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Relationship between language and culture

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Culture and language are strongly interconnected. The relationship between them is debatable and several questions pop up in your mind when you try to understand how the language and culture are linked.

Do you know whether culture came first or language? What is the difference between them? Can one of them exist without the other?

For a clear understanding of the relationship between language and culture, it is better to get familiar with their definitions first.

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What is Culture?

Culture is defined as a blend of thought patterns and characteristics of a group of people.

The word culture is derived from the Latin term colure which means to grow something from the earth so when people interact with each other, they grow together which forms their culture.

Usually, the term culture is defined using external aspects such as language, traditions, religion, arts, and cuisine. But culture is something deeper than these factors. It refers to the way we think and interacts with those around us.



How You Perceive the Diverse Cultures Existing in the Society is known as Your Cultural Lens

Interestingly, people living in the same society having similar characteristics may have different cultural views and ideas which depend on several different factors. Thus, it is important to mention that different people living together can have their own ideas and their cultural lens may vary.

How Culture is Related to Language?

“Changes in Language Often Reflect the Changing Values of a Culture”

(Ravi Zacharias)

Language and culture are interlinked and you cannot learn one of these without having a clear understanding of the other. According to the Encyclopaedia 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.

Language is Needed for Effective Expression and Transmission of Culture.

A renowned linguist Ken Hale shares his views on the culture-language relationship. He says that when a language is lost, a part of the culture gets lost as well as Culture is significantly encoded in language.

Culture impacts our core traditions, values, and the way we interact with others in society. 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.

Language or Culture-Which Came First?

Language is an integral part required for the establishment of culture.

Communication is a basic human need, right? From the start, human beings are communicating and interacting with each other in different ways. Thus, for obvious reasons, the language came first.

Language is the source as well as the essence of a culture.



With time, many languages evolved, and today, a large number of languages are spoken across the world. Do You Know?

Out of over 7000 languages, only 200 languages currently exist in both spoken and written forms while many of the languages are extinct now.

It won't be wrong to say that language complexity increased over time and so did cultural diversity. The languages evolve, primarily because of their association with culture.

Evolution of Language and Culture

Do you know what is common between language and culture? Both are continuously changing!

For instance, the English language that we use today is way different from the old English. Similarly, you can identify several differences between the old western culture and the new one.

Without Culture, no language can exist.

Both language and culture experience drastic changes over time. Therefore, you cannot expect a 10-year-old child and a 70-year-old man to share an identical culture and exact the same language even if they leave in the same locality.

How Do Language and Culture Influence Our Personal Identity?

Both language and culture play a significant role in shaping your personality.

Culture tells you how to interact with others and helps to shape values and ethics. Besides, it keeps you close to like-minded people and thus, the sense of belonging strengthens your bond with society.

On the other hand, language is like a tool using which you express your culture. In fact, cultural ideas and beliefs are transmitted ahead via language.

Furthermore, both the culture and language allow us to peek into the past and shape our ideas. How We think, speak and interact with others around us is determined by our cultural values. Likewise, language also impacts human thoughts.



As mentioned earlier, language and culture continue to evolve and so does our personality. As we meet people belonging to different cultures, we get to learn more and explore more, and interaction with them can impact your personality as well.

Want to Learn a Foreign Language? Learn about Culture First!

The understanding of a culture can greatly help in learning any foreign language. If you are interested in learning one or more foreign languages, you must study the culture of the respective regions.

It is rightly said that 'Action Speaks Louder than Words. For effective communication with a foreign audience, you must be aware of their cultural nuances.

Thus, culture and language are intertwined and you cannot set them apart. If you want to improve your linguistic skills for a second language, you must tackle both the culture and language side by side.

The Last Word:

The more you know about the cultural background of a language, the faster you can learn that language.

If you aspire to learn any foreign language, remember that understanding culture is going to be an integral part of your learning journey.

For learning any language, it is essentially important to know about the culture of the people who speak that language.

In addition to having expertise in the language, you also need to consider socio-cultural aspects and learn how to properly address people in that foreign language.

To cut a long story short, language and culture are inseparable.



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