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## **Language and culture**

Language and culture are two inseparable facets of human existence. They are intricately interconnected, influencing each other in ways that shape individual and collective identities. This paper seeks to explore the multifaceted relationship between language and culture through an examination of key theoretical perspectives from linguistic relativity, linguistic determinism, and sociocultural theories.

The relationship between language and culture is a complex one. The two are intertwined. A particular language usually points to a specific group of people. When you interact with another language, it means that you are also interacting with the culture that speaks the language. You cannot understand one's culture without accessing its language directly. When you learn a new language, it not only involves learning its alphabet, the word arrangement and the rules of grammar, but also learning about the specific society's customs and behavior. When learning or teaching a language, it is important that the culture where the language belongs be referenced, because language is very much ingrained in the culture.

### **What Exactly Is Language?**

Language is a system of "speech, manual, or written symbols" that humans use to communicate. Language helps us share with others and identify ourselves. The roots of human language remain a mystery. Linguists agree that the first humans, the homo sapiens, used some spoken language. Yet, there is no record of this early language to show us how the speech started. "Language is not just words. It's culture, a tradition, a unification of a community, a whole history that creates what a community is. It's all that and more." — Noam Chomsky. Language is primarily learned through oral communication rather than written. Children grasp the basic concepts of structure and grammar before they even go to school. The linguistic varieties of a language can be categorized into geographical, social, and functional. Geographical differences happen when a form of the language is used in certain parts of a community. For example, the language spoken in the Eastern part of a country may differ from the one spoken in the West. Social differences are influenced by gender, age, and occupation.

### **What Exactly Is Culture?**

A group of people's characteristics and patterns of behavior define their culture. Language, arts, and customs are the basic categories we use to characterize culture. Culture teaches us how to think, communicate with others, and perceive our surroundings. The sum of shared beliefs, values, practices, traditions, customs, art, and social behaviors that characterize a particular group, community, society, or civilization. Culture encompasses the knowledge, norms, symbols, language, and artifacts that are transmitted from one generation to the next, shaping the way individuals within a group perceive and interact with the world around them. Culture plays a significant role in shaping identity, providing a framework for social cohesion, and influencing the behaviors and choices of its members.

### **What Is The Relation Between Culture And Language?**

“Changes in Language Often Reflect the Changing Values of a Culture” (Ravi Zacharias) Language and culture are interlinked and you cannot learn one without having a clear understanding of the other. According to the Encyclopedia Britannica, language is linked to all the human-life aspects in society, and understanding of the surrounding culture plays an important role in learning a language. Moreover, language allows the organization and evolution of cultural values within a social community, culture and language share human beliefs, realities, and actions. As a result, there is a relationship between culture and language.

### **How Language And Culture Are Interlinked?**

Language changes often represent a culture's changing values. Language and culture are inextricably related. And you can't learn one without first knowing the other. Language is related to all features of human life in society. And comprehension of the surrounding culture is key to learning a language. The language also allows for the development and evolution of cultural values. Ken Hale, a well-known linguist, discusses the relationship between culture and language. He claims that when a language loses. A piece of culture is also lost as culture has a strong influence on the language. Our fundamental traditions, ideals, and interpersonal interactions are all influenced by culture. Language, on the other hand, makes these exchanges quick. Language promotes social connections. At the same time, culture aids our learning of how to connect with others.

### **Linguistic Relativity**

***Whorfian Hypothesis:*** Proposed by Benjamin Lee Whorf in the mid-20th century, this hypothesis suggests that the structure of a language influences the way its speakers perceive and think about the

world. Example: The Inuit languages have multiple words for different types of snow, reflecting the cultural significance of snow in their daily lives and perceptions.

***Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis:*** Developed by Edward Sapir and further advanced by Whorf, this theory emphasizes how language influences thought and worldviews. Example: The Hopi language's tenses, which are non-linear, challenge the Western concept of time and influence the Hopi culture's view of temporal relationships.

### **Linguistic Determinism**

***Strong Linguistic Determinism:*** Suggests that language entirely determines thought and perception.

Example: If strong linguistic determinism were true, speakers of different languages would have entirely distinct worldviews, with no common ground.

***Weak Linguistic Determinism:*** Argues that language plays a significant role in shaping thought and perception, but it does not determine them entirely.

Example: Languages may influence the emphasis placed on different aspects of an event, affecting the interpretation of the same event in different cultures.

### **Sociocultural Theories**

***Vygotsky's Sociohistorical Theory:*** Lev Vygotsky's theory posits that language and culture are intertwined in the development of higher mental functions.

Example: Vygotsky argued that learning and development occur within a cultural context, and language serves as a tool for cognitive growth.

***Communication Accommodation Theory:*** Developed by Howard Giles, this theory explores how people adjust their language and communication style to fit the cultural norms and expectations of their interlocutors.

Example: In intercultural interactions, individuals may consciously or subconsciously adapt their speech to build rapport or maintain social harmony.

### **Conclusion**

The relationship between language and culture is dynamic and intricate, as evidenced by the theories presented in this paper. Linguistic relativity and determinism theories highlight the influence of

language on thought and perception, while sociocultural theories emphasize the role of language in cognitive development and intercultural communication. These theoretical perspectives collectively illustrate the depth and complexity of the interconnectedness between language and culture, illuminating the profound impact each has on the other in shaping the human experience. Understanding these theories helps to foster cross-cultural awareness and effective communication in a globalized world. To sum up, language and culture are definitely an integral part of our life. There are many differences we share due to our different identities and individualities, but there are also many similarities that we have thanks to the connections between our cultures and languages we speak.