

***Full Length Research***

# Language as a Tool for Cultural Transition

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**Sociolinguistics and anthropology strongly holds that the development of a second language is inseparable from its socio-cultural context “second language learning is often a second cultural learning”. This study looks at the concept of culture, language as culture, the relationship between language and language as a tool for cultural transition. Second language teachers should identify them cultural items in every aspect of the language that they teach. Cultural issues should be made an inherent part of the curriculum because culture is the foundation of language development and Teachers should know the background knowledge of the culture of the language they teach.**

**Key words:** Language, Culture and Transition.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Language as human and social phenomenon has continued to attract the attention of scholars in and outside the field of linguistics and language studies, (Anthonia, 2007). We may define language as a system of social conventions that specify particular relationship between a set of particular set of ideas. Verbal symbols are of particular interest in studying the role of language in human behavior. The symbols are of particular interest in studying the role of language in human behaviour. The symbols include both utterance-spoken speech and graphics patterns written words. Other symbols may also serve to represent ideas artistes use as language of form, colour, and texture to represent ides abstractly, and in human behavior facial expressions, gesture and even posture may symbolize particular ideas language in a system of conventional symbols which are not instinctive and used for communication for member of a community. This definition has succeeded in saying that language is human. No other primate use language.

Language is a means by which ideas and experience

may be communicated from one person to another. Through language the experience of one individual may be transmitted into the experience of another: thereby allowing the second to learn from the first without having to undergo the same experience directly with self. Since language provide symbols to represent conceptual ideas, they permit ideas to the hypostasize by the means that words can be brought out of the privacy of subjective experiences and in symbolic from where they can be placed. In common domain where they are accessible others, for instance, verbal labels allow ideas to be communicated to others who have adopted the same set of linguistic convictions as the speaker. With this, language permits the exchange of the idea between one individual and another. In this way language facilitates the transmission of cultural ideas, beliefs, and values over both time and pace, [Jonah 2008.] As a cultural product, language plays a crucial role in the perpetuation of cultural traditions over time, and in the spread of culture spatially through cultural diffusion.

## Language as a Tool for Cultural Transition

### Language as Culture

Language is probably the most influential factor in the dynamic interrelationship between cultures. If cultures is not only what we see, but also the way we see it and the language we express it, culture cannot whereby be regarded as a body of knowledge which can be transmitted o learners by the teachers or text books. Culture can be seen as a web of spoken and written, text a linguistic landscape consisting of an infinite number of texts, language is not only communication, but also an expression of culture. It differs from other artifacts of culture in that it can be used to express itself Zalakoro, [2016], assert what;

Indeed for any is not a means of communication and a symbol of integration in a given culture, of a conception of the world, a system values and ways of living in a society and of a series of achievement in many domains ranging from science and technology to law and different art forms.

Language makes it possible for man to transmit knowledge across space and time. It is the key to the heart of the people. Any speech community of even moderate complexity reveals several varieties of language, all of which are functionally differentiated from each other. In some cases the varieties may represent different occupation or interest specialization and, there contain vocabulary pronunciations and phraseology which are not generally used or even known throughout the broader speech community. Through teaching and through text book tasks the visibility of language and text is preserved. In other words, all aspects of written or spoken text are made visible in the classroom. The text as a whole, as an entity of form and content in the “carrier and expression of culture, these include authentic texts, where the learner encounters language as culture i.e. spoken texts, written texts of different genres, painting, (Zalakoro, 2016).

### Language

Language is the method of human communication either spoken or written, consisting of the use of words in a structured and conventional way, (English) (Zalakoro, 2016). Language is a system of communication by speaking or written, or even making signs in a way that can be understood. It is any of the different system of communication used in particular regions; it means words, their pronunciation, and method of combing them used and understood by a community. Language is a

systematic means of communicating ideas or feeling by the use of conventionalized signs, sounds, gestures, or marks having understood meanings including rules for the formation and transformation of admissible expression, (Zalakoro, 2016). According to Zalakoro language is a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions, and desires by means of a system of voluntarily produced symbols. These symbols are in the first instance, auditory and they are produced by the so-called “organs of speech”. These definitions go to show that language is essentially vocal and non-vocal and is used for communication.

It includes any and every means available to humans for communication. In this sense, language is not an end to itself but a means to an end, namely; that of fulfilling the communicative needs of man. It is for this that Anyadiegwu and Nzekwu (2105) subscribe that any means that is conventially meaning laden, available to man and used by him to convey his thoughts and notions, as well as help him understand his fellow men and his world, is language. From the above definitions, Zalakoro (2016) identified ten characteristics of language as a system; human language is learned, acquire through cultural transmission. Speakers of one language can learn another is discrete- - language consists of minimal units.

---is recombinable these minimal units can combine in infinite varieties.

- Is interchangeable\_ any speaker potentially can create and utter any message?
- Is reflexive – people can talk about language; language has the ability to refer to itself.
- Is arbitrary- meaning depends on arbitrary association of meaning with sign or symbol on conventions shared by sender and receiver of message?
- --Is redundant- language contains redundant communicative elements (message may be conveyed or reinforced twice in same utterance).
- --Can displace- language can convey imagination distant, past, present, future, conjectural and or counterfactual statement (including lies).

### Concept of Culture

The concept of culture seems to be nebulous, because of the variety of definitions associated with it. However, the study of human society would not be easy without understanding the concept of culture. Thus, the study of culture in unavoidable, inevitable and indispensable, the universe is an expression and diversity of humankind which do not imply uniform pattern of behaviors, (Zalakoro 2016).

According to Sibiri (2014) the scientific meaning of culture is not restrictive and narrow but general and wide in space, this wide and extended meaning of culture still leads to diverse definitions of culture by scholars depending on what each scholar wants to emphasize. Taylor (as cited in Sibiri (2014) defines culture as a complex whole which include knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, laws, customs and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society. This definition is acceptable amongst anthropologists and sociological scholars. Anthropology as a discipline defined as the science of man has had to deal with definitional problems and conceptual issues that are vital to the comprehensive and authoritative study of its subject man. One of these concepts is 'culture' which in fact is the bedrock of anthropological studies. While some scholar have 'primitive' and 'civilized' relationship, other have simply attempted to be use clusters of words to capture their view of the attribute of a 'culture', (Ingiabuna 2002; 3).

Etymological origin of the word 'culture' the word 'culture' has its roots in the Latin word *colere* which means "to cultivate", literally, therefore, the word "culture" means "the cultivation of or constant exhibition of certain traits, acts, etc. this can be likened to the "ideas of cultivating one's self in an effort to attain the wisdom which was found in Greek through the ideas that human beings can become themselves. Ingiabuna (2003) defines culture as that complex whole which includes 'knowledge, belief, arts, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of a society. This definition is often quoted for its clarity and brevity. It implies that culture and civilization are the same, it could be inferred than man acquired or received the knowledge he/she utilize in daily activities; these activities cannot function well without the use of language. The belief and the interpretation Ingiabuna (2003) gave to the world around him, laws he has to obey and customs which are the rationalized behavior pattern of his social milieu and all the capabilities such as occupation and habits in a particular society which avails with the opportunity to learn and use this acts to meet the challenges of his society. Things e has to learn and use as a member of is society, constitute the culture of that society.

Culture is everything passed down in human society, except its biology, language, technology, law, belief, customs and moral standard, Sibiri (2014). Sibiri clearly explains that culture is concomitant with the ideas and knowledge learnt from the society around but, excluding ideas or knowledge that are generally acquired. Similarly, Ingiabuna (2014) saw culture as the total ways of life characteristics of members of a society including tools, knowledge and patterned way of thinking are learned and shared among the people and not the direct biological inheritance. And he further defined culture as the sum

total of the material and intellectual equipment, whereby they are satisfied with their biological and social needs and adapt to using them in their environment. This means that culture is all that is in society, which is socially rather than biologically transmitted from one generation to another, finally Ingiabuna saw culture as;

A concept that makes language the tool, by which man can make a living, the creative arts by which they attempt to make life agreeable, and the symbols of ideas by which they seek to give conduct and give meaning to life.

From the various definition discussed above; it could be seen that culture cannot be meaningful outside a group.

### **The relationship between language and culture**

The acquisition of another language, offers an individual the opportunity not only to become part of another group but also to identify with a culture different from his own. Zalakoro, (2016) supports this view of point stating that; culture is a deeply ingrained part of the fiber of our being and, language being means of communication among members of a culture is the most viable and available expression of that culture.

Second language learning in some respect involves acquisition of a second identity. The successful language learner is able to take on the 'mindset' of the speakers of the target language though not, of course without reservations that is consistent with their own mindsets. They should relate language to culture if a coordinate system is to result from the learners efforts, (Richard and Lawrence 2013; 12).

Nonetheless, the profound relationship between language and the culture is neither simplistic nor automatic, nor does it lend itself to straight forwards point by point analysis. The complexity is such that people with similar culture can use language which is very different while on the other hand one language may serve as a mean of expression for a great variety of learning and cultural learning, one need to understand the nature of acculturation, culture shock, culture stereotype, attitudes and social distance; (Adebayo, 2014)

### **Language as a Tool for Cultural Transmission**

Emphasis on the teaching and learning of o the language, English language has shifted over time from grammatical competence to communicative competence, which of late has come to include cultural competence to its scope, ( Zalakoro, 2016). Language is fundamental to man's existence, it is employed for communication. The context of communication varies and as such, the language for this different context of communication varies because every language is part of a culture, therefore it serves and reflects the cultural needs.

Teaching culture is considered important by most teachers but it has remained sporadic and substantial in most teachers', language classroom, (Maduewesi and Amaka 2016). It is clear that cultural background knowledge is necessary in language teaching as the research between language and culture deepens, people have realized the necessity of teaching language into language learning; the cultural factors becomes more and more important in English teaching.

Language is a thing to be studied but a way of seeing, understanding and communicating about the things of the world and each language user uses his/her language differently to do this. Traditionally, language is viewed as a code, and in this view language is made of words and a series of rules that connect words together. Learning language as a complex, personal communication system involves ongoing investigation of language as a dynamic system of the way it works to create and convey meaning. This involves learners' analysis and talking analytically and language. This learners are involved in learning which prompt exploration and discovery rather than only being recipients of knowledge as it is transmitted to them by others. The learners require learning skills which will give them independence as users and analyzers of language. Therefore, culture should be considered as an integral part of the study on language, Ajogbor, 2014.

Culture is the sum of material and spiritual civilization created throughout the human history, its creation is inseparable from language, which the language development can be altered as its culture develops. The two, however, they complement each other in perfect harmony, evidently, it is what people believe, how they act and interact and the way they live, with specific traits, behavior, attitude, and tradition passed down from generation to generation of families. Understanding the nature of the relationship between language and culture is central to the process of learning another language. In actual language use, it is language in its cultural context that create meaning; creating and interpreting meaning is done within a cultural framework. In language learning classroom, learners need to engage with the ways in which context affects how and what is communicated. Both the learner's culture and the culture which meaning is created or communicated have an influence on the ways in which possible meaning are understood. The context is not a single culture as both the target language and culture and the learner's own language and culture are simultaneously present and can simultaneously engaged. Learning to communicate in an additional language involves developing an awareness of the ways in which culture interrelate with language whenever it is used.

The reality, language is a sort of cultural heritage. This is culture plays an important role in language. As a close relationship exists between language, culture and foreign language teaching, they are inseparable during language

learning and teaching. As so, foreign language is a cultural heritage that we should protect and a practice actively of culture on which we read focus, which contains a rich cultural connotation and values of academic research, (Maduewesi and Amaka 2016). The influence of language to culture transmission can be seen in the following ways;

(i). Cultural context underlies the varieties of languages. The vocabularies of a language highlight this aspect of culture is important to the social members, such as 'snow' to Eskimos and 'blood relations' to Chinese. There are many specific words for the word Eskimos to describe heavy snow or light snow. Also the Eskimos have words to describe the snow in different shape just as Chinese 'blood relations' cannot be explained clearly through addressing aunt or uncle.

(ii). Different approach to life of people of different cultures brings about different denotative meaning of words such as peasant, intellectual, human right comrade, etc. as well as different connotative meaning of words, such as colours, trees and flowers in different languages.

(iii). The culture of philosophy and religion can deeply affect the language of the native for example, in African/Nigerian philosophy "heaven" is above everything and its dominating power, so there are a lot of expectations when it comes to "heaven" in African/Nigerian sayings. While the counterpart of "heaven" in the West is either 'God' or 'Jesus'. Different culture possess different taboos which give rise to different euphemism in African/Nigerian and English there are many words to replace "to die", yet each demonstrating different beliefs or conception.

In fact, it is different for culture to be transmitted from place to place and from generation to generation if there were no language. Moreover, language will be difficult to be understood without constant reference to the cultural context which has produced it, because it is the product of the culture and it embodies the products, practice perspectives, communities and persons of a culture, (Maduewesi and Amaka 2016). Member of the culture have created the language to carry out all their cultural practices, to identify and organize their entire product and the name the underlying cultural perspectives in all the various communities that comprise their culture. The words of the language, its expressions, structures, sounds and scripts reflect the culture, just as the cultural products and practices reflect the language.

## CONCLUSIONS

Understanding the cultural context of day-to-day conversational conventions such as greetings farewells, forms of address, thanking, making requests, and giving or receiving compliments means more than just being

able to produce grammatical sentences; it means knowing what is appropriate to say to whom, and in what situations, and it means understanding the beliefs and values represented between the various forms and usage of the language. Culture must be fully incorporated as a vital component of language learning.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

From the discussion above, some recommendation are made, they are:

- (i). Second language teachers should identify them cultural items in every aspect of the language that they teach.
- (ii). Cultural issues should be made an inherent part of the curriculum because culture is the foundation of language development.
- (iii). Teachers should know the background knowledge of the culture of the language they teach.

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