

## **LANGUAGE AND CULTURE IN THE LEARNING PROCESS FROM THE ECOTOURISM**

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### **SUMMARY**

Language is the principal means whereby social lives are conducted. When it is used in contexts of communication, it is bound up with multiple culture and complex ways. The objective expresses facts, ideas or events that are communicable because they refer to the knowledge about the world that other people share, especially from the ecotourism. The relationship between culture and communication generates great paradox and is often misunderstood by contemporary society, it goes hand in hand since its genesis, it is impossible to separate both terms in individual development, so it is a result of the interaction where culture manifests as main organizer of the human experience in the process of learning from ecotourism. The gap between the cultures of the world comes from ancient conflicts, today, through globalization, this existence becomes more evident, the voices that cry for understanding, alliance and dialogue are becoming of higher quality, a technified world in which the management of the channels for dialogue and communication are no solution to the threat. Rebuilding ancestral values in childhood and youth by creating a discipline that focuses on people from different cultures communicating with each other, especially when handling different languages, and taking care also produces alignments that allow this intercultural communication. This research is based on methods of bibliographic analysis, inductive-deductive, and analytic-synthetic. Its methodology is dynamic with activities of analysis and reflection.

Key words: Communication, language, cultural reality, interrelationship, knowledge

## INTRODUCTION

An understanding of the relationship between language and culture is important for language learners, users, and for all those involved in language education especially in the career of ecotourism. For language teachers and learners in general, an appreciation for the differences in opinion regarding the relationship between language and culture can help to illuminate the diversity of views held toward the use of language. Into the various views, not only second language learners but also first language users can participate as the way we choose to use language is not just important for some of us. Language and culture open the door for a consideration of how both language and culture influence people's life perceptions, and how people make use of their pre-acquainted linguistic and cultural knowledge to assess those perceptions. For all language users, the recognition of how their language affects others can greatly impact the direction and motivation for both language study and interpersonal relationships, and it can also add great insight and value to language education, program planning, and curriculum development.

This proposal begins by introducing the concepts of language and culture, and then considers the connection between the two through the three plausible relationships forwarded by Wardhaugh: language structure determines language usage, cultural values determine the way we use language, and the claim that a relationship between the two does not exist. In the latter part of the paper, the implications of such a relationship are discussed as they pertain to language education and policy.

Culture is defined as shared beliefs, values and behaviours of a social group. Words also reflect attitudes and beliefs, their point, that are also those of others. In both cases, language expresses cultural reality. But members of a community or social group do not only express experience; they also create experience through the medium they choose to communicate with one another, for example, speaking on the telephone or face-to-face, writing a letter or sending an e-mail, a message, reading the newspaper or interpreting a graph or chart. The way in which people use the spoken, written or visual medium itself creates meanings that are understandable to the voice, accent, conversational style, gestures and facial expressions. Through all its verbal and non verbal aspects, language embodies cultural reality in the process of learning.

Language is considered as a system of signs that is seen as having itself a cultural value. Speakers identify themselves and others through their use of language; they view their language as a symbol of their social identity. The prohibition of its use is often perceived by its speakers as a rejection of their social group and their culture. Thus it can be said language symbolizes cultural reality.

Supports Risager (2006) explores the link between language and culture when a communicative event takes place; by communicative event she means any social event, which also refers to a cultural event, so the best term is socio-cultural event in which language and culture (Agar, 1991) is used in a local integration with discursive and other cultural flows. It analyses the relationship between language and culture from three different perspectives: sociological, psychological and linguistic. In the first perspective, language and culture can be separable, since it is possible for a language to express or create, as Kramsch (2009) would say, different realities or cultures. In the psychological perspective these two are inseparable, since an individual carries all the linguistic and cultural experience within oneself. The third perspective is valid only in the practice of linguistics where language is analysed outside of its cultural context.

Language is used not just as a tool for the exchange of information, but as a symbolic system with the power to create and shape symbolic realities, such as values, perceptions, identities through discourse

So, since a communicative event comprises all kinds of human communication, a piece of art could be considered as a communicative event as well, since it englobes a semiotic concept perceived differently by diverse audiences. The trilingual system in Luxembourg along with the presence of some 100 nationalities on its territory provides an interesting context to investigate the relation between language and culture and address the question of art perception in multilingual settings. How do people of different cultures perceive a piece of art coming from another culture? Let me take as an example many spoken words (“la Fontaine d’encre de chine”) which lies in MUDAM, which as the artist remarks, “expresses the idea of the whole process of language: the way an initial thought or idea develops first into spoken, and then into written words”It might do this by considering the following poem by Emily Dickinson.

The General Rose – decay-  
But this- in Lady`s Drawer  
Make Summer- When the Lady lie  
In Ceaseless Rosemary- Kramsch, C. (2009)

Possibly tourism is one of the few activities that surrounds the ambivalence of being at the same time, business and leisure, cultural tourism as a phenomenon brings together various demands and interests of people with cultural assets that society wants to preserve, adducing a special interest for analysis and reflection. Hall and Hall (1990)

Cultural Tourism as an educational and creative leisure demand clearly intends to learn from the experience where the tourist seeks to go beyond a cultural or

playful activity, it is about enjoying free time approaching a cultural identity, a place, a history, a town or a monument to learn something of it, aspiring to their personal enrichment. In this sense, there are many ways to know, for example, a monument: research in the bibliography, attend a conference or visit it with the help of a local guide.

Kramersch's (2002) refers to the relationship of language "creating" socially shared realities or cultures – even if they are only temporary -, according to whom "language is used not just as a tool for the exchange of information, but as a symbolic system with the power to create and shape symbolic realities, such as values, perceptions, identities through discourse".

## **RESOURCES AND METHODS**

In order to carry out the study of the present research, it was based on a theoretical systematization of the most important works on the subject, it was investigated in a wide bibliography, taking into consideration the antecedents related to the language and culture in the learning process from ecotourism, the current situation and the need for study, the theoretical shortcomings with emphasis on the language and culture perspectives little discussed and the insufficient relation in the learning process.

In a second moment, observations were applied in the classroom and beyond, surveys and interviews, to evaluate the current state of sociolinguistic competence in educational inclusion and its training in English language teaching. The results of the implementation of these instruments were corroborated based on the methodological triangulation carried out.

The methodology is based on the communicative approach to generate language and culture in the learning process from ecotourism that includes: dialogues, words and rules, adequacy, cohesion and coherence.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Language and culture**

The relationship between language and culture is a complex one due largely in part to the great difficulty in understanding people's cognitive processes when they communicate. Below, Wardhaugh and Thanasoulas each define language in a somewhat different way, with the former explaining it for what it does, and the latter viewing it as it relates to culture.

Wardhaugh (2002) defines language to be: a knowledge of rules and principles and of the ways of saying and doing things with sounds, words, and sentences rather than just knowledge of specific sounds, words, and sentences.

While Wardhaugh does not mention culture per se, the speech acts we perform are inevitably connected with the environment they are performed in, and therefore he appears to define language with consideration for context, something Thanasoulas (2001) more directly compiled in the following.

...(l)anguage does not exist apart from culture, that is, from the socially inherited assemblage of practices and beliefs that determines the texture of our lives (Sapir, 1970). In a sense, it is “a key to the cultural past of a society” (Salzmann, 1998), a guide to “social reality” (Sapir, 1929, cited in Salzmann, 1998).

And if we are to discuss a relationship between language and culture, we must also have some understanding of what culture refers to. Goodenough (1957), taken from Wardhaugh, (2002) explains culture in terms of the participatory responsibilities of its members. He states that a society’s culture is made up of whatever it is one has to know or believe in order to operate in a manner acceptable to its members, and to do so in any role that they accept for any one of themselves.

Malinowski (Stern, 2009) views culture through a somewhat more interactive design, stating that it is a response to need, and believes that what constitutes a culture is its response to three sets of needs: the basic needs of the individual, the instrumental needs of the society, and the symbolic and integrative needs of both the individual and the society. For both Goodenough and Malinowski, culture is defined by benevolence and expectation. While each person holds their own individual roles and subsequent needs as part of a culture, the various needs of the culture must also be kept in balance. Consequently, in composing a definition for culture, we can see that the concept is often better understood in the context of how the members of a culture operate, both individually and as a group. It is therefore clear how important it is for members of any society to understand the actual power of their words and actions when they interact. Above, Salzmann is quoted by Thanasoulas as saying that language is “a key to the cultural past”, but it is also a key to the cultural present in its ability to express what is (and has been) thought, believed, and understood by its members.

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

The relationship between language and culture, concludes that it is not possible to understand or appreciate one without knowledge of the other” (taken from Wardhaugh, 2002). However, Wardhaugh (2002) reported that there appear to be three claims to the relationship between language and culture: The structure of a language determines the way in which speakers of that language view the world or, as a weaker view, the structure does not determine the world-view but is still extremely influential in predisposing speakers of a language toward adopting their world-view.

The culture of people finds reflection in the language they employ: because they value certain things and do them in a certain way, they come to use their language in ways that reflect what they value and what they do. A second proposed relationship suggests that people in a culture use language that reflects their particular culture’s values. This is the opposing view of Sapir and Whorf in that here it is the “thoughts” of a culture which are reflected in the language and not the language which determines the thought. This claim implies that cultures employ languages that are as different as the cultures that speak them and therefore linguistic functions differ in terms of, for example, a culture’s level of technological development.

It agrees with Wardhaugh (2002) who argues that we must assume that all languages possess the resources to allow any speaker to say anything...provided that speaker is willing to use some degree of circumlocution. When needs for lexical items arise, explains, it can assume that cultures possess the ability and are free to create or to borrow them as needed, and that cultures that have not done so have not yet experienced the need. Also notes that people who speak languages with different structures can share similar cultural characteristics, and people who have different cultures can also possess similar structures in language (e.g. Hungarians and Finns). Examples like these indicate that the second relationship between language and culture is quite viable.

## **Implications for language education and language policy**

The ultimate goals of language education for both learners and instructors revolve around the acquisition of competency. As illustrated above, language and thought interact constantly and linguistic competence is not enough for learners to be competent in that language (Krasner, 1999, taken from Peterson & Coltrane, 2003). Understanding that languages and their cultures do possess relationships central to the acquisition of linguistic and cultural competency is a good starting point for any approach to language education. The creation and

enforcement of an integrated language policy that reflects the need for learners to be educated about both target culture(s) and language(s) is needed if language learners are to be expected to achieve any degree of real competency in any language.

### **Context of situation, context of culture.**

Culture is the general context in which tourism is developed, in any kind of tourism that is carried out there is always a kind of contact with the receiving culture. The anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowsky (1884-1942) was working at describing the fishing and agricultural practices of the native inhabitants of the Trobriand Islands, when he discovered for the first time that their language (Kiriwinian) was the key to understand the meaning of their practices. But, as he sat on the beach, observing the fishermen cry out from one canoe to the other, manoeuvring their boats across difficult straits, he realized that, in order to understand what was going on, it was not enough to understand and write down the meaning of their words. One had to understand why they said and how they said to whom in a specific context of situation. In larger context of culture such as: tribal economics, social organization, kinship patterns, fertility rites, seasonal rhythms, concepts of time and space. Thus the semantic meanings of verbal signs had to be supplemented by the pragmatic meanings of verbal actions in context.

How is pragmatic meaning culturally realized in verbal exchanges? Meaning is created not only through what speakers say to one another, but through what they do with words in order to respond to the demands of their environment Kramsch(2009).

### **Contextualization cues, situated inferences**

In developed societies, one speaks precisely of development as something beyond material goods. Having attained a certain economic level, sometimes excessive and opulent, the concept of development also includes values of another nature, such as emotions or spirituality.

The cues help listeners make the relevant situated inferences, i.e. evoke the cultural background and social expectations necessary to interpret speech. Through the use of contextualization cues, speakers and hearers can convey to each other what their expectations are with respect to the communication they are engaged in. Participants in verbal exchanges have to manage their interpretation of each other's utterances in accordance with how they perceive the situational and cultural context to be on an instant- by – instant basis.

Efforts to make the words uttered meaningful within the situational and cultural context of the exchange are efforts to establish pragmatic coherence.

Coherence is not given in speakers' utterances, it is created in the minds of speakers and hearers by the inferences they make based on the words that hear. Thus, whereas semantic cohesion relates speaker to speaker within the larger cultural context of communication. The speaker's efforts to establish pragmatic coherence through the use of contextualization cues can have an inclusionary effect. Such as dialogues, tourism guidance, assistance record, interview, and so on.

### **Linguistic relativity**

Philologists and linguists have been interested in the diversity of human languages and their meanings since the eighteenth century. It considers the theory of linguistic relativity does not claim that linguistic structure constrains what people can think or perceive, only that it tends to influence what they routinely do think. In this regard, the work of Sapir Whorf has led to two important insights:

- a. There is nowadays a recognition that language, as code, reflects cultural preoccupations and constrains the way people think.
- b. More than in Whorf's days, however, we recognize how important context is in complementing the meanings encoded in the language.

### **Signs - Symbols**

Signs establish between words and things various semantic relations of **denotation, connotation, or iconicity** that give general meaning to the world. In addition, signs establish semantic relations with other signs in the direct environment of verbal exchanges, or in the historical context of a discourse community. The creation of meaning through signs is not arbitrary, but is, rather, guided by the human desire for recognition, influence, power, and the general motivation for social and cultural survival. Since meaning is encoded in language with a purpose, used to regulate human action. Thus it is often difficult to draw a clear line between the generic semantic meanings of the code and the pragmatic meanings of the code in various contexts of use.

With the passing of time, signs easily become not only naturalized, but conventionalized as well. Taken out of their original social and historical context, linguistic signs can be emptied of the fullness of their meaning and used as symbolic shorthand. For example, words like "democracy", "freedom", "choice", when uttered by politicians and diplomats, may lose much of their denotative and even their rich connotative meanings, and become political symbols in western democratic rhetoric; signifiers like the French Revolution, May 68, the Holocaust, have simplified an originally confusing amalgam of historical events into conventionalized symbols. The recurrence of these symbols over time creates an accumulation of meaning that not only shapes the memory of sign users but confers to these symbols mythical weight and validity.



dynamize the life of a community. However there is a tendency to define a person according to gender, country, social category, clothing and religion.

These ideas are spread by word of mouth through prejudices.

### **Communication style in a high vs. low context culture**

In cultures, communication style is influenced by the closeness of human relationships, well-structured social hierarchy, and strong behavioural norms (Kim, 1998). In a high context (HC) culture, internal meaning is usually embedded deep in the information, so not everything is explicitly stated in writing or when spoken. In a HC culture, the listener is expected to be able to read "between the lines", to understand the unsaid, thanks to his or her background knowledge. Hall (1976) emphasised that "a high-context communication or message is one in which most of the information is either in the physical context or internalised in the person, while very little is in the coded, explicit, or transmitted part of the message".

In an HC culture, people tend to speak one after another in a linear way, so the speaker is seldom interrupted. Communication is, according to Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey (1988), indirect, ambiguous, harmonious, reserved and understated. In an HC culture, communication involves more of the information in the physical context or internalised in the person; greater confidence is placed in the non-verbal aspects of communication than the verbal aspects (Hall, 1976).

In a low context (LC) culture, meanings are explicitly stated through language. People communicating usually expect explanations when something remains unclear. As Hall (1976) explains, most information is expected to be in the transmitted message in order to make up for what is missing in the context (both internal and external). An LC culture is characterised by direct and linear communication and by the constant and sometimes never-ending use of words. Communication is direct, precise, dramatic, open, and based on feelings or true intentions (Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1988).

It is the purpose of the present investigation to determine the current situation of language and culture, with emphasis on the learning process and analysis of its methodological treatment, from Ecotourism. It took as a population 10 teachers and 260 students belonging to the Faculty of Economic- Ecotourism career of the Estatal del Sur de Manabí University Manabi (UNESUM). From the same, an intentional sample of 33 students enrolled in the fourth semester was obtained and 100% of the teachers who taught in that faculty at the University of Reference were considered.

The detailed study of the object and field of this investigation was considered as a significant antecedent that allowed to formulate the indicators that appear next and that, in one way or another, allowed the selection and preparation of the diagnostic tools used:

- Students' characteristics to define the supports they require.
- Communities of language users
- Linguistic relativity
- A class that responds and is effective for all students, where there is no perceived problem to solve, but a wealth to support the learning of all.
- Motivation to learn and ensure that classroom activities and extracurricular activities promote the language and culture
- Potential for dialogue in English and respect for cultural diversity.

The diagnosis of the problem was developed on the basis of interviews with students and teachers, surveys of teachers and students.

Through the triangulation of the data derived from the methods and techniques of the empirical level that were applied, in correspondence with the indicators:

- Knowledge related to the characteristics of the students to define the supports they require, where they do not perceive a problem to solve, but a wealth to support the learning of all.
- Motivation by the teacher to learn and ensure that classroom activities and extracurricular activities promote the participation of all students and take into account the knowledge and experience acquired by students outside of university.
- Potential for dialogue in English and respect for language and culture.
- Methodological treatment for the formation of communicative competence in English by teaching, required for students to manage a precise and coherent discourse about language and culture.

The connoted methodology is based on the communicative approach to reach the communicative competence that includes: words and rules, adequacy, cohesion and coherence and the use of communication strategies.

The selected group includes students with different levels of intellectual development and their language skills in a foreign language (English)

## CONCLUSIONS

A tight synthesis of the behavior of the 4 indicators studied is expressed as follows:

- Limited mastery evidenced by the students about the knowledge related to the characteristics of the students to define the supports that they require about language and culture from the learning process from ecotourism.
- Students show a strong interest in learning and ensure that classroom activities and extracurricular activities promote the learning of language and culture
- Lack of acceptance of cultural diversity and little development of dialogue in English.
- Teachers show insufficient methodological treatment for the formation of sociolinguistic competence in English, required for students to manage a precise and coherent discourse about language and culture.

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