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Impact of Language on Individual and Culture

**Introduction**

Language is the most powerful tool that provides meaning to our thoughts and ideas. This is the ability of verbal communication that distinguishes humans from other species. We communicate with others to share our emotions and feelings. Our thinking process is also dependent upon language. As Oliver Wendell Holmes said, **“Language is the blood of the soul into which thoughts run and out of which they grow.”** Without the evolution of language, this world would be entirely different. All the literary work needs language. Our academics are the product of language. Language plays a vital role in the development of human society. Language can be considered the building stone of human societies and cultures. In the present day, more than six thousand different languages are being used by the entire world population. Change in the language becomes a source of change in social and cultural norms. Most of the people who shared the common mother language shared the same culture. The practice of the same language creates a strong bond among the people. It's not only the language that creates different cultures and societies but the accent in which a specific language is being also spoken matters. The language also becomes an identity for the individual. Language can help researchers to figure out the historical evolution of different cultures and societies. There are two border ideas about the influences of language on an individual. Lee Whorf, a famous linguist, is of the view that a language can dynamism one’s entire way of seeing the world (Dunbar). The perspective of life and world will be different for two individuals who own different native languages. The other view that highlights the value of language is that language directly affects the thinking process of a person (Searle). An individual's thinking process and behavior are highly influenced by the language.

The importance of language increased by many times in a multicultural society like the society of the United States. The US remained the favorite destination for immigrants since the American Revolution. People around the globe came here to find out better economic opportunities. A huge number of immigrants make American society a multicultural society. We can find American nationals originally belonged to different areas of the world. Although all the migrants adopt the English language as a source of communication, the footprints of their native language can be found on the accent in which they speak. In a diversified society, language, even the accent, becomes a source of identity for an individual.

This essay will present the impacts of language on the personal identity of an individual. The present study will also try to figure out how language plays a role in the evolution of different cultures and societies. The role of language in the cultural and social diversity of the US will also be evaluated.

**Cultural impacts of language**

Language can be considered as one of the most prominent parts of a culture. Every language has very strong impacts on the socio-cultural norms. Change in the language can become a source of change in the cultural norms. Language is considered the most powerful weapon for the cultivation of culture. It is said that if one wants to spread one's culture in other societies, one must promote the language of its cultures. When a nation adopts a foreign language, it does not adopt just the patterns of communications of that particular language, but it also adopts many cultural rules of that particular language. The adoption of a language means this particular nation will study the literature of that language and will meet the persons that practice this particular language. This adoption will gradually change the socio-cultural norms of society (Downes and Downes). It is a historical fact that all the ruling nations of the world try their best to promote their language in other nations. English was the language of the British, and then it became the language of most of the countries that were remained a part of the British Empire. Literature and academic work can be considered one of the powerful tools for the preservation and promotion of a language. Adoption of a foreign language in academic institutions will entirely change the cultural environment of these institutions.

This promotion of language also become the source of cultural promotion. Many cultural similarities can be found in countries that shared the same language. Almost every distinguished nation and community not just try to promote its language but also try to save their language from the impacts of other languages. History tells us about many wars and disputes that were fought over the issue of language. Language is the so powerful tool that can change the thinking patterns of an individual. Language can change the ideologies of nations.

Language and culture can be considered as the two sides of a coin. Language has many strong influences over the cultural norms. Language is the key to learn about the cultural characteristics of a society. The adoption of a language can change the existing socio-cultural values of a society. In the same way, every culture and society also has its effects on the language. We can find minor differences in the use of the same language in different societies. Just as English is spoken and used by many nations, but the accent changes from one nation to the other, and one can easily distinguish the nationality of a person by just observing the way of speaking. There can be found a two-way cause and effect relationship between the language and culture. They both can affect each other. As Rita Mae Brown said, **“Language is the road map of a culture. It tells you where its people come from and where they are going.”**

**Impact of language on identity**

Language becomes an identity card for an individual, especially when the person is outside of his native society, especially in a diversified society like the society of America. There can be found people belong to different races, colors, nationalities, and even share different native languages. In such a society, language, even the accent of a person, gives other persons a clue about their origins (Edwards). Whenever someone meets a new person, they instantly begin to gather information about them based on appearances and dialogues.

In the US, people came from different ethnic backgrounds and adopted English as a mean of communication. By adopting English as a source of communication, people belong to different backgrounds try to adopt a new identity, the American identity. The espousal of the local language is fundament and the first step towards engagement with the local socio-cultural norms. In public institutions and gatherings, the medium of communication remains English. But the accent in which people speak, the pitch of their voice, and the movement of the tongue reveal truths about their native nationality and backgrounds. Immigrants tend to assimilate into the mannerisms of the people around them. Doing so, they develop a modified identity to satisfy what is expected of them. But at the same time, one can observe the newly immigrants practicing their native language in their private gatherings. The new immigrants have to face a choice problem in their identities. They try to save their native identity by practicing native language and other socio-cultural norms of their home town. Newly immigrant’s efforts to preserve their native language have diversified the English language in American society. One can observe many accents and tones of the English language in American society. To live in America, you have to speak like an American. There is no correct way to speak "like an American" because there is no single language, accent, or dialect of an American. There is no official language in America because it is a melting pot of different cultures, and many languages are spoken there. A unique result of this variety of civilizations is its impact on the English language. The diversity of accent, intonation, and dialect characterized English with many new varieties of language.

There can be found many ethnic stereotypes in American society. People who belong to different ethnicities and backgrounds are assumed to behave and talk in a certain manner. "Thick of Tongue" is the article by John McWhorter that tries to emphasize the existence of these stereotypes in American society. McWhorter presents his example as an African American and explains that he always faces the problem of these typecasts. He had always faced the problem that people were judging him as an African American, which sounds "so white" because he has an articulate voice. McWhorter used the expression "thick of tongue," meaning that one has impaired or unclear speech. He is likely also mocking a persistent racist ideology among whites than African Americans speak as they do because they have thicker tongues than white Americans.

There are many ways that language can influence one's identity, such as categorizing individuals based, modifying their identity, and challenging and suppressing it. Although language can bring people together and build them up, it can also bring them down. This side of language is highlighted by Andrea Lundsford in his book "everything's an Argument with Readings." Lundsford stresses the importance of choosing the right words by saying that the choice of a wrong word can take someone's life. Lundsford speaks about the presence of microaggressions specifically on college campuses; that microaggressions can lead to ostracism, increase anxiety, and sometimes cause psychological pain. Humans are subconsciously biased and expect people to fit into some stereotypical bubble. If they do not fit into this bubble, they can make comments or remarks that may seriously offend an individual.

**Conclusion**

Language awarded human beings with the ability of communication. A man can transfer his ideas by using the tools of language. Thousands of languages are practiced in this world, and every language has its historical background. Language has the power to dictate the thinking process of an individual. The language of a person can tell many of the untold stories about him. It is not much hard thing to figure out the origins of a person by using the information about his language. It can also help to identify the different socio-cultural norms of a person. The language also has a deep-rooted connection with society. Language can be considered as one of the building blocks of society. Language cannot only socio-cultural norms of a society, but it also can preserve the culture, and a language can also be used for the promotion of culture. Language has the ability that it can become a binding force for the human race. At the same time, history has observed many disputes on the bases of ethnicity. The power of words cannot be undermined. The vigilant selection of words cannot only convey the message of a person, but it can also make this world a more peaceful home for us.

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