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Research essay Final

# The Power Of Language Over Society

According to Google there are a staggering 7151 living languages in today's world! Although there is such a vast pool of different languages, people around the world are able to communicate and bond together due to a shared language. As a result of our busy lives, people never seem to notice how important language actually is within the daily lives of every person on earth. Simple activities such as doing homework, greeting someone, and sharing ideas, all require a person to either speak/write at minimum the basics of a language. Even people who may be deaf or mute can use sign language as a way to communicate with others. Many people may believe that language has no impact on how people live their lives. However, language significantly influences society and has a direct relationship to culture.

Language has a direct relationship with culture because it creates relationships in addition to developing communities. People are unaware that the languages they speak do connect them culturally regardless of their geographic location. For example if you speak Arabic, you are most likely a Muslim, thus the Arabic language is connecting you with other people who share the Islamic religion. This is especially evident with the rapid expansion of globalization. We are no longer bound or influenced by a culture because of our geographic location. Furthermore the Quran which is the Islamic Holy text, is written in Arabic, therefore not only is language connecting people culturally, it can also connect them religiously. Sally Painter who is a prolific nonfiction and fiction writer, and has appeared in multiple print and digital publications. In her

article “How does Language Affect Culture” she writes about how language helps contribute to culture and the impact between language and culture, such as mixing words between two different languages, creating new slang words that are associated with a specific culture, and cultural identity. According to the article “How does language affect Culture" written by Sally Painter she declares

“It's safe to assume that a culture has its own set of expectations and traditions, such as the type of language used within it. Like other nuances within a culture, language isn't something each person thinks about, it is simply part of their culture. As the culture evolves, the language grows to accommodate cultural changes and vice versa.” “For example, you wouldn't hear a Southerner say, "Youse missed a great ball game last night" any more than you'd hear a New Yorker ask, "Ya'll going to the game tonight?"” (10/14/22)

This quote illustrates the idea that the language does grow along with the culture which is demonstrated with the New York and Southern example, in which standard English is shared between the two states; however, there are variations within the English language based on the different cultures. As a person living in New York I can personally vouch for Painter’s claim. In New York people are generally more aggressive towards each other when compared to the other States. This aggressive behavior is reflected in aggressive language with the creation of New York slang words like, “mad”, ”tight”, and “dead-ass.” In contrast to New York, people in the South tend to be friendlier and warm towards each other and this can be exhibited in Southern slang phrases like “Howdy” and “Bless your heart,” which are positive. Similarly to Painter, the author Henry McDowell who is an outstanding self-made linguist with over 15 years of writing experience and is ready to impart his knowledge and skills to others, strongly supports the claim that language and culture are connected. In his article “What is the relationship between language and culture” he discusses how language and culture are intertwined with each other, and both language and culture heavily influence each other. His article also speaks about how culture and language mold us into our identity. In his article McDowell proclaims

“There is a complex relationship between them because they are tied to each other. A child learns culture simultaneously with language, so for them, it is the same. They are indivisible parts because even when members of a certain culture go abroad, they are easy to recognize if they speak the local language and vice versa. Another point is, when people learn a new language, it also means learning a new culture.”(7/17/20)

McDowell’s analysis of how a child learns both culture and language at the same time demonstrates a connection because if culture and language were not closely related then children would either learn a language first and then the culture, or vice versa. McDowell also claimed that people can notice members of their cultural communities due to language that they speak, which is very true. From personal experience I can support McDowell’s claim. For example when my father speaks to job clients over the phone he can recognize which part of the Caribbean they are from, or if they are from our home country (Guyana) based on the tone of their voice or the language they speak such as broken English. Overall both Painter’s and McDowell’s ideas agree with each other due to the fact that both authors establish the connection between culture and language within their articles.

Language is also the foundation of cultural identity, because without language the expansion of culture would not be possible. Language is the cornerstone that holds specific communities together, and it is tremendously essential to their group. When you remove people's language, you remove the means by which they communicate their cultural heritage. Steph Koyfman who is a bilingual writer, language enthusiast, and is also the author of “Why is Language Important” writes about the significance and power of language such as how it develops communities and progresses advancements in categories such as culture and society. Koyfman agrees with my claim that language is the foundation of cultural identity. In her article it states “it’s the basis of our entire worldview and way of life. Everything ranging from social

norms to customs, shared histories, mythologies, religions and art forms are transmitted and mediated through language (5/6/22).” This quote indicates that language is the reason why history and ideas are spread throughout the world, and also the reason we have access to history from different cultures from the past. The article “The relation between language,culture and thought” which is composed by many authors agrees and supports Koyfman. In the article it argues “One can imagine the transmission of handicrafts from one generation to another without the use of a language.” This quote argues that if language did not exist, then innovations and cultural aspects would not be able to be passed down for future generations. Through the use of language we are able to look back at our past, history, and culture, and can use that to pave the path for our future.

Language has a significant influence on society because it allows us to communicate with each other and express ourselves. This is extremely important, when you think about it. Can you imagine if the most powerful people globally gathered together and no one understood each other? When global leaders meet from around the world to debate, discuss issues, solve problems, and build relationships, they all must understand each other and be on the same page or else chaos will break loose. It is because global leaders can communicate with each other effectively that they are able to work together in order to benefit their Country’s society. Author, content creator and web redactor; Lisa Lambert wrote about the impacts of language on our society in her article “How does language affect society.” Within her article Lambert establishes her opinions about the links between society and language, how society is conditioned by language, and uses scientific data to support how language does indeed influence society. In Lambert’s first sentence she describes society as “a group of individuals bound by a set of

relationships, whether functional or personal, public or private, they generally involve a balance of language (11/3/20).”Lambert supports the idea that language influences society because in her article she states

“Omnipresent in society, it is elaborated, preserved and modified by social interactions, and constitutes an integral part of collective representations. In the same way, society is conditioned by language, since social communication determines the daily conduct of its members and constitutes the main point of social organization. Language is therefore a social phenomenon which is the indispensable instrument of society and on which it acts continuously.”(11/3/20)

Lambert believes that language is required in order to communicate in our daily lives, whether it be for aspects like a job or family/friends. She also implies that society is built off of language due to the necessity for humans to understand each other thus making advancements to society.

The article “Language shapes the way people think and behave” by Bernadine Racoma who is a senior content writer at Day Translations, supports and expands on Lambert’s idea. Racoma’s article revolves around how language does not only affect society locally, but internationally too, in ways like trading and communication with other Countries. In the article she proclaims

“International communication and global business are also affected by languages, thus the pressing need for localization. To effectively do business in other countries, a company must be able to deliver messages to their employees and target audiences in a language that can be correctly and clearly understood. Localization means that all forms of communication must be translated into the local language so that the interpretation is clear. Local employee training and corporate culture must conform to local culture.”(6/20/18)

Rocoma shows how language influences society overseas because it allows for countries to further develop themselves by trading with each other. By effectively being able to communicate with other people even through translation of different languages people can expand themselves and business into further fields and countries. This image



from “Psychologist World” helps to support Lambert and Rocoma by illustrating a visual representation of exactly how language can influence society. The man in Black represents language, while the other white figures represent society. As we can see in the image the white figures are all connected and drawn to the center of the circle, where the black figure is. This can symbolize that language is the centerstone for functional societies.

The Languages that we speak play major roles in modern day society, in addition to connecting people culturally. By having such a large variety of languages we are also creating different cultures, in addition to ways to influence the society around us. Without language it would be significantly more difficult to communicate with other people, build relationships, and advance ourselves as the human race. It is because of the creation of language that society, cultures, and we as a people have evolved so far in such a small time period.

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