

IRENA DARGINAVIČIENĖ

Klaipėdos universitetas, Lietuva Klaipeda University, Lithuania

KULTŪROS IR KALBOS ĮTAKA ASMENS IDENTITETO RAIDAI

The Influence of Culture and Language on the Identity of a Person

SUMMARY

The issues of interrelated culture, language and identity have been researched since the 20th century. The majority of researchers support the idea of incorporating culture learning into English language classes. It can raise awareness of differences between normal and natural communication. Moreover, foreign language acquisition helps learners to develop a second language SELF. A Culture Triangle that was proposed and investigated by J. Mole determines people's behavior and interaction. It illustrates the differences between Individuals and Groups and might be helpful to manage cultural diversity. In the 21st century, English is claimed to be a Global Language, which is often referred to as Lingua Franca. Successful communication between different countries implies understanding behavioral and cultural differences and making adjustments in their relationships.

SANTRAUKA

Straipsnis skirtas apibūdinti teorines ir praktines įžvalgas apie kultūros ir kalbos įtaką asmens identitetui. Lingvistikos tyrėjai teigia, kad kultūros integracija į užsienio kalbos mokymą bei mokymąsi yra būtina. Tokia nuostata leidžia suvokti esminį skirtumą tarp įprasto ir įgimto bendravimo principų. J. Mole pasiūlytas ir ištirtas "kultūros trikampis" nusako žmonių elgesį ir tarpusavio bendravimą, nurodo konkrečius metodus, kaip žvelgti į kultūrinę atskirų asmenų ir žmonių grupių įvairovę. Norint sėkmingai bendrauti užsienio kalba, būtina ne tik gerai mokėti kalbą bet ir suvokti kultūrinius skirtumus, elgesio normas.

KEY CONCEPTS

The article looks into the relationship between language and culture and the impact of this relationship on the identity of an individual. There are a number

RAKTAŽODŽIAI: kultūra, kalba, identitetas. KEY WORDS: culture, language, identity. of various definitions of the word language which are very similar. The most common one is defined by R. S. Feldman: "Language is the communication of information through symbols arranged according to systematic rules"1. There is a variety of definitions of culture although they do not differ essentially. One of the definitions of the concept culture is "the ideas, customs, and social behavior of a particular people or society"². Or it may be defined briefly as "the social behavior and norms found in human societies"3. The following concise definition of identity is adopted from Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary: "who or what somebody is"4. A more sophisticated and detailed definition is: "how a person understands his /her relationship to the world, how the relationship is structured and how the person understands possibilities for the future"5. Culture and language are closely interrelated and relevant to identity of individual. According to R. S. Feldman, language is the communication of information through symbols arranged according to systematic rules. All languages have a grammar - a system of rules that determines how ideas are expressed. It encompasses the three major components of language: phonology, syntax, and semantics⁶. Language production develops out of baby babbling, followed by telegraphic speech after the age of 1, and by the age of 3, overgeneralization occurs, when children employ rules erroneously. Learning theorists believe that language is acquired through reinforcement and conditioning. The nativist approach suggests an innate language acquisition, while

the interactionist approach argues that language development is produced through genetically determined and environmental circumstances7. People who are multilingual, i.e. speak more than one language, may have a cognitive advantage over monolingual speakers. The commonly accepted definition of the word culture is the ideas, customs, and social behavior of a particular person or society. A brief definition: it is the social behavior and norms in human societies⁸. Cultural factors are important in the determination of identity of an individual. Identity can be defined as the distinguishing character of the individual: who each of us is, what our roles are, and what we are capable of. According to E. H. Erikson, people proceed through eight stages of psychosocial development across their lives9. He suggested that each stage requires the resolution of a crisis or conflict and may produce both positive and negative outcomes. Maslow's hierarchy shows how people's motivation progresses from physiological needs (for food, water, sleep) up to the state of self-actualization, i.e. self-fulfillment in which people realize their highest potential¹⁰. One of the important aspects of identity is membership of a group, and language provides a powerful way of maintaining and demonstrating group membership¹¹. The relation between language and identity exists between entire languages and populations.

The purpose of this article is to analyze and update information on the influence of culture and language on the identity of an individual.

RESEARCH INTO RAISING AWARENESS OF CULTURAL DIVERSITY

In teaching foreign languages it is important to raise learners' awareness of culture through language. This aspect is being researched by linguists and a number of publications appear every year. The key issues are reviewed in this part of the article.

The latest publication into incorporating global Englishes into the ELT classroom has appeared recently12. It reports on the use of a student presentation task to introduce and raise awareness of Global Englishes into a Japanese English language class. This task successfully raised students' awareness of variation in Englishes. An integral part of learning a foreign language is acquiring some familiarity with the culture associated with it¹³. Language teachers recognize the need to incorporate sociocultural factors into teaching, but there is no guide how to do it14. Culture learning can be grouped into categories: the elements of culture, intercultural phenomena, particular cultures, acquiring strategies for culture learning. According to the National Standards in Foreign Language Education (NSFLEP, 1996), students cannot master a foreign language until they understand the cultural contexts in which the target language is spoken.15

D. Crystal, a famous linguist, claims that English has become the world's global language due to its use for business, science, and politics¹⁶. The dilemma is how to define a Standard English. McArthur maintains that Standard English is 1) easy to recognize in print because written conventions are similar worldwide,

2) used by news presenters, 3) and it relates to speaker's class and education¹⁷. However, there is lack of clear definition of the term Standard, which causes confusion among teachers and students¹⁸. Therefore, these educators from Canada suggest that English language teachers should consider all varieties of English, not just British or American Standard English. S. L. McKay (2004) argues that English as an international language is not linked to any particular culture¹⁹. Moreover, non-native speakers 1) do not need to internalize the cultural norms of native speakers, 2) an international language becomes "de-nationalized", and 3) the purpose of its teaching is to facilitate the communication of ideas and culture in an English medium. It is essential that second language speakers of English use it to communicate NOT with the native speakers but with other second language users of English. Z. Chlopek argues that communication that lacks appropriate cultural content often results in humorous incidents, or worse, is the source of serious miscommunication and misunderstanding²⁰. Students who learn English in their own country have little access to the target culture in order to become culturally competent. The list of learner competences is revealed by the document in 2001 produced by the Council of Europe. It emphasizes that apart from grammatical competence, a culturally competent learner must possess sociolinguistic competence, pragmatic competence, sociocultural knowledge, and intercultural awareness²¹.

During the course of evolution, distinctions have been made between high and low culture. High culture denotes "all that is best" that has been written, created or thought in the world²². Low culture is seen as a "judgement phrase" to denote anything that is the opposite of high culture and is referred to anything that is produced by the culture industry in order to make a profit²³. It is thought that high culture is morally noble and of great value (p. 560), while low culture is morally unacceptable (p. 700). Z. Chlopek claims that it is useful to make a distinction between the so-called big-C culture and small-C culture¹⁷. The big-C culture constitutes factual knowledge about literature, music, dance, painting, sculpture, theater, and film. Small-C culture comprises a wide variety of interrelated aspects, which include attitudes, assumptions, beliefs, perceptions, norms and values, social relationships, customs, celebrations, rituals, politeness conventions, patterns of interaction, the use of time and physical space and body language in communication. It is obvious that some small-C culture aspects are easy to learn (for instance, customs, celebrations, etc.). However other aspects of culture are unspoken community rules. Implementing the intercultural approach by the non-native English teacher is a demanding task, which must be tactful and skillful, because it leads to the acceptance of values, beliefs, and behavior that might not be acceptable in learner's own culture²⁴.

The binary classification of speakers as either native or non-native is based not on linguistic categories, but on socially constructed identities. The researchers in Canada used four case studies to draw these conclusions: two participants were from Korea and Argentina, and two were from Philippines and Zimbabwe, but all of them identified themselves as the native speakers of English.

However, they perceive themselves differently and are perceived differently by others²⁵. Language learning materials approach culture in two ways: one emphasizes the learner's assimilation into the target culture, and another focuses on the need for information on learner's culture²⁶.

A study was attempted to determine if students' comprehension of culturally loaded words equals that of native English speakers and to what extent proficiency levels influence it²⁷. This research involved 125 students at a university in China and 61 native English speaker students at a USA university. The results indicated limited and inadequate approximation by non-native speakers, who should be taught in appropriate social and cultural contexts. It should be noted that taboo language, which is indication of culture, is rarely taught. An Australian study was designed for students to attend four 90-minute classes on taboo English in the period of three weeks. Students appreciated the usefulness of this language, which contributed to their understanding of the Australian culture²⁸. M. Modiano argued that teachers should place less emphasis on student attainment of near-native English proficiency, because this objective is both impractical and inappropriate²⁹. Foreign language learning might have a negative impact on the cultural integrity of the learner. Language practitioners believe

in the importance of integrating indigenous cultures into English language teaching and present fruitful ideas on its practical applications³⁰.

People with similar cultural and linguistic background speak to each other easily because they know the rules of conversation in their language and culture³¹. In writing people obey certain conventions which are not written down anywhere, nor are easy to define. Sociocultural rules - or shared cultural habits - determine the formality, the kind of language to use, how close to stand to each other and how loudly to speak. Turn-taking is a term which refers to the way in which participants in conversations get their chance to speak: people need to know how to signal verbally that they want to speak or to finish. Language appropriacy depends on settings, participants, gender, theme³². It is known that language can be acquired subconsciously or it can be taught. S. Krashen claimed that subconsciously acquired language can be easily used in spontaneous conversation because it is instantly available while language that is taught is not available for spontaneous use³³. The role of culture in language learning is getting more attention because it provides a broader and deeper context for how one knows or determines what is valued, appropriate, or why. L. Damen called culture the "fifth dimension of language learning"34.

W. M. Rivers analyzed the theory and practice of communicating naturally in a second language, and the author distinguished normal and natural communication35. Normal purposes of language cover the following points: 1) establish-

ing and maintaining social relations; 2) expressing one's reactions; 3) hiding one's intentions; 4) seeking and giving information; 5) learning or teaching how to do something; 6) conversing over the telephone; 7) problem solving; 8) discussing ideas; 9) acting one's social roles; 10) entertaining others; 11) displaying one's achievements; and 12) sharing leisure activities. Hence, if the learners are to function in a new culture freely and without embarrassing misunderstandings, they must learn to conform to the "normal" in that culture, even if it is not their own "natural". As a rule, in second language classes teachers seek the normal use. Natural language use presupposes natural relationships "Natural" means "free from affectation or artificiality; spontaneous; not altered, treated, or disguised; present in or produced by nature". For natural language use of any authenticity, a relationship of acceptance and equality must be between teachers and students³¹. Communicating across cultures involves listening, which requires active cognitive processing of information. Much of the processing of incoming information takes place during the pauses in speech; getting meaningful chunks (segments) helps to retain information; attention plays an important role in comprehension; emotion affects cognitive processing. It is natural for students to forget what they heard and understood, and thus be unable to recount it. Much of comprehension is drawing inferences; moreover, students tend to store the message they created, not the original linguistic output.

M. A. K. Halliday listed seven functions of language for children learning

the mother tongue: the instrumental, the regulatory, the interactional, the personal, the heuristic, the imaginative, and the representational or informative. A key concept in Halliday's approach is "the context of situation" which is obtained through a systematic relationship between the social environment and the functional organization of the language³⁶. The hypothesis of a cutoff age for language acquisition implies that there is a critical period, after which it becomes impossible to learn a language and it is at around age of twelve or thirteen³⁷. Chomsky's innateness hypothesis implies that language faculty resides in people's genes: humans are born with a set of language learning tools and all humans have a set of rules for grammar that are universal to all human languages³⁸.

K. Toohey and B. Norton reviewed research that intended to clarify the relationship between language learner identities and their sociocultural worlds³⁹. The current researchers of identity argue that identities are complex, multilayered, often hybrid, sometimes imagined, and developed through activity in many social fields. Up to now researchers have explored how identity features of race, class, disability, and sexual orientation may affect the language learner. In B. Norton's published book new ideas on identity, investment and language communities were developed⁴⁰. It is assumed that issues of identity and language learning will be researched in the future, and a number of scientific journals such as "Applied Linguistics", "Language and Education", "Modern Language Journal" welcome publications in this field. As learners acquire a foreign language, it is assumed that they gain a new awareness of who they are - they develop a second language SELF41.

CULTURE TRIANGLE

The concept of culture triangle as well as its application was investigated by J. Mole and described in two consecutive books, which were published within 13 years after each other, i.e. in 1998 and 2011⁴². The researcher emphasized that the most obvious difference between cultures is language. The potential for misunderstandings increases with people who speak English as a second language. The language that students learn in the classroom is not the same that the native speakers use. There are differences in not only what people say but how people say it. The origin of cultural differences

comes from history, sociology, philosophy, literature and other branches of humanities. Some differences seem superficial, for instance, dress code, etiquette, food, and relevant to traditions. Other differences can be irritating, like the conventions of punctuality in some countries. For language learners it is essential to identify cultural differences that have an impact on communication across the countries. Culture triangle that is shown in Fig. 1 determines how people behave and interact. It consists of three categories of Communication, Leadership, and Organization. Communication is cen-



Fig. 1. Culture Triangle (after J. Mole, 2011).

tered on language and includes verbal and non-verbal communication. Native English speakers have a variety of accents which foreigners find difficult to understand. The common 7-38-55 rule of communication is well known: 55% of total communication is delivered by body language, 38% by vocal signals, and the last 7% is delivered by words. The other two categories in Culture Triangle refer to values: the first set of values is Organization and a role of individuals within it; the second set of values is Leadership

which is based on power by groups versus individuals.

Organization consists of systematic and organic dimensions. Table 1 shows the important differences between the two. In the systematic organization the basic elements are functions which are coordinated by well defined, logical relationships. The relationship between the individual and the organization is rational and it is based on a contract. There is a clear distinction between an individual's identity and his/her organizational functions. Organic organization is based on personal relationship and social hierarchy. Its effectiveness depends on members' ability to work in a team. The organic dimension means that organizations are like living organisms: functions change, as do the relationships between them. Culture clash can arise when people of different organizational backgrounds try to work together. The comparison of statements in Table 1 allows us to evaluate the differences between the systematic and organic organizations.

Table 1. ORGANIZATION (after J. Mole, 1998)

SYSTEMATIC ORGANIZATION	ORGANIC ORGANIZATION
The best decisions are based on research and analysis	The best decisions are based on judgement and experience
Planning influences what happens tomorrow	Why plan? Future is unpredictable
Getting ahead depends on what you know	Getting ahead depends on who you know
The most important quality in a leader is professional competence	The most important quality in a leader is charisma
Organization charts describe how the company works	Organization charts do not reflect how the company works
To be effective people most need detailed action plan	To be effective people most need freedom to be creative

SYSTEMATIC ORGANIZATION	ORGANIC ORGANIZATION
Errors can always be traced to faulty systems and procedures	Errors can always be traced to people
Tasks should be precisely defined	People should use initiative in carrying out tasks
You get promoted if you perform well	You get promoted if you are the right person
You can be taught the right skills for the job	Either you are suited for a job or you are not
It is vital to stick to procedures	Procedures should be ignored if necessary
Procedures should be revised after careful analysis	Procedures should be quickly adapted to suit the circumstances
The key to success is managing key figure	The key to success is managing key people
At a meeting the agenda should be strictly adhered to	Participants should not be slaves to agenda
You should keep personalities out of issues	Personalities are a vital factor in any issue
Meetings are wasted unless they have a specific result	Meetings are always useful because they give people a chance to air problems
Most major decisions and agreements are made at meetings	Most major decisions and agreements are made outside meetings in private
Meetings should be run on established procedures	Meetings should be as flexible and free-form as possible
You can usually rely on people to follow up	You have to chase people to follow up
Those with the most powerful arguments win in the end	Those with the most powerful allies win in the end

Leadership is based on the power by groups to individuals. In the individual leadership, it is believed that individuals are intrinsically unequal. In the group leadership, it is believed that everyone has a right to contribute to all decisions. Table 2 illustrates differences between group and individual leadership cultures. The comparison and analysis of statements in Individual and Group Columns allows us to understand the differences in managing styles. There are two extremes in the group dimension. One is the collectivism which implies that power should be shared and exercised equally. The absolutist belief is that power is concentrated in the top person.

According to J. Mole, in order to manage cultural diversity, it is necessary to use the Cultural Triangle. The first stage is cultural awareness. Culture is relative - what is a norm to some might be unacceptable to other people. People behavior is based on their held values and norms. The second stage is tactical change. It is necessary to change in order to accept differences. Cultural imperialism provides one solution to adopt or reject particular behavior. Another solution is *cultural federalism* – following habitual ways of behavior. Recognizing cultural differences might be helpful in avoiding misunderstandings between people.

Table 2. LEADERSHIP (after J. Mole, 1998)

INDIVIDUAL	GROUP
The most effective decisions are made by individuals	The most effective decisions are made by teams
Planning is best done by top management	Planning is best done by all concerned
Only top management needs to know the corporate strategy	Everyone should know the corporate strategy
Giving clear instructions is the most important factor in implementing decisions	Getting everyone's agreement is the most important factor in implementing decisions
Decisions are best made by those who have responsibility	Decisions are best made by everyone they affect
Good leaders are born not made	Anyone can become a good leader
Bosses are better keeping a distance from their subordinates	Bosses are better being close to the people they manage
The best bosses are tough and decisive	The best bosses are participative and listening
A boss's primary task is to set clear goals	A boss's primary task is to get the team to agree on goals
Enforcing quality is a specific responsibility	Everyone should be responsible for quality
Individuals should be rewarded	Teams should be rewarded
Individuals work primary for themselves	Individuals work primary for the team
Healthy competition between colleagues is more important than teamwork	Teamwork is more important than competition
If I have a problem I go first to my boss	If I have a problem I go to my colleagues
Meetings are mainly for communication	Meetings are mainly for decision making
Meetings should be in the firm control of the chair	Meetings are for everyone to bring up what they want
I always support a majority decision even if I disagree	I will try not to comply
If I want something done I see people individually	If I want something done I call a meeting of everyone concerned
My main concern at meetings is to put my case	My main concern at meetings is to help the team come to an agreement
Meetings are a time-wasting way of getting agreement	Meetings are the best way to get agreement

Chart 1 shows the percentage of English knowledge as a second language in the EU member states. Unfortunately, this information is somewhat out of date; however, the latest data have not been

available. Nevertheless, it is evident how important knowledge of English has become. The big six countries include France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Spain, and the United Kingdom. The list

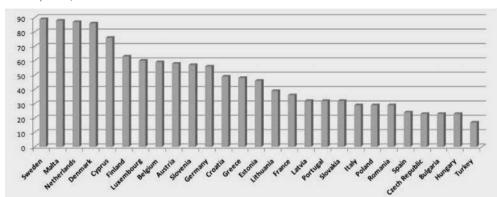


Chart 1. Knowledge of English as a second language in the EU member states⁴³ (after the European Commission, 2012).

of smaller countries ranges from Austria to Sweden including the Eastern countries that joined the EU in the 21st century such as the Baltic states, i.e. Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia, as well as Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Romania, and Czech Republic. Nevertheless, it is evident how important knowledge of English has become.

A. Nardelly claims that within the European Union, there are 23 officially recognised languages⁴⁴. There are more than 60 indigenous regional and minority languages spoken by migrant communities.

Just over half of Europeans (54%) are able to hold a conversation in at least one extra language, a quarter (25%) are able to speak at least two additional languages and one in ten (10%) are conversant in at least three. The five most widely spoken foreign languages remain English (38%), French (12%), German (11%), Spanish (7%), and Russian (5%). Almost everyone in Luxembourg (98%), Latvia (95%), the Netherlands (94%), Malta (93%), Slovenia and Lithuania (92%), and Sweden (91%) are able to speak at least one foreign language in addition to their mother tongue.

Chart 2. Countries best at English (online source: English Language Skills Statistics in the EU, 2016).

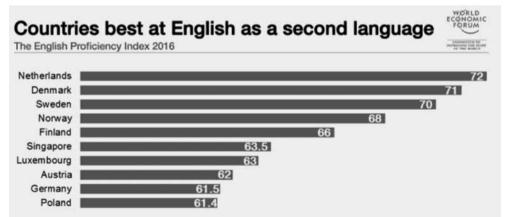


Chart 2 shows the statistics of countries that are best at English as a second language: the best are the citizens of the Netherlands (72%) followed by Denmark (71%), and Sweden (70%). At the bottom of the Chart 2 are Germany and Poland at slightly over 61%.

Foreign language skills statistics is reviewed by Eurostat data online⁴⁵. It presents information on the number of languages known, levels of language command, age and education of adults. According to the website of Eurostat, the statistics is planned to be updated is July 2018. In 2018, Home Office published the guidance about the knowledge

of language and life requirements for people who apply for settlement or British citizenship. It is available online and provides a thorough imformation for immigrants from various countries. Successful communication among the EU member states implies understanding a multicultural environment - the behavioral and cultural differences and making adjustments in their relationships. J. Mole (2011) argues that for working people the challenge remains to manage diversity and change simultaneously. The European Union will continue to foster partnerships within its territory and across its borders.

CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of the vast amount of linguistic publications confirmed, that both culture and language are interrelated and relevant to identity of an individual. Acquisition of either native or second language is an extremely complex and time-consuming process. The majority of linguists argue that raising cultural awareness is an integral part of learning a foreign language. The language practitioners distinguish normal and natural communication in teaching languages. Moreover, the relationship between language learner identities and their sociocultural worlds is essential for successful language learning: researchers have explored how identity features of race, class, disability, and sexual orientation may affect the language learner. The relationship between language

learner identities and their sociocultural worlds is essential for successful language learning. The concept of culture triangle, which was investigated and described by J. Mole, determines how people behave and interact. It consists of three categories of Communication, Leadership, and Organization. The relationship between these categories allows learners to understand how to manage cultural diversity across the countries. Recognizing cultural differences can be helpful in avoiding misunderstandings between people. Since English has been known as lingua franca, i.e. a language that is adopted as a common language between non-native speakers of English, it has been taught in the member countries of the European Union as a second language.

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