

Culture as the Reflection of a Society: A Sociolinguistics Phenomenon

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Abstract

This article revisits traditional definitions of culture and society to establish a sound criticism of existing coherence-based approaches. Culture also means the beliefs, values, behavior, and material objects shared by a particular people, the totality of learned, socially transmitted customs and also both a bridge to our past and a guide to the future. By expanding the one-dimensional concept of culture to a four-field-matrix, a likewise contemporary and practical concept of culture is formulated which is likely to supply reasonable answers to disputed questions regarding the formation of cohesion in society along with language which is also a system of signs with standard meanings that allows members of a society to communicate with one another in the perspective of sociolinguistics. It is a cultural heritage and the key to cultural transmission also. It is finally argued that the prevalent diagnosis of multi collectivity should be expanded to a desideratum of radical multi collectivity, the goal of providing increasing individual access to ever more collectives, leading to an increase in both social stability and developmental dynamics.

Keywords: Culture, Society, Language, Sociolinguistics

Introduction

Culture is a term used by social scientists, like anthropologists and sociologists, to encompass all the facets of human experience that extend beyond our physical fact. Culture refers to the way we understand ourselves both as individuals and as member of society which includes stories, religion, media, rituals, and even language itself. Culture also refers to a set of rules and procedures along with a supporting set of ideas and values. It is confirmed that culture is a part and parcel of human life. It doesn't matter which country or which society is the belonging place of a person. On the other hand, there exist a great connection between culture and society. Culture exists for humans and human are living in a society, so where is human, there is society and where is society, there is culture. A culture represents

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the beliefs and practices of a group, while society represents the people who share those beliefs and practices. Neither society nor culture could exist without the other. Again, both society and culture is the matter of study and analysis for the sociolinguistics. In a sentence, all the culture, society and sociolinguistics are interconnected with each other. Not a single one can make separate from any one of them.

Concept of Culture

Culture is the characteristics and knowledge of a particular group of people, encompassing language, religion, cuisine, social habits, music and arts. According to The Center for Advance Research on Language Acquisition, "Culture encompasses religion, food, what we wear, how we wear it, our language, marriage, music, what we believe is right or wrong, how we sit at the table, how we greet visitors, how we behave with loved ones, and a million other things," The word "culture" derives from a French term, which in turn derives from the Latin "colere," which means to tend to the earth and grow, or cultivation and nurture. "It shares its etymology with a number of other words related to actively fostering growth," De Rossi said.

Other Definitions of Culture

"Most social scientists today view culture as consisting primarily of the symbolic, ideational, and intangible aspects of human societies. The essence of a culture is not its artifacts, tools, or other tangible cultural elements but how the members of the group interpret, use, and perceive them. It is the values, symbols, interpretations, and perspectives that distinguish one people from another in modernized societies; it is not material objects and other tangible aspects of human societies. People within a culture usually interpret the meaning of symbols, artifacts, and behaviors in the same or in similar ways." (Banks, 1989)

"Culture: learned and shared human patterns or models for living; day- to-day living patterns. these patterns and models pervade all aspects of human social interaction. Culture is mankind's primary adaptive mechanism" (p. 367). (Damen, 1987).

Hofstede (1984) says "Culture is the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one category of people from another." (p. 51).

Kluckhohn (1945) says:

"By culture we mean all those historically created designs for living, explicit and implicit, rational, irrational, and nonrational, which exist at any given time as potential guides for the behavior of men."

Kroeber (1952) points out:

" Culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behavior acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiments in artifacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e. historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values; culture systems may, on the one hand, be considered as products of action, and on the other as conditioning elements of further action."

Lederach (1995) mentions:

"Culture is the shared knowledge and schemes created by a set of people for perceiving, interpreting, expressing, and responding to the social realities around them" (p. 9).

According to Linton (1945):

"A culture is a configuration of learned behaviors and results of behavior whose component elements are shared and transmitted by the members of a particular society" (p. 32).

Parson (1949) gave the definition as:

"Culture...consists in those patterns relative to behavior and the products of human action which may be inherited, that is, passed on from generation to generation independently of the biological genes" (p. 8).

"Culture has been defined in a number of ways, but most simply, as the learned and shared behavior of a community of interacting human beings" (p. 169).

Characteristics of Culture:

(a)Functional: Each culture has a function to perform; its purpose is to provide guidelines for behavior of a group of people. (b)Social Phenomenon: Human beings create culture, culture result from human interaction and are unique to human society. (c)Prescriptive: Culture prescribes (Sets down or imposes) toles of social behavior. (d)Learned: Cultural in not inherited; it is learned from culture other members of the society (e) Arbitrary: Cultural practices behaviors are subject to judgement. Certain behaviors are acceptable in one culture and not acceptable in other culture. (f)Value Laden: Culture provides values and tells people what is right and wrong. (g)Facilitates Communication: Culture facilitates verbal and nonverbal communication. (h)Dynamic: Culture is constantly changing to adjust to name situation and environment; it changes as society change and develops. (i)Satisfy Needs: Culture helps to satisfy the needs to the members of a society by offering direction and guidance.

Society

The term 'society' is derived from Latin word "Societies" meaning "companionship". In general, the word society denotes a group of people however in sociology it refers to the relationships between them. Society is also defined as the web of social relationships. It also means- a complex of group in reciprocal relationship with interacting upon one another to enable people to carry on their life activities for helping each person to fulfil his wishes according to accomplish his interest in association with his fellows.

Elements of Society

The following are the elements of a society:

- i. Mutual interaction of individuals
- ii. Mutual inter relationship between individuals
- iii. A pattern of system
- iv. Reciprocal awareness is the most important ingredient
- v. Like mindedness
- vi. Implications of differences
- vii. Interdependence 8) Cooperation

Characteristics of Society:

- i. Composed of people.
- ii. Mutual awareness, continues reciprocal interaction and inter relationship among members.
- iii. Likeness and differences similarities like needs, activities, ideals values etc. Differences like look personality, talents, attitudes etc.
- iv. Member's home cooperation and share common interest.
- v. Responsibility's held by means of division of labor and delegation of authority.
- vi. Members show a pattern of interdependence necessary to onset social needs.
- vii. Society has its own way of social control (Formal or informal).
- viii. Each society has its distinct culture.
- ix. Society is dynamic. Change takes place abruptly or gradually.

Type of Society:

- i. Foraging society
- ii. Pastoral society
- iii. Horticultural society
- iv. Agricultural society
- v. Industrial society
- vi. Post-industrial society

Sociolinguistics

While anthropological linguistics and ethno linguistics focus on the relationship between language and some particular aspects of social life and social roles, sociolinguistics is supposed to investigate all aspects of this relationship in the society as a whole. With the starting assumptions that all language events consist of a piece of language in a social context and that every different social context determines a particular form of language (Stockwell 2002:5), the potential scope of sociolinguistics is enormous. It studies how language is used in a living and complex speech community, from micro sociolinguistic issues dealing with correlations between language variation and use and social groups and situations, to macro sociolinguistic issues such as social attitudes to language, the patterns and needs of national language use, etc. The latter approach, which focuses more on the role of language in society and suggests a greater concern with sociological rather than linguistic explanations, is also known as the sociology of language. One of the key issues here concerns multilingualism and bilingualism, in a social group as well as in an individual speaker, as the most obvious cases of language variation. To the already discussed relation between language and ethnic identity, language rights of minorities, and political factors accompanying these issues, we should add the notions of pidgins and creoles, standard and vernacular languages, language loyalty, diglossia, code switching and code mixing, and language accommodation. They basically refer to various social situations and language behaviors where the speakers are exposed to or forced or willing to use more than one language, or a variety of language or speech.

Some further manifestations of language variation are sometimes less obvious to identify distinctly. They include regional dialects and social dialects, reflecting that in many communities it is possible to tell from a person's speech not only where (s)he comes from but also what class (s)he belongs to, although there seems to be a general tendency that the speech of the higher classes demonstrates less regional variation (cf. Trudgill 1990, Labov 1966, 1972, 2001).

Also important is the gender-related language variation, the field of study which has especially flourished in the past couple of decades. There are various ways in which the linguistic behavior of men and women from the same speech community differs – pronunciation, vocabulary, conversational practices, etc. For example, several studies have found that women tend to be more polite, and use more of the standard forms of language, which is frequently explained by their social class awareness, their role in society, or their status in general as a subordinate group (Coates 1986, 1998, Holmes 1995, Tannen 1996).

While these aspects of the socially relevant language variations focus mostly on language users, their ethnicity, gender, social background, etc., there are some

aspects which primarily focus on language use, reflecting particular contexts. The way people talk in court, in school, at business meetings, for instance, is more formal than the relaxed language they use at home or with people they know well. Similar differences are noticeable when we speak to people of a different age or social group. Such language variations are generally known as style, or stylistic differences, although the term register is also used. However, it is better to restrict the latter term to distinctive styles shaped by functional demands of specific situations or occupations – a sports announcer talk, for instance, or a group of specialists, e.g. cardiologists, computer programmers, carpenters, etc., talking about their specialty.

Sociolinguistic Variables

- i. There are several different types of age-based variation one may see within a population. They are vernacular of a subgroup with membership typically characterized by a specific age range, age-graded variation, and indications of linguistic change in progress.
- ii. Variation may also be associated with gender. Men and women, on average, tend to use slightly different language styles. These differences tend to be quantitative rather than qualitative. That is, to say that women use a particular speaking style more than men do is akin to saying that men are taller than women (i.e., men are on average taller than women, but some women are taller than some men).

Literature Review

As culture is a complex nature of society, various books or various scholars defines culture in different ways as follows:

- Hall (1981: Cited in Thanasoulas, 2001) considers culture as a concept, elusive of any definitions. Brain Steed refers to the same idea as “in fact, there in not much point in trying to say what culture is, what can be done, however, is to say what culture does.” (Quoted in Hall 2002:19). Culture for him is “An active process of meaning that consists over definition including its own definition.”(Ibid).
- The English anthropologist E.B. Taylor gave his famous definition, : “Culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities acquired by man as a member of society.” (The Encyclopedia Encarta 2007).

- Lyons (1990) said, “Culture may be described as socially acquired knowledge: i.e. as what someone has by virtue of his being a member of particular society.” (P-302).
- According to Seelye (1997), “Culture provides the software of the mind without which most behavior would be random, unpredictable, and meaningless to other people; it tells us how to behave within ourselves in group” (P-23).
- According to Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics (2002), culture means, “The set of practice, codes and values that mark a particular nation or group: the sum of a nation or group’s most highly thought of works of literature, art, music etc. A difference is sometimes made between high culture in literature and art, and small culture of attitudes, values, beliefs and everyday lifestyles. Culture and language combine to form what is sometimes called Discourses i.e. ways of talking, thinking and behaving that reflect one’s social identity” (P-138).
- Yule (1996) argued that “The notion that language determines thought may be partially correct, in some extremely limited way.’ He further states, “The human manipulates the language, not the other way around” (P-198).

There are thousands more such definitions and discussions on culture, culture based society, humans and their communicator, linker languages.

Methodology

It is very important to maintain the proper methodology in any research paper or thesis. Methodology is two types actually, descriptive and analytical. This assignment is prepared in descriptive method because no mathematical term is used here rather, all the discussion on all the topics. On the other hand, the data is used; both are taken from primary and secondary resources. Primary data means those data, which is collected from the society people directly, or, taken from field work. As we are social being and here we are using our own views and thoughts, so we are using primary data. Secondary data means those data taken from various books, research papers and newspaper. In this assignment, we are going to use various resources of research, internet, websites and books also. All the data are studied sincerely to achieve the objectives of the study.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study can be described in several ways because there exist several aims of the study of culture’s reflections on society. Those objects can be

helpful for the development of social relations among all the social members. Here, objects means target of the study we mean to get. There are some points of the objects:

- i. To show how culture reflects society.
- ii. To show social and cultural concepts and their application.
- iii. To show personal, social and cultural identity and interactions within societies and cultures.
- iv. To show how personal experience and public knowledge interact to develop social and cultural literacy.
- v. To show the continuity and change, cultural and social futures.

Hypothesis of the Study

To make any study or scientific analysis, people need to make some plans or pre-plans on which study or thesis get to be ready. Those pre-plans are called hypothesis. At the same way here we are making some pre-plan or hypothesis:

- i. Man's influence on nature or society.
- ii. Society's influence on man.
- iii. Culture's influence on both humans and society.
- iv. The interconnected relation among all the three elements.
- v. Humans are not only a dweller of his society, but also transformer of it.
- vi. From the very beginning of his existence, and with increasing intensity, human society has adapted enviroing nature.
- vii. An enormous amount of human labor can change the society in a great extinct.

Description

Culture is connected with society, because it exists thanks to and for its people. This relation is shown in an elementary model of communication. The first terms better describe communication in the arts, the second – in mass media. In numerous theories this elementary chart is developed in order to present other types of relations with primary and secondary groups, leaders of opinion, political and technical domains. I would like to present only one example by a Czech structuralist Roman Jakobson who links six elements and functions: the expressive function is connected with the author or the sender, the cognitive function is connected with the receiver. The phatic function links both. In our everyday communication we have a lot of terms which do not give any information, but stimulate good relations between interlocutors. These are the classic formulas of the beginning and the end of conversations, like: “good morning”, “how are you”, “nice to see you”, “good

bye”; as well as rhetorical questions like: “do you love me”, or terms: “darling”, “baby” etc. The representative function of communication emphasises the context. It is connected with the cognitive function and the attitude of the receiver who wants to get information about reality or study an object. When a code like language, artistic conventions and styles, are the objects of study, the metalinguistic function is realised. A work of art has mainly an aesthetic or poetic function, while both have autothetic character. As it has been shown, culture has social frames. A. Kłoskowska (1972, 1980) distinguishes three frames of transmission of culture: the primary system, the institutional system and the mass media system, based on two main criteria.

The first is a type of contact between the sender and the receiver, which may be direct, called “face to face interaction”, or indirect, when two interlocutors are separated in time and/or space. In the first case, the sender can use speech and gestures, which are transient forms of transmission, in the second, transmission has to be recorded. The introduction of writing (in various forms) was a crucial moment in the history of culture. Later, at the end of the nineteenth century, the invention of electronic means of recording (radio, television) followed, and eventually, at the end of the twentieth century, the introduction of digital data recording (computers, internet). The second criterion is the formal or informal frame of contact between the sender and the receiver. The first system, called primary, is characterised by direct and informal contact between interlocutors, like in a family, a group of colleagues or friends, or in primitive societies. The different examples show the possibility of applying this theory to diachronic historical study of these three systems of transmission of culture. It is primary in an ontological sense, that is in the life of a person who learns a mother tongue and behavior in his/her family, as well in philogenetic sense, i.e. in the development of human society.

The second system, called institutional, is characterized by direct contact between the sender and the receiver, but realized in a frame of formal institutions, like churches, schools, theatres, opera houses, clubs etc. The roles of the sender are strictly distinguished and professional. Priests, teachers, actors, musicians transmit specialized knowledge to their public. The history of this kind of institutions begins in ancient times (church, school, theatre) and their development in European countries took place in the Middle Ages. The first European universities were established in England (Oxford, Cambridge), France (Sorbone in Paris, universities in Toulouse, Montpellier) and Italy (Bologna, Padua, Naples, Siena) in XII and XIII centuries. The first universities in Central Europe were created at the same time, in Prague in 1348, and in Kraków in 1364 (The Jagiellonian University). In contemporary societies, like in ancient times, most of these institutions are placed in towns and big cities. Their public consists mostly of educated people living in a spatial proximity, hence the name “elitist institutions”. The problems of

transformation of Polish cultural institutions and the problems of cultural participation of Polish society will be presented below. The system of cultural institutions is local (in this case it is called “the second system”) and supra-local, having national or international level (in this case it is called “the fourth system”).

The best cultural institutions in each country belong to this fourth institutional system, like the Louvre Museum and the Opera House in Paris, the “La Scala” Opera House in Milan, the National Gallery in London, and some others. The third cultural system is based on mass media like books, journals, cinema, radio, television, internet, named here in the order of their chronological appearance. The study of their history is a great topic of its own which cannot be discussed in this text, however. The visual forms of art presented in churches and cathedrals, especially the gothic forms of the Middle Ages, like sculptures, paintings, stained-glass windows, in which the lives of saints as well as scenes from the Old and the New Testament were presented, were called *Biblia pauperum*, that is Bible for the poor (illiterate) people. It is the first historical example of visual media, directed towards mass public. The mass media are called so, because they have a single or quantitatively limited sender and a large public, which is called “mass public”. For the most interesting and popular events presented on television it may be almost a whole national or international population. We can learn at once what happened in another part of the world, hence Marshall McLuhan, a Canadian scientist, called the contemporary world “a global village”.

While describing two main criteria that characterize the system of transmission of culture, one must emphasize that the sender’s end is very formalized and submitted to control (especially political), but the receiver’s end is informal. The contact of the sender and the receiver is indirect, but all media try to introduce some elements of more natural and direct contact. That is why most magazines have a column called “letters from our readers” with replies by journalists, and television presenters smile to their viewers and talk to them as if they were in their homes (“nice to meet you this evening”, “I’m glad that you are spending this evening with us” etc.). The system of mass media is more accessible and democratic than the institutional system. It does not create intellectual, economic and spatial barriers. In order to be truly popular, it uses a lot of pictures and not too complicated language, adapted to the level of primary school graduates, basic education of a large public.

Findings

- a. Evaluates and effectively applies social and cultural concepts.
- b. Explains the development of personal, social and cultural identity.
- c. Analyses relationships and interactions within and between social and cultural groups.

- d. Analyses continuity and change and their influence on personal and social futures.
- e. Evaluates social and cultural research methods for appropriateness to specific research tasks.
- f. Uses planning and review strategies to conduct ethical social and cultural research that is appropriate for tasks ranging from the simple to the complex.
- g. Applies complex course language and concepts appropriate for a range of audiences and contexts.

Recommendations

Culture is the life blood of a vibrant society. It provides important social & economic benefits with improved learning & health, increased tolerance & opportunities to come together with others. Culture enhances our quality of life and increases overall well-being for both individuals & communications. Benefits of the culture & society along with nation:

- i. Cultural experiences as opportunities for leisure
- ii. To improve learning & valuable skills for the future
- iii. To make better health & well-being
- iv. To be vibrant communities like economic benefits of culture, contribution of job creation and tourism

As culture shapes the human life and also a man made product, which we ourselves made for our own comfort and development. Culture keeps on changing, because we are changing. So, it can be predictable that our global culture or civilization is more or less similar but according to geographical area and peoples test we are taking and erasing cultures from our society.

Conclusion

In conclusion of all factors and aspects like sociological and sociolinguistic concepts, culture is a word with both a popular and sociological meaning. As man is a social being and at the same time he is a cultural being also and it is one of the most important achievements of human being. It also makes human life meaningful. Human being is born and brought up in a cultural environment. It is culture which distinguishes a man from animal. But in a strict sociological and sociolinguistic sense, culture refers to the totality of all those is learned by individuals as members of society. Sociologically culture refers to acquired behavior which are shared by and transmitted among the members of society and sociolinguistics makes relationship between language and society. Culture is a way of life, a mode of thinking, acting and feeling. It is a heritage into which a child is born. Culture is

manmade. Culture passes from one generation to another. It can be used both for education and literature because they may have their own culture and it reflects on the society.

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