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Language: The Mirror Of Cultural Identity

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Abstract
Looking back at four decades of work in language teaching and applied language research reveals a range of methods. From ideas in psychology, society-focused language study, school-related linguistics, and language-centered anthropology, themes emerge. Five central issues shape what teachers and researchers explore. What ties culture to words and signs people use? Thinking changes depending on which symbols someone uses every day. Speakers may see the world in unique ways based on their language patterns. Even within one language, different groups carry separate views shaped by talk and usage. Another core issue: In what way do people show cultural values while using speech? Talks about how speaking works differ around the world, looks at talk through cultural lenses, also examines shared understandings people bring into conversations. Third point asks: How do people build culture together while talking? Explores shifts in applied linguistics - once fixed rules now seen as shaped by experience; less about correct usage more about doing things with words; attention moves from static traditions toward time, context, personal views. Fourth issue questions: What happens to studies of language and culture when tech gets involved? Printed books set limits just like digital spaces do - internet life, message threads, screen-based chats each reshape what can be spoken, recorded, acted out inside groups who share a way of communicating. Tied tightly to who holds power and makes decisions, these topics shape how we see them. Lately, scholars have begun challenging cultural norms more openly - politics now enters the conversation far more often than before. Work across different fields blends together with greater frequency, breaking old boundaries. Thinking about one's own role in research has become harder to ignore. Intercultural communication and practical language studies increasingly overlap when examining language and culture.

Key words: Linguistics**,** Culture, Communication, Teaching, Language

Culture in Linguistic Expression

Looking at language as part of culture's code, this part explores progress over the last few decades across three main fields showing how culture lives inside words and speech patterns: the link between language and thinking; how speaking ties into knowing and feeling; along with ways bodies hold meaning through talk. Such study loosely fits under what scholars call language relativity. Work in this zone examines how the tongue someone speaks influences their thoughts - momentum for such inquiry grew from the 1990s onward within Linguistic Anthropology thanks to efforts by Lucy (1992), Gumperz and Levinson (1996), Slobin (1996), then later Boroditsky (2003) and Deutscher (2010). Though Whorf once argued people could not

escape their grammar or word stock - a bold take on linguistic relativity - that extreme view lost ground, replaced by something closer to Sapir's softer stance: Language serves as a map to shared life… shaping much of how we reflect on collective issues and actions… The world we accept quietly forms itself around the speech routines common to our community. Never do two tongues match closely enough to paint identical pictures of lived experience. Each society inhabits its own reality - these aren't just identical settings wearing separate names. (Sapir 1949: 68–69). Today, most accept this milder form of the Sapir-Whorf idea - even though McWhorter in 2014 questioned it anew. Scholars in Applied Linguistics explore such differences through three lenses: how signs shape meaning, how language steers thought, and how talk varies across contexts (Kramsch 2004).

From Vygotsky's view, signs used in language double as tools shaping thought. Once children join their home culture, biological potential gets molded by everyday practices. Thinking emerges socially at first - then shifts inside as personal understanding grows. Culture shapes minds while minds, over time, reshape parts of culture too. This back-and-forth happens within systems built around shared symbols. Learning to belong to groups like families or classrooms forms part of becoming mentally capable. What we say and how we interact steers inner cognitive growth. Being guided into traditions changes raw mental ability into structured knowing. Shared meaning systems link outer communication with private reasoning. Now picture this - how we speak might shape how we think. A fresh look into mind tricks tied to language shows grammar can nudge our thoughts without us noticing. Take colors. In Russia they name two blues differently, one pale, one deep. Turns out those folks that spot shades faster than people using just "blue" for everything. Way across the planet lives a group in Australia called Guugu Yimithirr. They do not say left or right. Instead they point true north or face south even indoors. That odd habit got scientists curious about deeper patterns. Time lines up different depending on which tongue you talk. Small shifts in speech seem to bend mental maps in surprising ways. These days, talk about how language shapes thought keeps popping up in magazines and online. Not everyone agrees on it though. After seeing what Gopnik named "pop Whorfianism," McWhorter pushed back hard in 2014, sure, the notion sounds intriguing - language influencing thinking - but according to him, it just does not hold water. Instead, he flips the script: our speech grows out of shared habits and beliefs, not the reverse. Take a tongue where one term covers eating, drinking, and smoking - just because words overlap, people still know juice isn't lunch.

Culture in Everyday Communication

When conversation analysis started mattering more in Applied Linguistics for tracking changes in grammar and speaking patterns, people began wondering how to add cultural context without losing focus on what speakers actually responded to moment by moment. Into this space stepped Moerman, whose recordings of Thai rice farmers talking with officials carried unusual weight. Based at UCLA, just like Schegloff, he broke new ground by weaving history and shared understandings into a method meant to observe only real-time exchanges. His book Talking Culture pushed against the grain of traditional CA views - views insisting that only what shows up directly in transcripts should count. Many strict analysts dismissed his approach flat out, refusing to treat culture as something visible inside conversational mechanics. Yet later researchers found room in his thinking to bring in background ideas, past experiences, even deep-rooted values - if those elements clearly shaped how talk unfolded word by word.

Yet some scholars argued these links between language and culture missed complexity, demanding closer scrutiny. From her research on people speaking two languages, Ervin-Tripp looked at how one tale changed when retold in English versus Japanese - curious if heritage shaped those shifts. Her results revealed far wider gaps across individuals, even inside single countries, than anyone predicted (Ervin-Tripp 1973). Monolingual patterns themselves turned out to need finer distinctions. Alongside others exploring dual-language development, she applied various tools: picture-based narratives, word pairings, unfinished sentences, meaning scales, tales built from prompts, alongside structured image interpretation tasks. She compared native-born Japanese who moved to America - the Issei - with their U.S.-raised offspring, the Nisei - measuring how each group aligned or diverged from mainstream American behaviors, then did the same against traditional Japanese standards, finally weighing which influence held stronger sway. Peace came up more when Issei and Nisei answered in Japanese - like women back in Japan might respond. Switching to

English changed things though: Issei choices leaned toward what someone raised in America would pick instead. One example stood out: those born in Japan linked their deepest wish to calmness. People in the United States tended to name joy as top priority. Length of stay in this country shaped answers strongly. So did friendships outside their ethnic circle. Reading Western periodicals made a difference too. Mixing cultural habits versus holding they apart mattered quite a bit. In time, each person began sensing how a standard reply might sound - either way. Words carried different weight depending on which tongue they used. Every answer slipped slightly whenever speech switched sides. Put simply, people using language in everyday ways have caught the eye of experts in psycholinguistics and sociolinguistics. These specialists often link how a language works directly to traits they see in its speakers' minds or societies. Yet more lately, unease with treating culture like a fixed structure has grown. Because of that, certain scholars now lean toward post structural views. From this angle, talk unfolds not through preset rules but through mutual shaping - where words and world remake one another when cultures meet.

How Digital Communication Is Redefining Language and Cultural Expression?

Starting back in the 1500s, schools began shaping how people read and write through printed materials - this shift caught researchers' attention early on. Because of print, experts like Kress noticed patterns in communication styles, rules for reading texts, and differences in tone across situations. Much of what applied linguists know about language today grows out of traditions built around written forms. Earlier parts of this work show how theories about structure in language stem directly from environments where printing shaped thought. Think about research methods: turning talk into text for analysis only makes sense in settings where writing holds authority over speaking. Academic value often depends on being able to produce written records rather than relying on voice alone. Teaching students about formality or types of writing using Halliday's framework fits within systems that separate spoken words from written ones. Scholars such as Cope and Kalantzis used these ideas to redesign courses based on categories of writing. Byrnes and Maxim later adapted similar models when rethinking language teaching programs. These efforts mirror wider societal habits - nations have long used print to mark that is seen as learned versus untrained. Governments pushed certain behaviors and beliefs by making literacy a gatekeeper for status and influence. Online tech shows up. Then comes the internet. Research in applied linguistics takes a long time to dig deep into how these tools reshape language learning - though some work exists (Kern 2014; Kern & Malinowski forthcoming; Kramsch 2009, Ch.6; Malinowski 2011; Malinowski & Kramsch 2014). Pressure builds. Teachers must ready students for actual online interactions. Because of this, scholars often treat computers like old-school aids meant only to support written-language outcomes - even when chasing skills such as communicative ability inside classrooms. Yet here’s something else. Many now see digital spaces where people talk via machines as perfect spots to bring post-structural ideas alive in language and cultural lessons. These settings line up well with what educators want: talking with native users, engaging fellow learners who aren’t fluent either, working together alongside stronger partners (Swain 2000), growing independence, picking things up while doing activities similar to everyday life. Click once, get everything. Yet this shift brings something else entirely - scattered selves shaped by crowd reactions. Thinking spreads across tools and networks now, while copying grows harder to spot. People wear many faces online, hooked on likes and comments. Speech mixes with writing in emails, chats, blogs, without clear lines. Time bends, place loses meaning, truth wobbles slightly - all rearranged quietly beneath our habits. What once aimed to open global cultures to everyone now brings quiet costs. Not deeper understanding, but quick glances at variety. Hopes flattened, uniformity creeping in. Speedy data handling replaces careful thinking through tough ideas. Juggling many jobs at once, yet struggling to challenge why those jobs matter. Questioning tasks feels harder than doing them. Each leap in tech - from books to digital blends (Kress 2010), up to online worlds - stirs power and belief shifts. These shifts do not go unexamined. Even though the workshop happened in 2004, people saw it through varied lenses - some zoomed out, others close in - shaped by personal pasts and hopes for what might come, all tangled up in talk about "the Warsaw uprising." Reading words like these - as pieces pulled from wider streams of meaning, set across shifting moments and layers of context - opens deeper views than older methods usually allow. Such an approach fits well when studying digital writings, where ties to time, place, and truth twist just as wildly. Put another way: in real-world language study, speech and society cannot be split apart from how tech shapes expression. The world of printed books, the web's

endless flow, and instant messages shot back and forth - they each redraw the lines around which thoughts find room to live inside a group's conversation. Power always hides somewhere beneath those choices.

New Ways of Studying Language and Culture Today

Globalization pushes language teaching into tricky cultural territory. One issue ties directly to politics. After capitalism stumbled globally in 2008, fights over money and resources got sharper, widening gaps between rich and poor. These tensions fed louder culture battles. Symbolic clashes gained weight. Holborow suggests ideology isn't smooth or complete - it fits together like a puzzle missing pieces. It shows up through speech, yet stands apart from words alone. Ideology leans one way, shaped by certain groups who benefit most. People take in parts they agree with, ignore others. How much someone accepts it depends on what happens outside their heads. Reality isn't just mirrored by words - words shape it too. Because of this, Hasan argued back in 2003 that power lies in deciding what counts as real. Control over meaning becomes a kind of battle fought through signs and symbols. More studies now peel away hidden beliefs built into everyday talk. Language work often takes on politics, quietly showing how speech shapes society. Scholars look beyond classrooms, reaching toward wider forces across borders. They lean on ideas from Critical Sociolinguistics to make sense of connections. Links between speaking and culture gain depth when history enters the picture. Global movement, migration, digital exchange - all feed into current research angles. Even topics like teaching languages abroad carry these broader concerns inside them. Reality once tied to history now floats free. Online worlds pull symbols from their roots. Think Las Vegas sphinx looming where none should be. Digital masks in games reshape who we are. Places such as Facebook rebuild experience piece by piece. What feels true shifts without notice? Culture stretches past old borders. Imagined spaces challenge what tradition holds firm. The physical fades while coded realms grow louder.

When looking at methods, some language researchers now doubt whether online talk really helps people understand different cultures. Tools like email partnerships or discussion boards may boost conversation numbers. These tools help learners pick up grammar patterns through repeated exposure. Yet spoken words in digital spaces might not match real-world interaction needs today. Tech companies push hard on textbook makers to include their products. Teachers and researchers are starting to try fresh tech tools in lessons. Yet those who study language learning have rushed to back these gadgets instead of questioning where they fall short. Little digging has happened into their weak spots so far. Big gaps remain untouched waiting for deeper thought and clearer ideas. A shift in how researchers handle language and culture shows up in what kinds of books they now examine. Literary pieces like personal stories, fiction, or life accounts appear more often as material for understanding learners' inner experiences (Kramsch 2009; Pavlenko 2005). Still, such writings enter analysis only when written in English or turned into it first. Works mixing several tongues - jumping between languages mid-sentence, offering no gloss - are rarely touched. That gap might stem from scholars choosing to write solely in English despite knowing multiple languages themselves. Reading something written using several languages at once means understanding each of those tongues well enough to feel what's truly being said. That need - knowing multiple ways of speaking deeply - is rare, harder than it sounds. Real studies on how people handle such mixing? Still nearly missing from the field.

Bringing Fields Together: Language, Culture, and Communication in Focus

Lately, Applied Linguistics can't ignore how fast Intercultural Communication has grown. At first called "cross-cultural communication," back in the 1950s it leaned on anthropology for direction. By the 80s and 90s, though, cross-cultural psychology took charge - culture boiled down to national identity, one country measured against another through broad labels like those from Hofstede or Triandis. Their push - starting in a 1981 paper - to see ICC through discourse patterns didn't catch on right away; not even their full argument laid out later in Intercultural Communication: A Discourse Approach managed to move things quickly. For years, words themselves stayed off the radar in most ICC work. Only over the past twenty years did scholars working in real-world language teaching and analysis begin pulling ICC closer into their own frame. Learning languages now often focuses on bridging cultures, connecting personally across differences, while sharing meanings through dialogue (Liddicoat & Scarino 2013: 8). Meeuwis once gathered writings in Pragmatics about what culture means, along with how contrasts shape interaction back in 1994. Recently, books under the title Language and Intercultural Communication by Routledge highlight research from those working at the edge of language practice (Clark & Dervin 2014; Dervin & Risager 2014; Sharifian &

Jamarani 2013). The same publisher's journal welcomes voices from experts who explore real-world language use. Together, these developments show a quiet meeting point - where intercultural communication interests align closely with those rooted in applied linguistic inquiry.

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