

WHAT IS LINGUISTICS?

Linguistics is that branch of knowledge which attempts to make a scientific study of language. Here the term scientific implies a well-organized, comprehensive and systematic study of language. We know that every language has certain systems that make it operational under specific circumstances. Linguistics analyses these underlying systems of language in order to describe their distinctive features. Each language is identified with a set of sounds, letters, words, sentences and meanings, etc. which are its constituents. All of these constituents work in accordance with certain rules to produce the desired meaning which is the ultimate goal of a language.

Linguistics brings to light the incoherent link among these different constituents of a language and evolves theories regarding its functioning. It takes into account all the possible features of a language that can be correlated with its expressive potential. Linguistics strives to present a very objective picture of a language but at the same time it does not become oblivious of its subjective implications. R. H. Robins observes and says,

"Linguistics is concerned with human language as a universal and recognizable part of the human behaviour and of the human faculties perhaps one of the most essential to human life as we know it,

and one of the most far reaching of human capabilities in relation to the whole span of mankind's achievements."

This observation considers linguistics as an area of enquiry into the realm of language that is a universal characteristic of human beings. That is to say, linguistics basically deals with the characteristics of language in general regardless of the characteristics of a particular language. To be more specific, linguistics looks at language with a broad perspective, and so, adopts an all inclusive approach in its analysis and description. It does not study only the mechanism operational behind language rather takes into account all the sociological and psychological factors that have considerable bearing on it.

Further, how a language is acquired and learnt is the field of exploration for linguistics. Moreover, linguistics comes out with the ways of contrasting two languages at different levels and puts forward the similarities and dissimilarities between them that help in understanding the general nature of these languages. On the basis of these contrastive studies certain theories regarding the learning and teaching of these languages are evolved. Thus, linguistics makes a thread-bare analysis of all the ingredients of language in a scientific manner and postulates theories regarding its different aspects.