

First year

Groups : 5,6,7& 8

INTRODUCTION TO LINGUISTICS

LESSON FOUR

SOME FUNCTIONS OF HUMAN LANGUAGE:

In order to communicate any idea or transmit any message we make use of either one form of language. One function of language is communication which consists of sending and receiving pieces of language to make others know about ourselves or know about other selves. However, there are cases in which language is not used to fulfil that specific function but used for other reasons. Those reasons may be:

1. Emotional Expression (Emotive Language):

Sometimes we use language to get rid of our nervous when we are under stress or frustrated state; the clearest case is the use of swearing or obscenity as a means of getting rid of nervous energy when people are under stress. Other emotive utterances include involuntary responses to beautiful art or scenery, expressions of fear or affection, and the outpourings found in a great deal of poetry. We may also use positive kinds of emotive language in cases when we react automatically to beautiful sight.

2. Social Interaction (Relationship):

when more than one person are engaged in using language, the function of language is not necessarily communicating ideas. One other function of language (in a social gathering) is the intention to maintain good relationships among persons. For example in English when someone sneezes we use the expression “bless you” and the common reply is “thank you”. In this case, no ideas are communicated rather it is a purpose of maintaining a good rapport

between people. Silence instead of the expression “bless you” would mean a sense of distance (alienation) or even dislike (hate). These kinds of expressions are automatically produced, stereotyped in most of the cases and they differ from one language to another as cultures vary.

3. The Power Of Sounds:

meaningless expressions are often uttered in different situations. For instance, those repetitive rhythmical sounds produced by children to control a game, or those voices of individuals singing at kitchen, bathroom ... Phrases like these can be explained only by the desire to exploit the sonic potential of language.

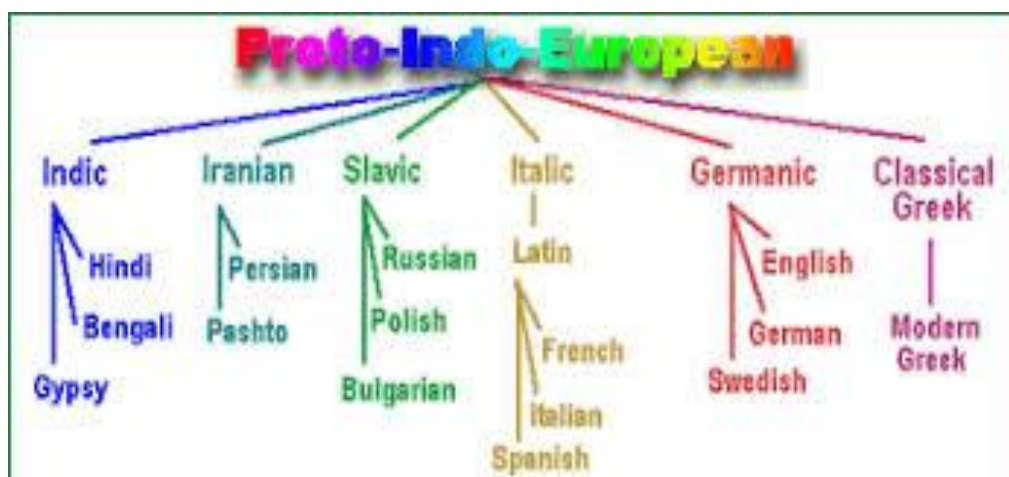
3. The Instrument Of Thought:

people, specially when writing, feel the need to speak out their thoughts aloud saying that this helps them concentrating more. This can be the example of an author who reads to check whether what has been written corresponds to what he has in mind. An example of students performing mathematical calculation where the mental act (thinking) is accompanied with a verbal commentary. Here also no idea is communicated.

LANGUAGE FAMILIES:

To say that two or more languages belong to the same family is to say that they are variants of the same common ancestral grandfather language, or the original form (proto) of a language. The first attempt to discover the history of the languages of the world began at the end of the eighteenth century, scholars (linguists) at that time began to compare groups of languages in a systematic and detailed way to see whether there were correspondences between them especially in terms of sound systems and grammatical structure.

If this could be demonstrated (finding similarities) it would be assumed that these groups of languages belong to the same original language or proto language; however, there is no direct and complete knowledge of the proto language from which the members of a particular family are descendants. In Europe for example, there were groups of languages like French, Spanish, and Italian which are descendants of a common origin (Latin). Another hypothesis supports the idea that there was once a language form which many languages of EURASIA have been descendants, this language is called the Proto-Indo-European language.



Who Were The Indo-Europeans ?

History showed that there existed a semi-nomadic population living in southern Russia around 4000 BC. They began to spread into the Danube area of Europe from around 3500 BC, those people were known as the Kurgans.

The Kurgan culture and language seem to have arrived in the Adriatic region before 2000 BC. The ancestors of the Kurgans are not known although there are similarities between their language and the Uralic family of languages spoken in the East.

The Discovery Of Proto-Indo-European Language:

It was not possible to deduce the existence of this family of languages until scholars become aware of the systematic resemblance which can be found between European languages and Sanskrit which is the oldest language of the Indian continent. When these similarities were first found, many people thought that Sanskrit was a part of the European languages, but towards the end of the eighteenth century, systematic studies showed that this was not the case and many studies proved that Sanskrit was a system to European languages.

Sanskrit	Latin	Greek	
pitar	pater	pater	(father)
bhratar	frater	phrater	(brother)