**Language and Culture Defined**

Language and culture are intertwined. A particular language usually points out to a specific group of people. When you interact with another language, it means that you are also interacting with the culture that speaks the language. You cannot understand one’s culture without accessing its language directly.

When you learn a new language, it not only involves learning its alphabet, the word arrangement and the rules of grammar, but also learning about the specific society’s customs and behavior. When learning or teaching a language, it is important that the culture where the language belongs be referenced, because language is very much ingrained in the culture.

## Using paralanguage

Complex is one term that you can use to describe human communication since paralanguage is used to transmit messages. Paralanguage is specific to a culture, therefore the communication with other ethnic groups can lead to misunderstandings.

When you grow up in a specific society, it is inevitable to learn the glances, gestures and little changes in voice or tone and other communication tools to emphasize or alter what you want to do or say. These specific communication techniques of one culture are learned mostly by imitating and observing people, initially from parents and immediate relatives and later from friends and people outside the close family circle.

Body language, which is also known as kinesics, is the most obvious type of paralanguage. These are the postures, expressions and gestures used as non-verbal language. However, it is likewise possible to alter the meaning of various words by changing the character or tone of the voice.

## Homologous relationship of culture and language

The phrase, language is culture and culture is language is often mentioned when language and culture are discussed. It’s because the two have a homologous although complex relationship. [Language and culture](https://www.daytranslations.com/blog/2017/10/understanding-culture-9988/) developed together and influenced each other as they evolved. Using this context, Alfred L. Krober, a cultural anthropologist from the United States said that culture started when speech was available, and from that beginning, the enrichment of either one led the other to develop further.

If culture is a consequence of the interactions of humans, the acts of communication are their cultural manifestations within a specific community. Ferruccio Rossi-Landi, a philosopher from Italy whose work focused on philosophy, semiotics and linguistics said that a speech community is made up of all the messages that were exchanged with one another using a given language, which is understood by the entire society. Rossi-Landi further added that young children learn their language and culture from the society they were born in. In the process of learning, they develop their cognitive abilities as well.

According to Professor Michael Silverstein, who teaches psychology, linguistics and anthropology at the University of Chicago, culture’s communicative pressure represents aspects of reality as well as connects different contexts. It means that the use of symbols that represent events, identities, feelings and beliefs is also the method of bringing these things into the current context.

## Influencing the way people think

If you are familiar with the principle of linguistic relativity, it states that the way people think of the world is influenced directly by the language that the people use to discuss it. Anthropologist-linguist Edward Sapir of the United States said that the language habits of specific groups of people built the real world. He further added that no two languages are similar in such a way that they would represent one society. The world for each society is different. In analysis, this means that speaking a language means that the person is assuming a culture. Knowing another culture, based on this principle, is knowing its particular language. Communication is needed to live the interpretations and representations of that world.

## Inter-cultural interactions

What is likely to happen if there is interaction between two cultures? In today’s scenario, inter-cultural interactions are very common. Communication is necessary for any person who wants to understand and get along with people whose background and beliefs are greatly dissimilar from their own.

Cultural identity can be marked by language, although language can be used to refer to other processes and developments, like when intentions are explained in the language by a specific speaker. A specific language refers to a particular cultural group.

Values, basic assumptions, behavioral conventions, beliefs and attitudes shared by an ethnic group make up what we call culture. This set of attributes influences the behavior of the individual members of the group and their interpretations of the meanings of the behavior displayed by each member.

The set of attributes of a culture is expressed through language. Language is also used to point to objects that are unique to a particular culture.

All this means that learning and teaching another language is essential for international communication and cooperation. The knowledge of other languages facilitates knowledge of other countries and the specific cultures of each one.

## Transmission of culture and language

Language is learned, which means it can be culturally transmitted. Pre-school children take on their first language from their exposure to random words they encounter in and out of their homes. When they reach school age, they are taught either their first language or another language. If it is the [first language](https://www.daytranslations.com/blog/2018/01/how-many-mother-tongue-languages-are-there-10529/), the children are taught writing and reading, the correct ways to construct sentences and how to use formal grammar. However, the initial knowledge of the child about the essential structure and vocabulary of the first language was learned before the child went to school.

Conversely, culture is transmitted in a large part, by language, through teaching. Language is the reason why humans have histories that animals do not have. In the study of animal behavior through the course of history, alterations to their behavior were the result of the intervention of humans through domestication and other types of interference.

The culture of humans on the other hand is as different as the world’s languages. They are likely to change over time. In industrialized countries, the changes in the language are more rapid.

Culture is not learned by imitation but by oral instruction. There could be some imitation, if the learner is still young. With language, methods of social control, products, techniques and skills are explained. Spoken language offers a vast quantity of usable information for the community. This helps to quicken new skill acquisition and the techniques to adapt to new environments or altered circumstances.

The advent of writing increased the process of culture dissemination. The permanent state of writing made it easier for information to be diffused. The process is further hastened by the increase in literacy and the invention of printing.

Modern techniques for fast communication transmission across the globe through  broadcasting and the presence of translation services around the world help make usable knowledge to be accessible to people anywhere in the world. Thus, the world benefits from the fast transference, availability and exchange of social, political, technological and scientific knowledge.

## Assimilation and social differentiation, and language

Through time, variations appeared within a language. Transmission of a language is self-perpetuating unless there is deliberate interference. However, it became important for humans to improve their social hierarchies and social status to advance personally. Thus, many people cultivate the right dialect with is phonological, grammatical and lexical features to make themselves better than the rest and get accepted in new communities.

An example of this phenomenon is the insistence of immigrants from Europe to speak American English when they decided to move to the United States. It is because they realized that speaking American English is the sign of acceptance in their new home country. Unexpectedly, third generation immigrants now want to get in touch with the language of their ancestors.

## Cultural and linguistic diversity

Culture unifies a community although there is diversity within that unity. For example, the speech used by the older generation could be different from the one used by the younger people. Further, different groups may speak one language, but there would be subsets used by different groups of people. There could be slight differences in the language used by a professor compared to the one used by a young office worker. People could use a different form of the same language in online forums, which would vastly differ from the language used by media and classically trained individuals.

Language is used in different ways and broadly, the linguistic varieties could be categorized into geographical (used only in particular parts of the community), social (varieties used by societal groups based on occupation, gender and age) and functional (used based on function and situation). These factors lead to the formation of dialects that add diversity to the language.