

THE THEORY OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

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Abstract

The relationship between language and culture has long been considered one of the most significant topics in the humanities. Language is not only a means of communication but also a powerful tool for preserving national identity, cultural values, and traditions. Through language, people express their worldview, collective memory, and social practices, while culture enriches the vocabulary, idioms, and symbolic meanings of the language. This mutual interaction shapes the mentality, social consciousness, and moral outlook of a nation. Culture evolves through language, and language, in turn, develops under the influence of cultural processes, historical experience, and social change. Therefore, studying them as an integrated system is crucial for understanding the dynamics of human society. This article analyzes the theoretical foundations of the interrelation between language and culture, highlighting their mutual enrichment and their impact on social development. The research also emphasizes the importance of linguistic and cultural studies in strengthening intercultural communication, preserving heritage, and fostering global understanding.

Keywords: Language, Culture, Linguoculturology, Society, Mentality, Tradition, Values, Thinking, Interaction, Social consciousness.

Introduction

The idea that language defines the boundaries of the cultural world emphasizes its role as both the guardian and carrier of cultural identity. Language not only conveys meaning but also embodies the values and traditions of society, making it an inseparable part of cultural heritage. Languages and their differences are regarded as an influential force that has shaped the entire cultural history of humankind. A careful study of the history of language is crucial for fully understanding how people transformed abstract thoughts into concrete reality. Furthermore, in exploring the achievements of nations in science and art, the mutual influence of literatures, and the contribution of these processes to cultural development, language cannot be overlooked. All of these are inherently connected with language. Thus, the impact of language on development and culture is immense. However, the relationship between language and culture is not always uniform. The same language may unite representatives of different cultures or, conversely, divide them. For instance, the American linguist Edward Sapir argues that there is no direct connection between language, race, and culture (Sapir, 1993). He notes



that the English language is not confined to a single race; millions of African Americans speak English as their native language, using it as a tool to express their thoughts and experiences. At the same time, the white, English-speaking population of America is not a separate race apart from African Americans. Moreover, based on a common English language, it is possible to discuss the distinct cultural identities of both Americans and the English. Nevertheless, the English language itself is an integral part of the linguistic heritage of the Anglo-Saxons, while also incorporating elements influenced by Norman French, Scandinavian, Celtic, and pre-Celtic traditions.

Methodological Analysis:

The relationship between language and culture is often interpreted as the interconnection between an integrated system and its constituent elements. Language is viewed both as a component and an instrument of culture, revealing the isomorphism between the characteristics of language and the national culture of its speakers. However, these relations are complex and not always explicitly expressed. This situation gives rise to scholarly debates around conceptual notions such as Russian linguoculture and Slavic culture. A significant contribution to the study of Russian folk culture through the lens of ethnolinguistics and ethnoculturology was made by N. I. Tolstoy. The central premise of his research is that language and culture demonstrate isomorphism, which enables the application of linguistic research methods in cultural studies. Tolstoy emphasized the intrinsic connection between linguistics and ethnography as part of semiotic sciences. He demonstrated the ethnic and spatiotemporal variability of linguistics, which encompasses both language and traditional folk practices, thus considering the development of dialectology—the ethnographic component—as a natural continuation of scientific evolution. According to Tolstoy, the structure of culture parallels the structure of language, as both domains reveal phenomena such as style, genre, synonymy, homonymy, and polysemy. Moreover, he highlighted the affiliation of bearers of different cultures (bilingual or multilingual) with various spheres of life and external interactions. The history of cultural interactions also exposes mutually influencing cultural layers, described through notions such as cultural substratum, superstructure, or super-strategy. Tolstoy proposed a systematic approach to the study of language within culture by describing a sequence that includes idiolect, microdialect (representing small communities), dialect (linked to regional varieties), and macrodialect (associated with broader regional dialects). Another important study on Russian culture, including its linguistic dimensions, was carried out by D. S. Likhachev, who regarded language as the primary expression of culture. He argued that the richness of language directly affects the “cultural awareness” of the world. In his work *Notes on Russian*, Likhachev examined not only the Russian language but also the foundations of Russian culture, encompassing literature, folklore, and surrounding cultural influences. He discussed various cultural concepts such as nature, kindness, the character of the Russian people, national ideals and truths, patriotism, and gardens. Likhachev traced the development of Russian culture during the medieval period (9th–13th centuries) of Kievan Rus, linking it to the unifying factor of linguistic unity and folklore. He observed that, despite regional differences, the variations in spoken language were minimal, and a single language prevailed everywhere. Today, most



scholars agree that cultural diversity is largely tied to linguistic diversity. This relationship is clearly articulated in the works of A. Wierzbicka, who demonstrated that the meanings of words in different languages—even when translated in dictionaries—do not always correspond. Such meanings reflect and embody the lifestyle and modes of thought specific to particular societies or speech communities. They serve as an essential key to understanding culture. The study of the linguistic culture of a nation or people refers to the field of ethnolinguistics, which focuses on the interaction of linguistic, ethnocultural, and ethnopsychological factors in the development and use of language. More broadly, ethnolinguistics explores the “content” of a particular ethnic group’s culture, which is revealed through linguistic myths, vocabulary, rituals, and symbols. In Russia, F. I. Buslaev, A. A. Potebnya, and A. N. Afanasyev, and in foreign linguistics, F. Boas, E. Sapir, B. Whorf, and D. H. Hymes are recognized as the first researchers in this field. A broader discipline that combines both ethnolinguistics and sociolinguistics is known as linguoculturology, which has gained prominence as a linguistic science that studies culture and linguistic culture. Linguoculturology is an interdisciplinary field that examines a specifically organized set of cultural values, the dynamic processes of speech production and perception, as well as the experiences of linguistic personalities and the analysis of national mentality. It offers a systematic description of the linguistic worldview and addresses issues related to education and intellectual development. Linguoculturology and ethnolinguistics both emphasize the close interrelation between language and culture but differ in their specific areas of study. Ethnolinguistics focuses on the linguistic mechanisms, functions, and systems of language that reflect the national worldview, while linguoculturology highlights the cultural norms, values, and traditions that shape this national linguistic perspective. The tasks of linguoculturology largely coincide with those of linguistics, primarily focusing on the study of national identity under the conditions of the interrelation between language and culture. In general, the purpose of linguoculturology is to investigate the influence of language on human beings. Linguoculturology is closely related to ethnolinguistics and cognitive linguistics, while at the same time going beyond the boundaries of these disciplines. It examines the new realities of language and culture from an anthropological perspective, paying attention to the competencies of native speakers as the creators of speech and thought processes. From these analyses, it becomes clear that the theory of the relationship between language and culture has undergone a long historical development, which can be considered through several key stages. Each stage is characterized by its own theoretical approaches and methodologies. Linguoculturology is a multifaceted interdisciplinary field that studies a specifically organized set of cultural values, the dynamic processes of speech production and perception, as well as the experiences of linguistic personalities and the analysis of national mentality. It offers a systematic description of the linguistic worldview and is aimed at addressing issues of education and intellectual development. Linguoculturology and ethnolinguistics both focus on the close interrelation between language and culture, but they differ in their specific areas of study. Ethnolinguistics concentrates on the linguistic mechanisms, functions, and systems that reflect the national worldview, while linguoculturology emphasizes the cultural norms, values, and traditions that shape this national linguistic perspective. The tasks of linguoculturology largely coincide with those of linguistics,



primarily focusing on the study of national identity under the conditions of language–culture interrelation. In general, the main goal of linguoculturology is to explore the influence of language on human beings. Linguoculturology is closely related to ethnolinguistics and cognitive linguistics, yet it goes beyond the boundaries of these disciplines. It considers the new realities of language and culture from an anthropological perspective, paying attention to the competencies of native speakers as the creators of speech and thought processes.

Conclusion:

The exploration of the connection between language and culture demonstrates that they are deeply interwoven and cannot be examined as separate entities. Language functions not only as a tool of interaction but also as a repository of cultural memory, values, and traditions of a nation. Through language, communities convey their worldview, social norms, and collective identity, while culture, in turn, enriches language by influencing its lexicon, figurative expressions, and symbolic layers of meaning. In this sense, language and culture form a dynamic system of reciprocal influence, where each element sustains and develops the other. The interplay between language and culture is particularly significant in the formation of social consciousness, national mentality, and intellectual outlook. Everyday communication, filled with proverbs, idiomatic expressions, metaphors, and symbolic references, reveals the cultural background embedded in linguistic structures. Conversely, language plays a decisive role in maintaining and passing on cultural identity, serving as a crucial channel for safeguarding moral, spiritual, and intellectual values. For this reason, studying language and culture through the lens of linguoculturology allows scholars to better comprehend both their theoretical underpinnings and their practical impact on society. To conclude, the bond between language and culture should be viewed as an integrated whole that reflects the broader dynamics of human development. Such an approach contributes not only to scientific research but also to the advancement of intercultural dialogue, mutual understanding among nations, and the protection of cultural heritage. Ultimately, recognizing and analyzing this synergy provides opportunities for effective participation in global communication and creates a foundation for moral and intellectual progress in contemporary society.

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