

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"Bread!" may suggest to the hearer.....
 "Give me bread! I am very hungry." "Courage!
 may be almost equivalent to, "Don't be down
 -hearted! Your troubles will soon be over."
 Language, however, is not confined
 to the utterance of single words. To express
 our thoughts we must put words together.
 We most combine them into groups and
 such group have settled meaning (just as
 words have), established (like the meanings of
 single words) by the customs or habits
 of the particular language that we are
 speaking or writing. Further, these
 groups are not thrown together
 haphazard. we must construct them
 in accordance with certain fixed rules.
 otherwise we shall fail to express
 ourselves clearly and acceptably and we
 may even succeed in saying the opposite
 of what we mean.

In constructing these groups (which
 we call phrases, clauses and sentences)
 we have the aid of the large number
 of short words like and, if, by, to, in,
 is and was which are very different
 from the definite and picturesque words
 that we have just examined.
 They do not call up distinct
 Images.

the
 they
 their
 groups
 a
 that
 is
 about
 my
 John
 thought
 apply
 comes
 him
 show
 more
 not

Yet their importance in the expression of thought is clear..... for they serve to join other words together and to show their relation to each other in those groups which make up connected speech.

Thus, "Box Heavy" conveys some meaning..... but "The box is heavy" is a clear and definite statement. The shows that some particular box is meant and is enables us to make an assertion about it. And, in "Charles and John are my brothers," indicates that Charles and John are closely connected in my thought and that what I say of one applies also to the other. "If Charles comes, I shall be glad to see him," connects two statements and shows that one of them is a mere supposition (for Charles may or may not come).

In grouping words, our language has three different ways of indicating their relations.

- (1.) The forms of the words themselves
- (2.) Their order
- (3.) The use of little words like and, if, is, etc.