

Language, Culture and Communication

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Abstract: Man is born with an ability which distinguishes him from the rest of the creatures in the world; an ability which means the evidence of his life and existence. He starts to get accustomed to his environment and begins to communicate. Together with his biological and spiritual development he reacts and gains experience and finally learns a language totally. He is included in the system of his environment by this language. Gradually the parameters that reflect the culture and language structure of the society in which he lives becomes apparent in the mind of individual. Now, the individual has gained the ability to communicate with his environment and opens up his feelings, thoughts and beliefs to other people. Today, also called the age of globalization, the effect of information technologies on the societies is among the most common issues.

Beyond having a function of providing communication among people, language is at the same time one of the milestones of the process of logical basis of the thinking activity. The most abstract thoughts turn into concrete form together with the words of a language. On the other hand, language may be regarded as a vessel nourishing the cultural originalities of the society it is spoken in. Culture, on the other hand, is closely related to the richness of vocabulary of a language.

Technological developments that contributed greatly to the formation of globalization have also constituted some new forms of relations. The most effective one in this process has been the information technology. Because information technologies have created a dynamic system which indicates that there exists no faraway place in the world and almost everyone could reach one another without any difficulty. Particularly television has had great effect on teaching peoples and societies the “universal culture” in their daily lives.

The relationship of language, culture and education by means of intercultural communication is multi-dimensional and this multi-dimensional communication occupies a prominent ground in education. Intercultural phenomenon is of great importance in interlanguage communication for the simple reason that there exist cultural features within the core of a language. Differences within and out of language may cause conflicts and likewise misunderstandings in the communication of men from different cultures and so result in preoccupied attitudes. Language, by the way, may be considered as a method to eliminate those misunderstandings and as a way to develop intercultural dialogue. Different societies may be brought closer to each other and effective communication may be made possible by teaching a common language.

Within this context, language, which has enabled man different from other creatures throughout the process of existence, should be defined properly. Language, which provides communication and which contains a cultural tissue with its vocabulary, is a means of communication since the existence of mankind. Since language has its own rules and laws, it should be handled as an institutional system. As men get use of language as an institution, they should at the same time master the cultural and linguistic aspect of the language which constitute the cornerstones of this system. Otherwise, language may cause various conflicts and preoccupations besides being constructive and beneficial in the process of communication.

No doubt, language is a living thing and because of this characteristics it always undergoes certain transformations. The most important factor constituting the dimensions of thought is language and one develops his/her ability of thought by the store of vocabulary he/she has in that language. Things turn into vivid pictures in the mind by the words and the process of thinking starts. So, one cannot mention about thinking without the very existence of a language.

The close relationship between language and thought is a prominent factor contributing to the social process of man directly. The man who thinks has always directed intersocial relations by directly contributing to his environment and by having a much more wealthy life. Language, a much more important characteristics, which distinguishes men from the rest of creatures, has played and still plays vital role in the formation of individuals and societies. By means of language both individuals and societies can have the chance of having communication with each other. Since language is the means of communication of every society, using language does not solely depend on the level of development or technological advances because even the most primitive societies have their own language as the most advanced societies. And since a language contains the culture of the society where it is spoken, it would be mistaken to handle communication apart from culture. Because communication and language are integrated to each other and they are, in a sense, an inseparable part of a whole.

On the other hand communication will, no doubt, contain fewer and fewer misunderstandings and contraversies among those who share the same culture.

The cornerstones of the culture of a society contain some basic elements within itself as mythology, beliefs, religion, science and art etc. So the culture of a society may be resembled to a mosaic. Culture, which contains very many elements within itself, should be dealt with on the social ground. Because the vital elements of society may be claimed to exist in the culture of that society. In the light of such a definition, the concept of culture can be examined on two grounds: national and universal (international) culture. As national culture can be defined as a set of collective social values of a society, universal culture, on the other hand, may be defined as cultural cliches that can be accepted and shared by every society in the world.

So, universal culture that may also be defined as a common culture of all nations signifies a way of guidance in having international culture and dialogue. Universal culture, in a sense, is the product of a cultural interaction. Elements of different cultures are needed to to have that sort of product. The relationship between language and culture depends mainly on communication and is a matter of communication. Now a question may arise here: Has language created culture or culture created language? In fact both of these are true in a sense. If we consider culture as a way of life of a community, naturally, culture may come first. In short, men has formed certain rules, principles, beliefs, opinions as they have started to live together. One of the forecoming features of language may be said to transfer the common values of societies from one generation to another.

Culture has a national characteristics since the lifestyle, traditions, worldviews, works of art, religion and language of a society differ greatly from the others. For this very reason various cultures belong to various nations. Though some cultures contain certain similarities, all cultural elements can not be the same as to contain all nations.

There can exist neither a common world literature, world language, world way of thought, in short a common world culture. Because one of the prominent features of culture is its historical aspect. Culture, which emerges as a result of the common way of life of the members of a nation gains a historical value as it is transferred to the future generations. Members of a nation come to face the experiences of thousands of years formed by their ancestors and get use of these experiences. At that point comes the crucial step: that the transfer of experiences from one generation to another may be realized only by language. Language is both a carrier of culture, a cultural means of transfer and history, music, art, literature, science and technology, that is, all common values can only be transferred to future only by the language of the society in question.

Throughout centuries, nations have dealt with mutual interactions and these interactions have resulted in cultural transfers. Those nations with close relationships with each other have created common civilizations by joining some values of their cultures. So it is crystal clear that language is of the greatest importance in having a national government, national culture and national identity.

Every individual has, no doubt, a mother tongue and that mother tongue determines both way of feeling, thinking and the nationality. The use of language means the use of thinking. One who uses language effectively at the same time thinks effectively or vice versa and this generally results in good communication and interactions between different societies.

The success in communication with others will be closely related and directly correlated with the success in using the language. So if language is considered not only as a set of signs but also as culture , then it would be easily recognized that language and culture cannot be seperated from each other. So the element of "culture" should not be overlooked in learning and teaching a language. Otherwise, language will inevitably be much more monotonous, mechanic and boring.

Communication is realized mainly by language and culture. For example, without language, being one of the basic cultural elements, communication will, of course, be impossible. Likewise, language that we have formed among friends or jobs lets us to realize communication in a special way. We come to know which metaphors to use and when to use. In certain circumstances we choose certain words and use them. But in doing so, we take into consideration what the listeners or the others do understand from these.

Culture, language and communication have become much more phenomena both due to the dense interactions among themselves and the spread of globalization. Culture, on the other hand, consists of the life styles, social orders, beliefs of the societies and makes its existence much more dynamic related to the activities of these elements. For this very reason culture is of greater importance in providing communication in the society.

Communication, on the other hand, may be said to be a forecoming activity expressing methods and principles of culture and at the same time an important means having a role of spreading culture both in its own society and among the other societies. Communication can be fulfilled one sided or mutually and is effective in activating and using the cultural potential. Today, at the very beginning of 21st century culture can find its real value by means of the basic tools of communication.

Language constitutes the most practical and common dimension of communication. Language has been existent since the very first emergence of communication. Culture, as multi dimensional and important phenomenon, becomes much more common and develops by the basic methods of communication and this

function is realized by language. So there should always be a unity between language, culture and communication. These three constitute a whole and the lack of any of these elements may, most probably, result in poor communication. For instance younger generations gain the necessary knowledge by communication. It can be claimed that there will not be culture without communication or language.

Culture and society, as a concept, may be defined differently from each other but there is always an inseparable relationship between these two. Culture consists of common products shared by the members in the society. Society, on the other hand, consists of individuals sharing that common culture and having interactions among themselves. There can be no society without culture and culture can not find life without a society which protects and develops it. So society and culture live dependent to each other.

Due to the vast technological developments, new types of lifestyles and international relations have emerged throughout the world. The importance of economic and political relations have been felt deeply. Because of this, communication has become a multi-dimensional factor in the lives of both individuals and societies. While communication was fulfilled only by orally and written forms in the past, it has become much more rapid by technological advances. Communication technologies have turned the whole world into a small village. And in this village language and communication have gained much more importance.

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