

IDEAS 77

**International Online Teachers Society
Debate
Educational Materials For
Advance and Upper Intermediate
Students**



**International Online Teachers Society
Publishing Committee**



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THE 77th INTERNATIONAL ONLINE TEACHERS SOCIETY ESSAY CONTEST

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I NO SPEAK ENGLISH...

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I have often marveled at how language has served both as a bridge and a barrier to the building of relationships. We find language to be a barrier when we are unable to communicate more effectively in a foreign language. This has been so since biblical times when the Tower of Babel itself became the setting for language to evolve into a definitive barrier that separates people from one another. Pride was the culprit that caused the confusion amidst what was supposed to be a united civilization of humans. If mankind had not dreamed of being greater than its Maker, we would not have suffered such a cruel fate. Now, we speak languages which confound us in their complexity as well as their diversity.

We consider language to be a link that connects us because we have been able to establish a number of languages that are universally used by people all over the planet. For instance, global communications and international business have always had English as the primary language in use. Meanwhile, the Chinese language, with its collection of phonetic symbols and pictures, has also become a universal language of sorts since it is spoken by what is probably the most widely-scattered population in the world.

Because of the dual roles of language, we often find ourselves alternating between one language to another to articulate our thoughts and to get our ideas across. For instance, ESL teachers always have to learn to think in English in order to make their students see their proficiency on the job. Otherwise, they lose whatever teaching credibility they might have if they are unable to express themselves in the language that they educate students on. ESL teachers still retain the nationality they were born into but have to learn to adapt to the nuances of the language that they have to use to interact with their ESL learners.

There have been instances where ESL teachers have had to take on a foreign accent just to prove themselves capable of teaching English. In addition, some online ESL schools have even resorted to asking their teachers to “pretend” that they are Americans in order to be credible teachers of English. Being able to pretend is easy enough. Keeping up with the pretense is another. What happens when the student asks about a national history that’s different from one’s own, then? Most likely, every ESL teacher in that case should do their homework and perform research and information gathering even before they dare to teach. Indeed, language can be both a barrier and a bridge. However, those of us who are engaged in teaching a language are well advised to learn that specific language by heart and achieve a fluency that’ll build bridges instead of erect barriers to communication.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Why do you study English? Is there any other foreign language you wish to learn?
2. Is it easy to learn a foreign language? If not, what are the usual problems in learning another language?
3. How has language diversified in your own community presently? Be as specific as needed.
4. How many languages do you speak at home and in school? Be able to tell the story about how you studied your first foreign language.
5. How were you able to learn to speak your mother tongue? Do you think the same method can be used in learning a second language such as English? Why or why not?



THE LANGUAGE THAT CONFOUNDS US

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In my country, it's not uncommon for people to alternate between English and Filipino to express themselves. Although it can be perplexing to hear people using words in two different languages within the same sentence (which had originally been attributed to college girls studying in exclusive schools in Manila), many people nowadays have become quite comfortable in the practice of doing just that. Yes, many of us have learned to express ourselves in multiple languages, sometimes even in out-of-this-world languages of communication we call "swardspeak" or "textspeak". Frankly speaking, such unusual languages of communication are still Greek to me despite the fact that they can be very amusing at specific points.

I myself have found a certain fascination with the way texting has changed the way we communicate. We shorten our text messages using acronyms. There's even a website dedicated to internet slang, for goodness' sake. There was a time when LOL was considered rude and fresh in my country, but nowadays it just signifies extreme mirth. WKYP looks like the call sign of a radio station to me, but it has meant "Will Keep You Posted" to many people nowadays.

Why can't our languages be short enough as they are? What many of us have overlooked is the fact that we seldom use verbal language nowadays to communicate our thoughts. Instead of exchanging snail mail letters, we exchange emails. We no longer find it comfortable to speak on the phone unless it's for an emergency. We just send text messages, and goodness knows how chock full they can be with abbreviations and stuff like that. I reprimand my children when they just nod their heads in assent to what I say. I tell them that they were given tongues to say Yes or No. What's even more exasperating in some cases is how they nod or shake their heads even when we are beyond seeing distance of each other. Then I have to repeat myself to check if they're still where I think they are and whether they have been listening to me at all.

I use language to inject certain feelings in the way I want to be understood. For instance, my children know that I am happy when I add "...my child" to punctuate my sentences. But when they hear their names at the end of my sentences, they know I am either displeased or angry about something they did. In our day-to-day interactions, let us not forget the essential things that language needs to do: to communicate as well as make people aware of our thoughts and feelings about things in general. Once language fails to make others see what we want them to see, all it becomes is a jumbled mash-up of letters and sounds that don't really mean a thing.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. What are the purposes of language to you?
2. When can language become confusing? Elaborate on your answer/s.
3. Why is language important?
4. Why do people learn a second language?
5. How can we become effective language users? Be as specific as needed.



THE WORD IS MIGHTIER THAN THE SWORD

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We use language to transmit ideas and thoughts to each other. We use it to inform, ask questions, influence or effect changes. Language is what we use to write books and stories and verses. We also no longer look at language as a mere function or privilege of the human race. Animal trainers have already taught animals under their care to respond to simple commands. Pet birds have even been taught to mimic human language and human expressions.

Fortunately, we humans have been able to reserve language as an exclusive ability that sets us apart from lower beings or creatures. No matter how studies have revealed that certain animals like whales and dolphins emit sounds to communicate with one another, it is still us humans that have used language to the hilt by creating not just sounds and symbols but entire language systems to articulate our thoughts.

We have created computer programs using technological “languages” to make them more advanced. Our cellular phones respond to our voices and dial numbers or perform operations at our command. We have been able to create clapper activated on/off switches for automated lighting systems. We zoom in and out of computer images using our thumbs and fingers to manipulate those images. We have click-to-call and click – to-map functionalities for our websites. Yes, as far as language is concerned, mankind has gone a long way. Yet, amidst all the advances we have gone through to make communicating easier in our day-to-day existence, how much of language has suffered in order to make our interactions quicker and more “efficient”?

Have you ever heard of speed dating? The phenomenon has spread like wildfire in many societies. Participants converse with each other for less than 10 minutes and then move on to another dating partner. One gets to meet several different people in a day and talk to each one of them, albeit briefly. This is quite an amusing way to meet multiple dating partners in one speed dating session. People have testified that it’s a more effective way to meet new people than going to bars or clubs. But what can you really know about a person you only spend less than 10 minutes with? Married people know that it takes a lifetime to get to know just one person thoroughly so talking with someone for less than ten minutes can be a challenge to the mind as well as the heart. I guess people who join such events just rely on the unexpressed language of smell and sight to be able to land a great partner. Will such language really suffice in the long term?

In our daily interactions, let us not forget how essential the things we express are as well as those that are left unexpressed. Let us use language well for it can spell the difference between a happy life and one that’s just mere existence.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. How can language influence the way we live? Be as specific as necessary.
2. How is language utilized to change the world? Cite specific examples.
3. Do you think it is useful to also learn alternative forms of communication such as sign language or Morse code or Braille? Justify your answer.
4. What do you think would happen if animals could also talk?
5. How do you use language in your day-to-day interactions?



Why we need language

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Language is the means of communication that we use today. It is part of human evolution and it is deeply rooted in our cultures and races. The language that we use today is based on certain sounds and movements. People before made sounds and certain movements in order to communicate, and through such sounds they were able to share their emotions and their ideas with other people. The English language, known as the most popular type of language today, is based on British, German, Danish, Latin and Celtic languages. A lot of languages have influenced the English language and that is why it is one of the most widely languages today.

There are various types of languages in the world. Most people speak in Spanish while others in Mandarin. There are people who speak Japanese, French, German and Italian languages. Of course, most countries also have foreign dialects. Dialects are actually language patterns developed by cultural races. For instance, in Africa they have developed a certain language that is only common to certain locals. If we try to learn their language, we might spend three years trying to decipher their language. Most people study various languages in order to work in other countries.

They also learn other languages in order to become translators or travelers.

There are also some amazing ways for most people to communicate without the use of language. People with speech or hearing disabilities communicate through the use of sign language. Scientists are also trying to communicate with animals through the use of sounds. Of course, there is also a type of language that we instinctively know. This type of communication is called Body language. Body language is based on the movement and actions of a person. Our minds have the ability to check out the movement of other people. Sometimes, when others smile we also smile in return. We also shake or we try to close our eyes when we are afraid. Those are just some of the movements of body language.

Imagine if there is no language. If there is no way of communicating with one another, we will not be able to teach others. We will not be able to have teachers and we will not be able to share our ideas. There will be no doctors, scientists, mathematicians, engineers and architects today since there will be no way of sharing concepts, theories and ideas. It will be very hard for us to do certain things since we will not be able to communicate.

Questions:

- 1) What are some types of languages that you know?
- 2) What is the main language in your country?
- 3) What are dialects?
- 4) What is body language?
- 5) What happens if there is no language?



LANGUAGE - HEART AND CULTURE OF PEOPLE

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Language is a vital means of communication to other people and it is tantamount to saying that it is the heart and culture of people. When we say, it is the heart; it only means that we cannot do without it for we can express and interact with others through language. We can also connect with other people; make sense of our experiences through language. Likewise, we can also let others know how we feel, what we need, ask questions and these could all be done through language. Thus, for communication to take place, we do not just listen but also speak through language.

The same thing holds true when we say that language can help us learn the cultures of other people. When we get to know other people's language, we get to know their culture too. A typical example is when we go to other places, for instance in Spain, we should more or less know the Spanish language for us to be able to communicate with them. Many people are afraid of those from other countries, simply because they don't know the language of that particular person. This lack of knowledge of other people's language makes them feel threatened by someone from another land and culture but when they start to talk to each other and know a little of their language, that fear subsides.

Language can be a big barrier that cuts us off from others and that is the reason why we should try to know and interest our self with other languages too. It can develop and grow with time for it reflects history and it grows as our knowledge of the world grows. Besides strong language skills, it can be an asset which in turn promotes a lifetime of effective communication. When we try to delve into a certain language and not the only language that we know, we get to know the culture of that particular country. We get to interact with its people and know all about there is to know about their culture.

Language and culture play a very important role in all communities. People's culture can be expressed, seen and shown through language, which is a very effective means of communication. There is no doubt that language and culture are link together. We must admit that it acts as a significant feature in intercommunication as well as a vital factor in culture interaction. A powerful play is what language does in the communication world.

Whether we like it or not, as per the 2012 International Conference on Language, Medias and Culture, language is a vital factor that influences human life progress which does not only improve our quality of life but it also shows how people live and think. This only proves the fact that language is the heart and culture of people from all walks of life.

Questions for discussion:

1. How does language play an important part in a person's life?
2. Can we do without language? Elaborate on your answer.
3. In what way can language best show the heart and culture of people? Explain your answer.
4. Do you consider language as a very important means of communication? In what way or ways can you consider it as one?
5. Do you agree to the fact that language plays a vital role in the interaction of human beings? Why or why not?



International Online Teachers Society(IOTS) is an independent non profit international organization committed to improving the state of online and offline education in the world by engaging all kinds of language teachers with fluent English speaking skill in the world to shape global, regional and education agendas.
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