

On the interdependence between language and culture

Philip Chika Omenukwa^{1*}

¹Department of Philosophy, Catholic Institute of West Africa; frphilipchika@yahoo.com (P.C.O.).

Abstract: Man grows within a cultural framework, and interacts with the members of that cultural build, and while adopting a way of life builds and develops his “worldhood”. Language being an indispensable tool of cultural engagement and societal integration derives its legitimate definition and reference from the performance of this unique function. Given the interdependence between language and culture, a harm or disregard of one portends a terrible danger and harm on the other. With English; the colonial language, a rupture has been created in the “worldhood” of Nigerians that terribly threatens their cultural identity. Between language and culture there is always an interactive influence: the two cannot exist without each other, since language is purveyor of culture. Problems arise when indigenous languages are violently denigrated and or even abandoned for socio-economic reasons. This is a problem this work sets out to address. To do this, the nexus between culture and language will be highlighted. The methodology here will be basically descriptive, expository and analytic. The aim is to reawaken the consciousness of rediscovering the cultural roots of African nations by a deliberate engagement in scientific studies with the indigenous languages for a more enhanced scientific learning that does not compartmentalize the individual both in the learning process and afterwards.

Keywords: *Communication, Culture, Intercultural Communication, Language, Man, Worldhood.*

1. Introduction

The human person is naturally a speaking being – animal loquens. Speaking here involves multivariant forms. It includes both verbal and nonverbal communication. It embodies in this wise the quality of relationality between persons and things in all its forms. This human characteristic both complements and confirms the other fact of man’s natural make-up as a social being – ensocialis. He essentially speaks not necessarily to himself alone but to others within the terrestrial conditions of his existential realities and contingencies. For, he is a being that essentially lives and survives within society, needing as well as being needed by the other. This makes communication in every imaginable form, a human necessity (Ukeh, 2018) and a public enterprise. Human beings, by contrast to other animals that inhabit the cosmic reality, and by virtue of intellectual capacity, are able to go beyond the sensory, here and now. They can abstract the whatness, the quiddity or essence of things and events. In fact, they can universalize. Reflecting on this quality of abstraction inbuilt in the character of humans, Lutzbetak (1988, p.191) avers:

Human beings can in fact do more than form and preserve ideas for themselves. They have the power to share their abstract ideas and knowledge with their fellow humans.

They are able to describe a game without actually performing, and listeners can get the gist of the game without necessarily seeing it played. Herein lies the difference between human and purely animal learning and communication.

Consequently, one can without fear of equivocation assert that communication which verbal speaking partly expresses is absolutely central to the social process of human existence. It makes possible interaction among humans and creates meaning in the various endeavours they undertake. Through

communication ideas are developed and integrated. As human beings that exist within the societal bounds and principles, an unending process of communicative interactive engagement is daily struck in the very frequent perceptible activities discoverable among humans through their lives, from home to school, from school to work, from childhood to maturity, through friendships, jobs and marriage. In an important sense then, Montgomery (1995, p.xxii) holds that,

speech (or any related form of linguistic expression) constitutes the prototypical medium of communication. Each new medium of course is more than simply parasitic upon the old... As conversation, speech is never far from the centre of the social process, however, there is behind speech, another presence -*language*. Speech is merely its manifestation and not the only manifestation that human language can adopt.

In fact language is the essential method for human communication (Santana, 2016) consisting of words formed in structured and conventional ways and expressed through oral, written, or gesticulatory means (Santana, 2016). Language is basically conventional and fundamentally multivariant in its constitution and character. It is a unique characteristic feature of humans and a profound instrument of communication. "Language is considered as the type of behaviour that is peculiar to man and which he shares with no other living creature. Man as different from plants and animals is the living being capable of words. Man is by nature a speaker, that is to say that the language capacity is given to man's nature, and of course it is exactly language that makes man that being that he is." (Omenukwa & Kanu, 2024). Language can also mean a particular form or pattern of speech adopted by an author in writing, or the choice of words in speaking or the choice of gestures. It is expansive in nature and embraces both verbal and nonverbal forms, but decisive in engaging interlocutors in that universe of discourse understandable by players involved in that particular engagement.

The secondary understanding of language is always contained within the primary understanding of language. While one can talk of primary languages like English, Igbo, Yoruba, German, Swahili, etc., one can also speak of the secondary understanding of language. This simply means that even within every language structure, there are still other unique language patterns like dialects and other various ways and forms of expression seen in idioms, proverbs, narratives, etc., which are conventional for various occasions and audiences. Fundamentally, language is for communication and this quality can be stretched to embrace both simple and complex forms of word formation, because "man, starting from this minimal language that is his natural endowment, has developed an extremely complicated fabric of articulated sounds that form the various tongues. Every tongue (French, English, Russian, German, Chinese, Igbo, Efik, Hausa, Yoruba, etc.) contains tens of thousands of signs able to be combined in the most varied ways, capable of representing an infinity of ideas and sentiments. (Mondin, 2016). The representation of this infinity of ideas and sentiments are unique to the players of each linguistic formation and embodiment.

Language is the more generalized capacity on which speech depends. We make sense to each other when we speak, only in so far as we share the same abstract set of underlying conventions. These set of conventions or patterns of communicating constitute a language and operate on various degrees. The sounds of any given language are organized into patterns and each language tends to work with its own particular configuration. (Montgomery, 1995). We all speak the language that helps us and these languages are formed to meet the needs of our culture and social situation. And every individual and culture in history places its own mark upon this tool. It is an invention that envelops all humans. (Everett, 2013).

No linguist, psychologist, anthropologist, or philosopher would disagree that language is useful. Language embraces the talkability of humans and captures in a certain sense their "worldhood", thus explaining Ludwig Wittgenstein's insistence that meaning must be sought in the use of words and not in anything prepackaged or externally imposed. Because the meaning must reflect the particular form of life in which the language is spoken and lived. This 'form of life' is articulated in culture, which is a definition of how people live. Language includes grammar, stories, sounds, meaning, and signs. Culture is the set of values shared by a group and the relationship between these values, along with all the

knowledge shared by a community of people, transmitted according to their traditions. In fact, language is a very important part of culture. And this accounts for the multivariant kinds tangibly perceivable in the many dialects found among speakers of a particular language in the larger spectrum of language identification as well as in a completely independent languages with peculiar alphabets and word formation, which points to the variations from one cultural area to the other, from one tribe to another tribe, and from one people to another people.

For a proper appreciation of this work, there is the intention to terse out the constitutive inbuilt of linguistic formation, the variations in cultures and the nexus between language and cultural formation. The intention here is to point out the interdependence between language and culture, with the insistence of an equal validity of languages in communicative linguistic engagement in order to create a wind of appreciation of the various languages in the world as they are also the transmitters and tools of cultural dissemination, an expressive assertion of the gains of the many languages of world as a legitimate philosophical demonstration of unity in diversity in lived philosophical engagement, a display of a constitutive homogeneity among humans, an “at-homeness” of ethnicities, a space of societal self-discovery and a point of communication among people. And on this, no language can be considered to be either inferior or superior to the other. Each language contains as it is a world of its own, a universe of encounter and further exploration.

2. The Conventional Use of Language

Humans are fascinated by language, the ability to express the range of thoughts and feelings through symbols in the form of sounds, gestures, marks on paper, drum beats, and the myriad of other ways of communication. It is only natural that humans should be so fascinated by this communicative technology, for nothing has more to tell them about what it means to be human than the forms, sources, and uses to which they put language. (Everett, 2013). The great majority of the conscious behavior among humans is acquired through learning and an interactive engagement with other members of the same cultural context, particularly at the earliest stages of development. Culture is learned not inherited; it derives from one’s social environment rather than the genes. (Spencer-Oatey, 2008). If a solitary individual thinks and behaves in a certain way, that thought or action is idiosyncratic, not cultural at least to the extent that it is not an identifying characteristic of a specific collection of a people. For an idea, a thing, or a behavior to be considered cultural, it must be shared by some type of a particular social group or society. (Ferraro, 1998). Even those responses to one’s purely biological needs, such as eating, dressing, etc., are frequently influenced by one’s culture. For example, people generally share a biological need for food, since that situates itself within the fundamental needs of the human person. But what one eats, how often one eats, how much one eats, with whom one eats, and some rules guiding eating, are regulated, at least in part, by one’s culture.

The German philosopher, Johann Herder, expressed the idea that “a nation’s language reflected the way its people thought according to the equation; *one language - one folk - one nation*. If it be true that we learn to think through words, then language is what defines and delineates the whole of human knowledge. In everyday life, it is clear that to think is almost nothing else but to speak. Hence, every nation speaks according to the way it thinks and thinks according to the way it speaks.” (Kramsch, 2004, p.236). And thus, it becomes an unfortunate disservice to oneself and to the community when one abandons his or her indigenous language for mere fanfare or for social acceptance and unfortunately uses his societal position to further the annihilation of indigenous languages without realizing that such a process inadvertently leads to auto annihilation. Wilhelm von Humboldt further expressed the link between language and one’s cultural mindset when he claims “that there resides in every language a characteristic world-view.” (Von Humboldt, 1988, p.60). As such, “man spins language out of himself, he spins himself into it, and every language draws about the people that possesses it a circle whence it is possible to exit only by stepping over at once into the circle of another one.” (Kramsch, 2004, p.237).

Given the fact of multiple belonging to various cultural groups, an average cultural person possesses several layers of diverse cultural dispositions. For example:

- A national level according to one's country or countries for people who migrated during their lifetime;
- A regional and/or ethnic and/or religious and/or linguistic affiliation, as most nations are composed of culturally different regions and/or ethnic and/or religious and/or language groups;
- A gender level, according to whether a person is born male or female;
- A generation level, which separates grandparents from parents from children;
- A role category, e.g. parent, son/daughter, teacher, student;
- A social class level, associated with educational opportunities and with a person's occupation or profession;
- For those who are employed, an organizational or corporate level according to the way employees have been socialized by their work organization. (Hofstede, 1991).

3. Language in Culture, Culture in Language

With the works of scholars like Lucy (1992), Slobin (1996), Gumperz (1983), Levinson (2011), and Deutscher (2006), there have been growing interest and research on the theory of language relativity in linguistic anthropology, which explores the way language shapes the way humans think and live. Language, researched from a psycholinguistic perspective by Dan Slobin (1996) in his path-breaking study of children's narratives, based on one story in pictures, *Frog Where Are You?*, narrated by different children in their different native languages argues that in order to speak at all, speakers must respect the choices of the syntaxes and lexicon that their grammars offer, and that the cumulative occurrence of these choices can have cognitive and affective effects on the listener. By learning to speak and to communicate with others, children learn to think, by first internalizing the words and thoughts of others on the social plane, and then making them their own on the psychological plane.

In the same view, Vygotsky (1985), like most sociocultural theorists, holds that the culture of a community and the mind of an individual are inherently in a dialectical relationship as semiotically organized functional systems. For him, a semiotic system is both a linguistic sign and a cognitive tool. (Vygotsky, 1978). As a matter of fact, semioticians classify signs or sign systems in relation to the way they are transmitted. This process of carrying meaning depends on the use of codes that may be the individual sounds or letters that humans use to form words, the body movements they make to show attitude or emotion, or often something as general as the clothes they wear. To coin a word to refer to a thing, the community must agree on a simple meaning within their language "worldhood". And the chosen word or the options for a word usage and adoption can transmit the meaning only within the language's grammatical structures and codes, understood and acceptable to the particular society of the players of the specific language in focus, thus aligning itself to the Wittgensteinian thesis on language game embodiments and definitions.

Codes also represent the values of the culture, and are able to add new shades of connotation to every aspect of life. Meanwhile, semiotics differ from linguistics in that it generalizes the definition of a sign to encompass signs in any medium or sensory modality. Thus, it broadens the range of sign systems and sign relations, and extends the definition of language in what amounts to its widest analogical or metaphorical sense. Pierce's definition of the term "semiotic" as the study of necessary features of signs (Pierce, 1931) also has the effect of distinguishing the discipline from linguistics as the study of contingent features that the world's languages happen to have acquired in the course of human evolution. There are yet studies of comparative analysis between semiotics and other areas of study like philosophy of language, cultural anthropology, literary theory, etc. in sum, semiotics (or semiosis) which is the content of semiotics, is the process that forms meaning from any organism's apprehension of the world through signs. And to further illustrate this point, Lantolf (1999) describes the process of cultural acquisition in children as a concrete case of reference. According to him, "during ontogenesis the biologically specified mental endowment of children is shaped in specific ways once it interfaces with

cultural forces as children are apprenticed into their native culture.” (30). Cultural development here is taken to mean socialization into a given social group, be it the family, the school or any other social group.

The formulation of the interdependence of language and culture as captured by Edward Sapir and Benjamin Lee Whorf under the term “Linguistic Relativity” (Kramersch, 2009) presents an interesting piece for further consideration. For Sapir (1962),

Language is a guide to social reality; it powerfully conditions all our thinking about social problems and processes. Human beings do not live in the objective world alone, nor alone in the world of social activity as ordinarily understood, but are very much at the mercy of the particular language which has become the medium of expression for their society. (p. 689).

It is quite an illusion to imagine that one adjusts to reality essentially without the use of language and that language is merely an incidental or even an accidental means of solving specific problems of communication or reflection. The fact of the matter is that the real world is to a large extent unconsciously built up on the language habits of the group. (Kramersch, 2009). No two languages are ever sufficiently similar to be considered as representing the same social reality or even to be substituted for the other, for every language must be accorded equal validity of meaning, relevance and importance in communicative engagement, especially among the inhabitants of a specific linguistic circumscription. Nigeria is a concrete demonstrable example, where over 250 ethnic groups have fully complete independent languages and still each enjoys multivariant dialects. However, these languages have been so denigrated that they have embarked on the unfortunate procession to a gradual extinction, and when this extinction is finally achieved, then a demolition of the cultures embodied in these indigenous languages would have been inaugurated. English language, with the happening of the colonial masters have become the official language upon which the entire social life of Nigerians revolve, making the indigenous languages to assume an inferior position. This is a disaster that not only affects the “worldhood” of the Nigerian populace but strikes a chord of disorientation in their entire constitutive build in all its aspects. One sees and hears and otherwise experience very largely as it were because the language habits of the community predispose certain choices of interpretation. (Kramersch, 2004).

The contribution of Whorf (1956) helps for deeper elucidation in this regard. He holds that

we dissect nature along lines laid down by our native languages... The categories and types that we isolate from the world of phenomena we do not find there because they stare every observer in the face; on the contrary, the world is presented in a kaleidoscopic flux of impressions which has to be organized by our minds – and this means largely by the linguistic systems of our minds. We cut nature up, organize it into concepts, and ascribe significances as we do, largely because we are parties to an agreement to organize it in this way – an agreement that holds throughout our speech community and is codified in the patterns of our language. The agreement is, of course, an implicit and unstated one, but its terms are absolutely obligatory. We cannot talk at all except by subscribing to the organization and classification of data which the agreement decrees. (p. 221).

From this point, according to Kramersch, we arrive at what Whorf called the “linguistic relativity principle,” which means, in informal terms, “that users of markedly different grammars are pointed by their grammars toward different types of observations and different evaluations of externally similar acts of observation, and hence are not equivalent as observers, but must arrive at somewhat different views of the world.” (Kramersch, 2004, p. 238). If human language interferes between a person’s existence and their thoughts, then a person’s social existence itself is influenced by the grammar of their speech. (Kramersch, 2004). Nevertheless, Kramersch points out that “while Whorf claimed that speakers were prisoners of the grammatical and lexical structures of their language, this strong version of the linguistic relativity hypothesis has now been rejected and researchers tend to align more with Sapir’s more moderate statement that language is a guide to social reality, which powerfully conditions all our

thinking about social problems and processes.” (2009, p. 32) The ‘real world’ is to a large extent unconsciously built on the language habits of the group. (Kramsch, 2009, p. 32).

On the other hand, George Lakoff proposed that cultural signs can become idealized cognitive models that channel our thinking and make it more difficult to grasp other people’s words because of the different underlying idealized cognitive models associated with them. (1987). However for Gopnik (2014), “language reflects culture and worldview, not the other way around. The fact that a language has only one word for eat, drink, and smoke, doesn’t mean its speakers don’t process the difference between food and beverage.” (p. 38). For instance, we observe this during the process of criminal investigation and interrogation where criminals are tortured, but with less consequential words deployed in making reference to the act of torture. But whatever the situation might be, one knows what torture means. Gopnik further insists that, if D. L. Cheney calls it enhanced interrogation, this still doesn’t change the meaning of the word torture, which Cheney and the public know perfectly well. (2014). But John McWhorter (2014) making reference to cognitive linguists like George Philip Lakoff reminds us that the public can be manipulated into believing that torture is merely an enhanced interrogation technique to prevent any protest. Nonetheless, as citizens of our languages, we must be aware that words don’t change meaning on their own; they can be made to change meaning in order to arouse different emotions and thus serve different interests through discourses that are often culture bound.

4. Language in Culture Contact

Language is a human created reality as an instrument for social engagement. It is an impressive and fascinating human capacity, and human languages are strikingly powerful and complex systems. Its origin has been associated with tools by some theorists. John Lewis for instance insists that “abstract thinking, speech, and the use of tools are inseparably connected. As tools differentiated into new and more appropriate forms, so language differentiates into an ever-growing wealth of words, sentences, and thoughts to further general ideas.” (1969, p. 197).

Given the nature of man’s innate endowment, language is one of the most sophisticated tools of humans. Language is and remains an exquisitely human activity. As a well-developed, complicated fabric of articulated sounds, language gives rise to different tongues wherein infinity of ideas and sentiments are represented in most varied ways. There is a general way in which animal signals and non-linguistic signs are called knowledge and that is language understood in this broad sense of mode of communication. But language in its proper sense refers to the historically and socially conditioned forms of human speech, and which by implication is culture-bound and culture-conditioned. This means that each language is socially and historically conditioned – and the universal human activity of shaping a system of signs (symbols) according to definite, generally accepted rules of association. That is, every language is not only speaking, but in each we have semantics, syntaxes, etc., thus, some see it as a systematic means of human communication, particularly by the arrangement of vocal sounds, conventionally representative concepts, feelings, objects. Conventional here, means that it is man-made and culturally bound. What makes it a language is because man has the capacity to evolve the words of the sentence to some other thing but the same meaning, but still within a perceptibly defined cultural circumscription.

Humans use language to do various things, like expressing feelings, giving commands and asking questions, but most importantly, they use it especially to communicate information about the world; the locus of human activities and engagements. (Prashant, 2001). Man, as *homo faber*, has shaped this tool to suit his ends and as such, it bears his marks and the marks of the world which it is about. Language in this wise is a special kind of tool. It is in fact a complex social institution. (Prashant, 2001). All social institutions are of course tools that enable humans to organize different aspects of social life. Different institutions serve different functions in society, and it seems plausible to say that the primary function of language is communication.

Apart from the tool-origin of language, there also exist other speculations concerning the sense of coming to-be as humans or even of the assertion of the beingness of humans as beings of special kind, inhabiting a particular cultural space, engaging and being engaged in multivariant forms and by so doing sharing an apparently similar “worldhood”, which the fact of language most supposedly and demonstrably makes possible. In this line, Battista Mondin argues that human language in its complex form is developed from the minimal language, which is endowed by nature. (2016). Indeed, it is possible to see languages, such as scientific language, technological language, artistic language, medical language, indigenous languages, as arising from the interactions of a group of individuals. This is how all social institutions emerge and language is no different, except that it arises from the communicative interactions of individuals inhabiting a cultural space.

Language is not only an essential element of every culture but being naturally a major medium and instrument of human communication, it is also axiomatically a formidable purveyor of culture. Particularly interesting is the fact that, culture finds its expression in language. When a people loses her language, she equally loses her culture and identity thereby. In fact, language is not only a purveyor of culture but understandably a powerful vehicle of civilizations too. With and through it, a culture not only expresses itself but also goes into dialogue and encounter with other cultures. All this is because, “it is the passcode to people’s thought, culture and values.” (Okeke, 2019, p.103). That may also explain why David Crystal summarily speaks of the value of languages as that channel through which one’s identity is expressed and in it is contained the repositories of history and as part of human knowledge. (Crystal, 2000). Language thus belongs to the core and innermost identity of a culture. Understandably, therefore, language is a very strong and veritable agent of culture and culture-change.

What seems to be common to most users of language is the intended information flow between individuals. This has to do with how language refers to or connects people and the world. When people use language, they typically use it to communicate particular information. Eugene Nida holds the view that “language and culture are two symbolic systems. Everything we say in language has meanings, designative or sociative, denotative or connotative. Every language form we use has meanings, carries meanings that are not in the same sense because it is associated with culture and culture is more extensive than language.” (Nida, 1998, p. 30). People of different cultures can refer to different things while using the same language forms. For example, when one says ‘lunch’, an Englishman may be referring to hamburger or pizza, but an Igbo man will most probably be referring to fufu and soup.

Language nevertheless cannot be limited to just communication, it possesses equally a mark of identity. Every person needs to maintain an individual identity. One of the most important aspects of that identity is membership of a group, and language provides a powerful way of maintaining and demonstrating group membership. The trader for example who sells in the International Main Market Onitsha Nigeria will belong to a group of family and friends with whom he has shared experiences, shared interests, shared circumstances and shared values. In order to remain a member of that group, he must speak like the other members of the group. For this purpose, it doesn’t matter whether the group’s speech is regarded by him or by anybody else as refined or unrefined, acceptable or not acceptable, what is important is to speak the way the others do, because doing so carries the clear message ‘I regard myself as a member of your group’; a concrete demonstration of identification and solidarity. So in such a sense, one sees language as a very powerful means of declaring and maintaining one’s identity. This falls within the confines of culture, for it delineates a definition of a person’s location and identity in the society. Nothing suggests that this cultural function is less important to most people than communicating information. (Trask, 1999). In buttressing this view, Abdul Hameed Taga holds that culture may be defined as a ‘social heredity’ that is transmitted from one generation to another generation that has as its constitutive embodiment an accumulation of individual experiences, or a display of a mode of activities that differentiates people of one society from another society. (Taga, 1999).

Culture is not merely a biological phenomenon but a learned pattern of social behaviour to be followed. Although from the point of view of emergence into a geographical localized circumscription, it

will definitely align itself with the tinctures of biological procession at least from the fact of birth into a definite particular space, but it cannot be limited to that. It is learned and goes beyond biological configurations. Nevertheless, culture is a wonderful and unique phenomenon of human society, which with its profound diversity intensifies the beauty of human society. Culture forms beliefs, conveys ideas, and shares knowledge on customs and values. (Taga, 1999). All these characteristics are communicated through language which is an integral part of culture.

The existence of culture for human society is possible due to the development and use of a common language among the people, for example the cultural representation of an individual can be observed through the use of language in a given context. It is the influence of culture on human minds that constructs human personality and also leads one to behave in line with the existing norms of society. (Emitt, 2003). Marie Emitt & Linda Komesaroff argue that the acquisition of culture requires the learning of a language for the transmission of attitudes, ideas, and values to the next generation. As a result, individuals continue to follow prevailing customs, norms, and values inherited through a social system. Therefore, no human society has ever existed without developing language and culture. (2003). It is observed that language is used in a cultural phenomenon to exchange ideas and opinions or share experiences. It is so much interrelated or inextricably interwoven with each other that without understanding properly the cultural setting and social behaviour of a language use, it leads to misinterpretation and breakdown in the language communication, or it may result to errors and misunderstanding. This is because language is not simply about sending or receiving information but it also functions as a form of social behaviour in certain cultural contexts. (Emitt & Komesaroff, 2003).

Language has been designated as a source of intercultural communication among the people from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. A range of linguistic and cultural theories have therefore contributed meaningful insights on the development of competence in intercultural communication. The speculations suggest the use of communicative strategies focusing on the development of learners' efficiency in communicating language through cultural context. (Trask, 1999). Robert Lawrence Trask making reference to an American anthropologist Edward Sapir, argues that culture and thought are language dependent on account of conveying the implicit meaning and inherited patterns of life. The acquired knowledge on such patterns reveals one's identity through the ways of thinking, feeling, acting, and behaving in a cultural context. Moreover, the cultural context determines the way people interact and make perceptions regarding any situation or the object of life. (1999). Thus, the existence of language in culture serves the means of communication among the individuals of a society and individuals of different societies and cultures and by so doing creates room for an admirable engagement in an intercultural intercourse.

5. Language and Intercultural Communication

Intercultural communication involves individuals of different cultures who have dissimilar orientation and interpretation to the values of life. Culture as a social process deals with the use of language and communication experienced by people in given circumstances. Individuals tend to learn more than one language for the satisfaction of communicative needs in their academic and professional career. The process of learning a second or foreign language not only requires an individual to practice linguistic forms but also necessitates becoming familiar with the culture of the second language in order to be able to engage and be engaged by the members of another linguistic cultural "worldhood" (Myron & Koester, 2010).

People often experience difficulties while adjusting to the cultural patterns of a new society. An immigrant in a new cultural setting would find it uneasy initially because of changes in behaviours and attitudes. Sometimes, there may be clear contradictions in the practice of new norms, values, and customs of a host society when compared to the migrant society. A European or an American when in Africa needs to behave in a certain manner, and similarly, an Indian, Iranian and Pakistani needs to behave in a certain way when in English speaking country like England and America. Therefore, in the learning of a second or foreign language, it is necessary to provide for the learners sufficient information

about the new cultural context so as to obtain proficiency in intercultural communication of target language. (Schmidt, 2000).

Alessandro Duranti would suggest that language per se “is naturally a social notion. It does not necessarily furnish us with the way we act upon the world but speech itself is a type of social action and language is a cultural source for all people around the world to make use of.” (1997, p.2). Both language and context are two integrated concepts and as he claims, “contexts and linguistic practices mutually constitute each other.” (Duranti, 1997, p.2). In line with Alessandro Duranti, Laura M. Ahern further asserts that, language should be investigated basically as a cultural practice and not just only as a mode of thinking. That is to say, it has to be considered majorly as a form of action that both presupposes and at the same time creates ways of being in the world. (2001).

The cultural pattern of a society takes hundreds and thousands of years to form in a dynamic way, thus compelling individuals of society to learn and adjust. And when a foreigner comes into cultural communication, it requires cultural understanding, social behaviour, and emotional reactions which help the learner develop confidence to use language and interact in communication. No doubt, acquisition of linguistic knowledge is mandatory for effective communication, but more attention needs to be paid to the cultural context of the target language. It implies the knowledge of cultural patterns, norms, and values of a society communicating specific meaning to its participants. Therefore, intercultural communicative competence cannot be achieved without the development of communicative competence within the cultural setting of the particular language to be acquired. (Kim, 1991, p. 259). In this wise, while learning of a new language is encouraged, the cultural embodiment within which the target language is located has to also be learned as well, and proper attention paid to it. Acquiring competence in intercultural communication demands advanced communication skills and the efficient use of language to negotiate meaning in context. It deals with cultural differences that create complex meanings for the individuals participating in a communicative event. Integrating cultural awareness in a foreign language learning programme requires that teachers be efficient communicators of the target language. The use of cultural knowledge in communication attaches importance to the ways of negotiating meaning embedded in values, customs, and norms. However, teaching cultural practices in target language has not been the objective of most language educators in foreign language settings. (Kelly, 1969, p. 375). The practices followed by them focus on the learning of grammatical structures rather than the development of efficiency in communicating language through context. Therefore, a wide range of traditional teaching strategies fail to develop competence in using a foreign language in given context. (Kelly, 1969).

6. Conclusion

Language embodies culture and culture equally embodies language. The central fact about most languages is that they are situated within a cultural set up. Language being such an important part of cultural constitution, and so, belonging to the heart of every culture, also shares in most of the major characteristics of cultural “worldhood”. In fact, the dynamic nature of language means that it changes and grows with time through various cultural encounters and influences. A language can understandably also mutate into a new one. Modern Italian language, for instance, is said to be a corruption of the Latin language of the ancient Roman civilization. (Huntington, 1996). The possibility of linguistic annihilation, extinction or even mutation into a totally different language is faced by many African indigenous languages. UNESCO has already predicted that the survivability of the Igbo language for instance is heavily endangered. (Asonye, 2013; Odionye, 2008). This fate is shared either minutely or majorly by some other African indigenous languages and even with some other languages of the world. This is not just a mere projection, but a reality that is informed by a serious study and therefore deserves to be responded to. Thus, it still bears repetition to underscore that like culture itself, a language lives and grows and can possibly or simply go into extinction. And given the interdependency between language and culture, the gains of one implies the gains of the other and the losses of one, necessarily implies the losses of the other. So, if language can live, grow, develop and

expand, then culture can equally live, grow, develop and expand, and if by any means, language shrinks and gradually dies, the same also will be applicable to culture. Consequently, with each passing generation, language and/or even culture expands, develops, grows, shrinks or even gets corrupted and could possibly die. As a cultural element, language's characteristic dynamism is often manifested in and through the changes and expansions of its vocabulary, poetry, grammatical structures, idiomatic expressions, etc. Our thought process could be affected by speaking a language, by the specific semantic or grammatical structures of our own language, or due to the social models of everyday use of the language. Hence, it is also important to note that social and cultural factors almost certainly influence the development of various languages. One only needs to consider the technological industry today to understand this.

Language learners face the problem of communicating language in context. Several language instruction programmes focus on the development of skills such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing but the teaching of the cultural context of language has not to some extent been introduced in some of such programmes. A Nigerian learning the German language in Nigeria would lack the cultural context which would aid the assimilation of the target language and as such would fall short of being acquainted with the culture. However, the cultural understanding of target language not only develops competence in communication but also raises awareness regarding the use of language in intercultural communication. It is therefore advisable that the cultural life behind indigenous languages be integrated into the language learning programmes. This ought to be part of the major focus of education in many multicultural societies like Nigeria, so as to preserve the component identities of the constituent cultures. The beautiful gains of the content of formal education can still be couched and presented in the indigenous languages, so as to maintain a balance between the materials of learning, the vehicle of communication and the identity of the subject that learns.

Copyright:

© 2024 by the authors. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

References

- Ahearn, L. M. (2001) *Language and Agency. Annual Review of Anthropology*, 30: 109–137.
- Asonye E. (2013) *UNESCO Prediction of the Igbo Language Death: Facts and Fables*. In Journal of Linguistic Association of Nigeria, vol. 16, no. 1 & 2, 91–98.
- Crystal, D. (2000) *Language Death*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Deutscher G. (2006) *The Unfolding of Language, The Evolution of Mankind's Greatest Invention*, United Kingdom, Random House UK Ltd.
- Duranti, A. (1997) *Linguistic Anthropology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Emitt, M. & Komesaroff, L. (2003) *Language and Learning*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Everett, D. (2013) *Language: The Cultural Tool*. London: Profile Books.
- Ferraro, G. (1998) *The Cultural Dimension of International Business*. 3rd Edition. New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
- Gopnik, A. (2014) *Word Magic. How Much Really Gets Lost in Translation?* Pennsylvania: The New Yorker.
- Gumperz, J. (1983) *Language and Social Identity*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Hofstede, G. (1991) *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind*. London: Harper Collins Business.
- Huntington, S.P. (1996) *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Kelly, L. G. (1969) *Centuries of Language Teaching*. Rowley, MA: Newbury House.
- Kim, Y. Y. (1991) *Intercultural Communicative Competence*. In S. Ting – Toomey & F. Korzenny, Cross-Cultural Interpersonal Communication. California: Sage Publications. 259–275.
- Kramsch, C. (2008) *Language, Thought and Culture*; In A. Davies & C. Elder eds. *The Handbook for Applied Linguistics*, California: Blackwell Publishers.
- Lakoff, G. (1987) *Fire, Women, and Dangerous Things*. Chicago IL: University of Chicago.
- Lantolf, J. (1999) *Second Culture Acquisition : Cognitive Considerations*. In Culture in Second Language Teaching and Learning, E. Hinkel (ed.), 28–46. Cambridge: CUP.
- Levinson, C. Stephen, (2011) *Space in Language and Cognition , Exploration in Cognitive Diversity*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Lewis, J. (1969) *Anthropology Made Simple*. London: W. H. Allen & Co.

- Lucy, A. John, (1992), *Language Diversity and Thought, A Reformulation of the Linguistic Relativity Hypothesis*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Luzbetek, L. J. (1988) *The Church and Cultures*. New York: Orbis Books Maryknoll.
- McWhorter, J. (2014) *The Language Hoax. Why the World Looks the Same in Any Language*. London: Routledge.
- Mondin, B. (2016) *Philosophical Anthropology*. Rome: Pontificia Universitas Urbaniana.
- Montgomery, M. (1995) *An Introduction to Language and Society*. New York: Routledge.
- Myron, W. L. & Koester, J. (2010) *Intercultural Competence: Interpersonal Communication Across Cultures*. Upper Saddle River, N.J: Pearson Prentice Hall.
- Nida, E. (1998) *Language, Culture, and Translation*. In *Foreign Languages Journal*. 115/3: 29-33.
- Odionye, S. and Odionye, I. E. (2008) *Preventing the extinction of Igbo language*.
<http://www.linguisticsafrikana.com/pdf/Ekwueme%20JILL%20N0%203.pdf>
- Okeke, B. (2019) *Inculturation in the Liturgy: Nigerian Experience Twenty-Five Years After the First African Synod*. In Anthony Osuji & Chibuikwe Ukeh (eds.) *Synod for Africa: 25 Years Later (Context and Pastoral Ministry in a Post-Synodal Local Church)*. Enugu: Iykememo Productions. 94-123.
- Omenukwa, P. C. and Kanu, I. A. (2024) *Private Language in Wittgenstein and the Igbo-African Worldview*. *Pakistan Journal of Life and Social Sciences*, , 22(1): 646-660.
- Pierce, C. S. (1931) *Collected Writings*. In Charles Harsthorne, Paul Weiss & Arthur W. Burks (Eds), Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press.
- Prashant P. (2001) *The Use of Language*: CSLI Publications.
- Schmidt, G. (2000) *Teaching Culture and Language for Specific Purposes*. In A.J. Liddicoat and C. Crozet (Eds.), *Teaching Languages and Teaching Culture*. Canberra: Applied Linguistics Association of Australia. 131-140.
- Santana, C. (2016) *What is Language*. *Ergo, An Open Access Journal of Philosophy*, vol 3, no. 19, 501-523.
- Sapir, E. (1962) *Culture, Language and Personality*. In David Mandelbaum (Ed.). *Selected Essays*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Slobin, D. (1996) *From 'Thought and Language' to 'Thinking for Speaking'*. In *Rethinking Linguistic Relativity*, J.J. Gumperz & S. Levinson (eds). Cambridge: CUP, 70-97.
- Spencer-Oatey, H. (2008) *Culturally Speaking: Culture, Communication and Politeness Theory*. 2nd edition. London: Continuum.
- Taga, H. A. (1999) *Sociology: An Introduction*. Lahore: Ismail Brothers Publishers.
- Trask, R. L. (1999) *Language: The Basics*.; London: Routledge.
- Ukeh, C.O. (2018) *Quietude: The Fertile Desert*. Owerri: APT Publications.
- Von Humboldt, W. (1988) *On Language: The Diversity of Human Language Structure and its Influence on the Mental Development of Mankind* (trans. P. Heath). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Vygotsky, L. (1978) *Mind in Society. The Development of Higher Psychological Processes*. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press.
- Wertsch, J. (1985) *Vygotsky and the Social Formation of Mind*. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press.
- Whorf, B. L. (1956) *Language, Thought, and Reality*. In J. B. Carroll (Ed.) *Selected Writings of Benjamin Lee Whorf*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.