

新编英汉 语言与文化比较

A New Comparison of English and
Chinese Languages and Cultures

黄育才 主编

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 復旦大學 出版社

图书在版编目(CIP)数据

新编英汉语言与文化比较/黄育才主编. —上海:复旦大学出版社,2016.4
ISBN 978-7-309-12146-9

I. 新… II. 黄… III. 英语-文化语言学-对比研究-汉语 IV. H31-05

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字(2016)第 038515 号

新编英汉语言与文化比较

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责任编辑/郑梅侠

复旦大学出版社有限公司出版发行

上海市国权路 579 号 邮编:200433

网址:fupnet@fudanpress.com <http://www.fudanpress.com>

门市零售:86-21-65642857 团体订购:86-21-65118853

外埠邮购:86-21-65109143

江苏省句容市排印厂

开本 787×1092 1/16 印张 17 字数 373 千

2016 年 4 月第 1 版第 1 次印刷

ISBN 978-7-309-12146-9/H·2592

定价:38.00 元

如有印装质量问题,请向复旦大学出版社有限公司发行部调换。

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前言

“语言与文化有着密切的关系,语言是文化的重要载体,是文化的表现形式,而语言又反映文化。”(邓炎昌)语言之中蕴含着文化,而文化的丰富和发展也得益于语言。

“一种事物的特点,要跟别的事物比较才显出来。”(吕叔湘)“You could know your own language only if you compared it with other languages.”(只有将本族语同其他语言进行比较,才能真正懂得自己的语言。——恩格斯);“只有拿外语和母语相比较,才能够更深刻地理解和更好地掌握外语。”(刘重德)

英汉语言与文化对比是一项跨学科研究,既涉及英汉语言,又涉及英汉两大文化。本书不仅从语言的棱镜中去审视英汉文化,而且从英汉文化的视角来探讨英汉语言问题。

本书共分10个章节。每个章节首先以热身练习引出主题,接着围绕主题讨论英汉语言与文化的异同点,最后通过问题思考、小组讨论、案例分析等形式多样的练习帮助读者检验与巩固本章所学内容。完形填空、阅读理解或影视欣赏则专为读者加深或拓展知识面而设。书后附有英汉语言文化研究重要期刊及相关网站,主要供感兴趣的读者查询。

本书主要就英汉语言与文化的主要层面进行对比分析。第一章为开首篇,概论文化、语言及二者关系;第二、第三章就文化的核心内容——价值观及人们认知世界的方式——思维方法进行比较;第四章就英汉语言的主要层面——语音、词汇、语法、语篇等进行比较;第五、第六章就英汉言语交际与非言语交际进行比较;第七章就英汉比喻与联想进行比较;第八章——第九章就英汉习俗与社交方式进行比较;第十章从发展的角度,讨论了近年来英汉语言与文化的相互影响。

本书语言浅显(必要时注以汉语),图文并茂,通俗易懂,集知识性、趣味性、实用

性于一体。通过英汉语言与文化的对比,本书旨在帮助读者了解两种文化的异同点,特别是增强对其差异的敏感性,从而提高跨文化交际能力。本书紧跟时代步伐,吸收了国内外学者最新研究成果,讨论了当前英汉语言与文化领域最新现象。

为便于教学,减轻教师备课负担,本书随书赠送授课教师电子教学资料包,包括较为丰富的图片、音视频、PPT课件、文字材料及练习参考答案等。

本书主要作为英语专业及大学英语选修课系列教材,对其他英语爱好者、英汉语言与文化研究者、跨文化交际研究者及涉外工作者也都具有一定的参考价值。

全书主要由黄育才策划、编写、修改及最终统稿与审校;赵富霞主要参与了第一章、第七章及第八章的编写,提供了英语语言与文化比较研究相关组织的网站;田华昌主要参与了配图与练习的编排,并提供了练习答案。本书在编写过程中参考了大量资料,特在书末统列主要参考书目,并就此对作者表示衷心的感谢。复旦大学出版社对本书的出版给予了大力支持,在此表示诚挚的感谢。

由于编者水平有限、时间仓促,本书难免有瑕疵,恳请专家、读者批评指正,以便我们不断改进提高。

黄育才

2016年1月

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Chapter 1

Language and Culture

语言与文化

Learning Objectives

In this chapter, you are to know:

1. the definitions and significance of language;
2. the definitions and characteristics of culture;
3. the relationship between language and culture;
4. foreign language learning and intercultural communication.



Words of Wisdom

- To know another's language and not his culture is a very good way to make a fluent fool of one's self.
— Winston Brembeck
- Studying a second language without learning the culture is like learning how to drive a car by studying a driver's manual and never getting behind a steering wheel.
— Kathy J. Irving
- The sum of human wisdom is not contained in any one language, and no single language is capable of expressing all forms and degrees of human comprehension.
— Ezra Pound

Warming-up Activities

1. What is the pragmatic failure in the following conversation?
Xiao Li (*a Chinese interpreter*): You must be very tired. You're old ...
Catherine (*an elderly American lady*): Oh, I'm NOT old, and I'm NOT tired.
2. What are the two speakers talking about in the following conversation? How do you explain it to foreigners?
甲: 什么时候吃你的喜糖啊?
乙: 八字还没一撇呢。
甲: 那我来做你的月下老吧。
3. What do you know “终身大事” means? Why do you think the American guest in the following report had difficulty working out its meaning?
In a CCTV quiz program hosted by Wang Xiaoya, an American guest who could speak some Chinese was to choose the correct meaning of “终身大事” from the following: 工作、事业、婚姻、生死. Although he fully understood the literal meaning of this term (the most important thing in one's life), he couldn't work out the meaning that the Chinese people attach to it until the host gave him some hints.
4. How do you understand the term “culture”?

Text

1.1 Language

1) Definitions

From past to present, different definitions of language have been given from various perspectives by scholars and researchers. The following is just a glimpse of it.

(1) “Language is a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions and desires by means of voluntarily produced symbols.” (Edward Sapir, 1921)

(2) “A language is a system of arbitrary (随意的) vocal (声音的) symbols by means of which a social group cooperates.” (B. Bloch and G. Trager, 1942)

(3) “From now on I will consider a language to be a set (finite or infinite) of sentences, each finite in length and constructed out of a finite set of elements.” (Noam Chomsky, 1957)

(4) Language refers to: ① the method of human communication, either spoken or written, consisting of the use of words in a structured and conventional way; ② the system of communication used by a particular community or country, ③ the manner or style of a piece of writing or speech (*The Oxford American College Dictionary*, 2002).

(5) “Language is behavior which utilizes body parts: the vocal apparatus and the auditory system for oral language; the brachial apparatus and the visual system for sign language. ... Such body parts are controlled by none other than the brain for their functions.” (Fred C. C. Peng, 2005)



(6) “A language consists of symbols that convey meaning, plus rules for combining those symbols, that can be used to generate an infinite variety of messages.” (Wayne Weiten, 2007)

(7) “We can define language as a system of communication using sounds or symbols that enables us to express our feelings, thoughts, ideas, and experiences.” (E. Bruce Goldstein, 2008)

(8) “语言是表达思想或情感的工具。……人类最普通的语言是用口说的, 可以称为口语, 也就是狭义的语言。口语虽然便利, 但是不能传远或传久, 于是开化的或半开化的民族又创造文字来代替口语。文字也是语言的一种, 可称为书写的语言, 或文语。” (王力, 1943)

(9) “语言是人跟人互通信息、用发音器官发出来的、成系统的行为方式。” (赵元任, 1968)

(10) “语言是人类最重要的交际工具, 语音、词汇、语法构成的体系。” (《语言学辞典》, 1998)

(11) “语言是人类特有的一种符号系统, 当它作用于人与人的关系的时候, 它是表达相互反应的中介; 当它作用于人和客观世界的关系的时候, 它是认知事物的工具; 当它作用于文化的时候, 它是文化信息的载体和容器。” (许国璋, 1991)

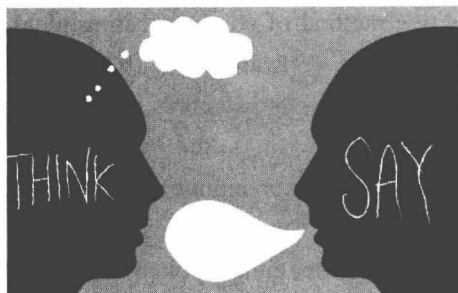
(12) “语言是人类认知世界及进行表述的方式和过程。” (潘文国, 2001)

Despite all the differences in the definitions, it is universally accepted that language is a symbolic code of communication consisting of a set of sounds (phonetics) with understood meanings (vocabulary) and a set of rules (grammar) for constructing messages.

2) Functions

(1) Tool for Social Communication

Language is the most effective way of communication although there are many other



ways, e.g. non-verbal communication. All the other ways of communication can only play auxiliary roles. Only with language, can knowledge and information be spread far beyond time and space. Language permits us to remember the past, deal with the present, and anticipate and plan for the future. (Samovar, 1998). Language is human-specific. Only human beings possess what can be

called language and make social communication in the true sense while animals, e.g. parrots, can only imitate people's language mechanically, by a few words or a few sentences, but can not master the whole complicated language system of human beings.

(2) Device for Thinking

Thinking, which mainly includes abstract thinking and image thinking, is human beings' brain activity to reflect the real world.

Thinking takes form and "speaks out" with the help of language, which makes people's communication possible. In this sense, there would be no thinking or communication without language. Language and thinking are closely related to each other. They promote and develop each other in human beings' social activities. For example, human beings thinking activity has developed from concreteness to abstractness, so has the vocabulary in a language. With human beings' deeper understanding of the world, there is a larger and larger vocabulary, especially in abstract words.

(3) Propeller of Society

As a social phenomenon, language originated in society from labor on the one hand, and reflects the society on the other hand. It plays a very important role in society. In every field of human beings' activity, from material production to spiritual creative work, from political and cultural activity to daily life, language, as a link, helps human being set themselves apart from the animal world, ties the whole society together, develop their thinking, organize their activities and promote social civilization. Without language, people could not coordinate their group activities, and the whole society would stop working, which would make all the other activities come to a stop, too.

1.2 Culture

In English, the word "culture" comes from the Latin word "*cultura*" and "*colere*", meaning "inhabit (居住)", "cultivate (栽种)", "protect (保护)".



In Chinese, the earliest appearance of the term “文化” so far is generally regarded in 《说苑·指武》, works by Liu Xiangzhi (刘向之) in West Han Dynasty (206 BC—25 AD): “圣人之治天下也, 先文德而后武力。凡武之兴, 为不服也, 文化不改, 然后加诛。”

Later, at the end of 19th century, when scholars translated the English word “culture”, they used “文化” as its equivalent.

1) Definitions

Culture has been given a lot more definitions than language by scholars and researchers from various perspectives.

Edward Burnett Tylor, the well-known culturist in Britain, gave the classical definition of “culture” in his *Primitive Culture* (《原始文化》) in 1871: a completed system including knowledge, faith, art, law, morality, custom, and all the abilities and habits from which a social member would acquire. (一个完整的体系, 它包括知识、信仰、艺术、法律、道德、风俗以及其他作为社会一员的人类从社会中获取的各种能力与习惯。)



(Edward Burnett Tylor, 1832–1917)

Some other typical definitions include:

(1) “Culture is the medium evolved by humans to survive. Nothing in our lives is free from cultural influences. It is the keystone in civilization’s arch and is the medium through which all life’s events must flow.” (Hall, 1959)

(2) “Culture refers to the total way of life of a particular group of people. It includes everything that a group of people thinks, says, does and makes.” (Kohls, 1979)

(3) “Culture is a system of shared beliefs, values, customs, behaviors, and artifacts that the members of a society use to cope with their world and with one another, and that are transmitted from generation to generation through learning.” (Harris & Moran, 1996)

(4) “Culture is the deposit of knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, actions, attitudes, meanings, hierarchies, religion, notions of time, roles, spatial relations, concepts of the universe, and artifacts acquired by a group of people in the course of generations through individual and group striving.” (Samovar, Porter & Stefani, 1998)

(5) “Culture is the total accumulation of beliefs, customs, values, behaviors, institutions and communication patterns what are shared, learned and passed down through the generations in an identifiable group of people.” (Davis, 1999)

(6) “Culture is the coherent, learned, shared view of a group of people about life’s concerns that ranks what is important, furnishes attitudes about what things are appropriate, and dictates behavior.” (Beamer and Varner, 2001)

(7) Culture refers to ① the arts and other manifestations of human intellectual achievement regarded collectively; ② the customs, arts, social institutions, and achievements of a particular nation, people, or other social group, or ③ the attitudes and behavior characteristic of a particular social

group. It is a term we commonly use to explain the differences in our ways of living. (*The Oxford American College Dictionary*, 2002)

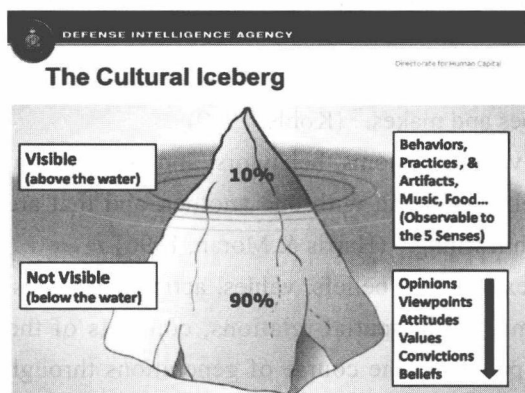
(8) 吾人生活所依靠的一切。文化之义应在政治、经济,乃至一切,无所不包。(梁漱溟, 1949)

(9) 文化既包括信念、价值观念、习俗、知识等,也包括实物和器具。(胡文仲, 1985)

(10) 广义的文化是指人类创造的一切物质产品和精神产品的总和。狭义的文化专指包括语言、文学、艺术及一切意识形态在内的精神产品。((《中国大百科全书·社会学》, 1993)

(11) 文化广义指人类在社会实践过程中所获得的物质、精神的生产能力和创造的物质、精神财富的总和。狭义指精神生产能力和精神产品,包括一切社会意识形态:自然科学、技术科学、社会意识形态。泛指一般知识,包括语文知识。如“学文化”即指学习文字和求取一般知识。又如对个人而言的“文化水平”,指一个人的语文和知识程度。中国古代封建王朝所施的文治和教化的总称。((《辞海》, 1999)

(12) 笼统地说,文化是一种社会现象,是人们长期创造形成的产物,同时又是一种历史现象,是社会历史的积淀物。确切地说,文化是凝结在物质之中又游离于物质之外的,能够被传承的国家或民族的历史、地理、风土人情、传统习俗、生活方式、文学艺术、行为规范、思维方式、价值观念等,是人类之间进行交流的普遍认可的一种能够传承的意识形态。广义文化指人类在社会历史发展过程中所创造的物质财富和精神财富的总和。(百度)



Many metaphors have been employed to help people have a better understanding of the term “culture”.

(1) Culture is like the water a fish swims in. A fish notices everything except the water it is swimming in. The same is true for us.

(2) Culture is like an iceberg; only some of culture is visible.

(3) Culture is our software. Culture is the basic operating system that makes us human.

(4) Culture is the grammar of our behavior. Culture is what people need to know in order to behave appropriately in any society.

Besides, culture is also regarded as: compass, mind maps, ecosystem and toolbox ...

The metaphors mentioned above emphasize different features and functions of culture.

2) Characteristics

Although there may not be a universally accepted definition of culture, there are a number of characteristics of culture, on the basis of which most people agree to describe its essence.

(1) Culture is learned. Culture is not something we are born with; rather, it is learned. We all have to be taught our culture. The process begins immediately after birth — even earlier,

e.g. prenatal education (胎教) according to some recent researches. People learn culture through proverbs, folktales, legends, myths, art, mass media and many other ways.

(2) Culture is transmitted from generation to generation. The means of transmitting the culture can take a variety of forms and can have numerous “carriers” (family, media, church, etc.), but the key elements of culture must be shared with each new generation, so culture and communication are linked in the way that communication makes culture a continuous process.

(3) Culture is subject to change. Cultures are constantly changing over time. They change in the process of transmission from generation to generation, group to group, and place to place. Four major mechanisms account for the change of cultures: technological inventions, disasters, cultural contacts, and environmental factors.

(4) Culture is integrated. Culture is composed of parts that are related to each other. The interrelationship of these various parts is so important that all aspects of culture must be reasonably well integrated in order to function. It is believed that you touch a culture in one place and everything else is affected.

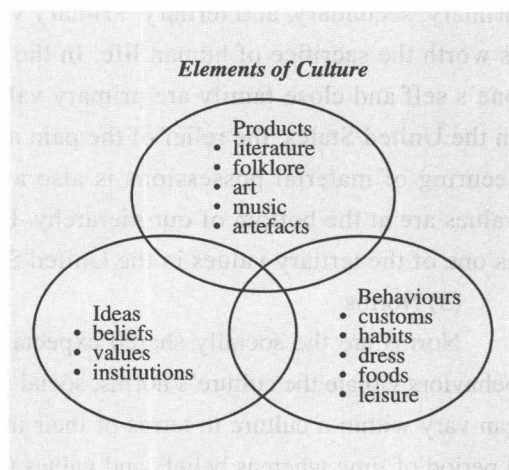
(5) Culture is ethnocentric. Ethnocentrism is our instinctive reaction to assume that our culture, our way of life, are the right ones, and that all others are not. It is the natural state for peoples of the world. Acceptance of cultural differences is the exception. Developing sensitivity to cultural differences does not come naturally.

(6) Culture is adaptive. People need their cultural skills to stay alive. On this point, culture has been a highly successful adaptive mechanism for human-beings. It has given them a major selective advantage in the competition for survival with other life forms. From the invention of efficient hunting skills, fire use, and ultimately, clothing, warm housing, early agriculture to modern science and technology, culture has allowed the global human population to grow from less than 10 million shortly after the end of the last ice age to more than 7 billion today, a mere 10,000 years later.

3) Cultural Patterns

People and cultures are extremely complex and consist of numerous interrelated cultural orientations, which constitute the components of cultural patterns.

Cultural patterns refer to the specific cultural rules that people from a certain nation or a certain group have become accustomed to and followed together for a long time. They consist of a whole set of stable cultural system, such as beliefs, cultural values, norms of behaviors and social practices. (文化方式指生活在一个民族或社群中的人们长期适



应、共同遵守的特定文化规则,包括人们的信仰、文化价值观、行为规范及社会习俗等一整套稳定的文化系统。)

(1) Beliefs

Beliefs are ideas that people assume to be true about the world and are a set of learned interpretations that form the basis for cultural members to decide what is and what is not correct and logical. In other words, beliefs are people's conviction in the truth of something, and they are at the core of our thoughts and actions. For example, if people highly value the Islamic tradition, they will believe that the *Koran* is an infallible source of knowledge and thus accept the miracles and promises that it offers. What is interesting about beliefs is that they are so much a part of culture that in most instances we do not demand proof or question them. We do not have to declare the belief wrong. We should recognize the fact that cultures have different realities and belief systems. People accept them simply because they know "they are true". Beliefs are influential in communication in that they affect people's conscious and unconscious minds, as well as the manner in which people communicate.

(2) Values

Values are learned organizations of rules for making choices and for resolving conflicts. These "rules" and guideposts are normative and teach people what is useful, good, right, wrong, what to strive for, how to live our life, and even what to die for. Although each of us has a unique set of individual values, there are also values that tend to penetrate a culture. These are called cultural values, which are transmitted by a variety of sources (family, media, school, church, state, etc.) and therefore tend to be broad-based, enduring, and relatively stable. Most importantly, as is the case with cultural beliefs, cultural values guide both people's perception and communication. An understanding of cultural values helps people appreciate the behavior of other people and an awareness of cultural values also helps people understand their own behavior. Values can be classified as primary, secondary, and tertiary. Primary values are the most important: they specify what is worth the sacrifice of human life. In the United States, democracy and the protection of one's self and close family are primary values. Secondary values are also quite important. In the United States, the relief of the pain and suffering of others is a secondary value. The securing of material possessions is also a secondary value for most Americans. Tertiary values are at the bottom of our hierarchy. Hospitality to guests and cleanliness is regarded as one of the tertiary values in the United States.

(3) Norms

Norms are the socially shared expectations of appropriate behaviors. When a person's behaviors violate the culture's norms, social sanctions are usually imposed. Like values, norms can vary within a culture in terms of their importance and intensity. Norms may change over a period of time whereas beliefs and values tend to be much more enduring. Norms exist for a

wide variety of behaviors. For example, the greeting behaviors of people within a culture are governed by norms. Similarly, good manners in a variety of situations are based on norms. Norms also exist to guide people's interactions and to indicate how to engage in conversation, what to talk about, and how to disengage from conversation. Because people are expected to behave according to their culture's norms, they therefore come to see their own norms as constituting the "right" way of communicating. Norms, then, are linked to the beliefs and values of a culture.

(4) Social practices

Social practices are the predictable behavior patterns that members of a culture typically follow. Social practices are the outward manifestations of beliefs, values, and norms. In the United States, lunch is usually over by 1:30 p.m. and gift brought by dinner guests are usually opened in the presence of the guests. In Italy, lunch hasn't yet started by 1:30 p.m. In China, gifts are never opened in front of the giver, and doing so is considered bad manners. One type of social practices is informal and includes everyday tasks, such as eating, sleeping, dressing, working, playing and talking to others. Another type of social practices is more formal and prescriptive. These include the rituals, ceremonies, and structured routines that are typically performed publicly and collectively: saluting the flag, praying in church, honoring the dead at funerals, getting married, and many other social practices. Of course, all members of a culture do not necessarily follow that culture's "typical" social practices; each person differs, in unique and significant ways, from the general cultural tendency to think and behave in particular ways.

4) Classifications

Cultures can be classified into different types from different perspectives.

(1) Material Culture, Spiritual Culture & Institutional Culture

Material Culture: the culture that satisfies people's material life, such as food, dressing, building, cars, etc.

Spiritual Culture: the culture that reflects the various forms of human beings' psychology or social consciousness, such as literature, art, etc.

Institutional Culture: the various forms of culture that regulates human beings' relationship or behaviors, such as economic system, marriage system, family system, legal system, etc.

(2) Big C Culture & Small C Culture

According to E. D. Allen, culture can be divided into two types: "Big C Culture" and "Small C Culture".

Big C Culture: the culture that is most visible, such as literature, art, music, architecture, philosophy, science and technology, etc. They are the most overt forms of culture.

Small C Culture: the more invisible type of culture associated with a region, group of people, such as norms of behaviors, patterns of living, daily habits, customs, etc.

(3) High-context Culture & Low-context Culture

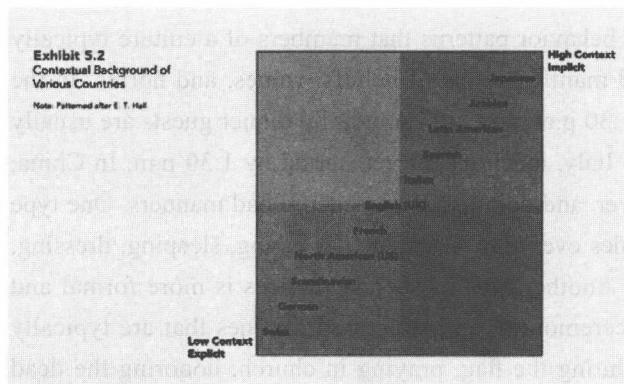
Edward Hall categorizes cultures as being either high or low context, depending on the degree to which meaning comes from the settings or from the words.

A high-context culture is a culture in which the individual has internalized meaning and information, so that little is explicitly stated in written or spoken messages. In conversation, the listener knows what is meant because the speaker and listener share the same knowledge and assumptions, and the listener can piece together the speaker's meaning. Communication in a

high context culture expresses much information either in the physical context of the situation or is already internalized in the person.

A low-context culture is one in which information and meanings are explicitly stated in the message or communication. Individuals in a low-context culture expect explanations when statements or situations are unclear, as they often are. Information

and meanings are not internalized by the individual but are derived from context, e.g., from the situation or an event. Low context, in contrast, conveys most information as explicit statements and little is conveyed by relationships or internalization.



1.3 The Relationship between Language and Culture

As early as 1921, the American anthropologist-linguist Edward Sapir pointed out, "Language does not exist apart from culture, that is, from the socially inherited assemblage of practices and beliefs that determines the texture of our lives." "The vocabulary of a language more or less faithfully reflected the culture whose purposes it serves and that the history of language and the history of culture move along parallel lines."

Language and culture are intimately related to each other. They depend on and permeate into each other.

American intercultural communication scholars Gudykunst and Kim (2003) summarize the relationship between language and culture as:

Every culture has a language with which people are able to communicate with one another. The specific languages we speak are learned in our cultures and reflect our cultures. Over time, changes in our languages change our cultures and changes in our cultures lead to changes in our languages. We learn our languages as we are socialized into our cultures.