

The Relationship between Language and Culture

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Discuss the relationship between language and culture.

Language is a human communication system, and Culture is what we do. Language and Culture are strongly interconnected. The relationship between Language and Culture is controversial, and when someone tries to understand how language and culture are connected, a number of questions come to mind. It is good to understand the relationship between language and culture first to understand their definitions.

Definition of Language: Language is the method of human communication, either spoken or written, using words in a structured or conventional way.

According to Aristotle, **“Language stands for speech that humans produce to exchange their experiences, resulting in ideas and emotions.”**

Noam Chomsky states, **“A language is a set of sentences, each finite in length and constructed out of the finite set of elements”**

Definition of Culture: Culture is a combination of a group of people's types of thought and characteristics. The word culture is derived from the Latin word ‘colere,’ which means something born from the earth.

One scholar, Edward Burnett Tylor, defined culture as "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society."

Emile Durkheim saw **“culture as a system of representation that maintains the collective consciousness of society.”**

Evolution of Language and Culture: Language and culture are constantly changing. For example, the English language we use today is very different from Old English – for example, the ancient form “Maketh” has been changed to “Make”. Similarly, you can identify several differences between the old Western and new cultures. No language can exist without culture. Both language and culture experience massive changes over time. Therefore, you cannot expect a 10-year-old child and a 70-year-old man to share the same culture and language

though they may live in the same locality.

Like Ecological Balance: A renowned linguist Ken Hale expresses his views on the culture-language relationship. He says

When a language is lost, a part of the culture gets lost as well as Culture is significantly encoded in language.

Culture influences our core traditions, values, and interactions with others. On the other hand, language makes those interactions easy. Simply put, language facilitates social interactions, while culture helps us to learn how to behave and interact with others.

In Personality Formation: Both language and culture play an essential role in shaping human personality. Culture tells us how to communicate with others and helps build values and ethics. Moreover, it keeps us close to like-minded people; thus, the sense of kinship strengthens our bond with society. On the other hand, language is like a tool that we use to express our culture. Indeed, cultural ideas and beliefs advance through language. Moreover, culture and language allow us to peek into the past and shape our ideas.

In conclusion, understanding culture can significantly help in learning any foreign language. One must study the region's culture if one is interested in learning one or more foreign languages. It is rightly said that action speaks louder than words. Thus, **“the more one knows about the cultural background of a language, the faster one can learn that language.”**