LANGUAGE, THE INDIVIDUAL, SOCIETY AND CULTURE CONSTITUTE A UNIQUE APPROACH, CONGENIAL FOR LANGUAGE TEACHERS.

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ABSTRACT: *A formidable unique effect is expected when language, individual, society and culture are studied together. The result shows that languages reflect rather than create social-cultural regularities in values and orientations than has previously been identified. Language has profound influence on an individual's self-image. Interpersonal events help to set the stage. The characteristics of languages are regarded more as indicators of social relationship. Anthropology attributes to language teaching such importance as it does to the grammatical or phonological aspect. Added, fieldwork expects familiarity with the tribal language. For example, an expression in a primitive language may be totally unintelligible unless considered in its cultural context and related to circumstances in which it occurs. This makes language a guide to social reality and a symbolic guide to culture. Culture indeed satisfies both the basic and integrative needs of the individual and society. Consequently, language, the individual, society and culture constitute a unique approach, congenial to language teachers.*

KEYWORDS*:* Language, Individual, Society, Culture, Language teachers, cultural competence

INTRODUCTION

Trudgill (2001) has a view that a genuine approach will be formed when language (where students explore the great diversity of world languages and where they develop an understanding of the genetic and geographical ties among them; where students learn to appreciate language as an object of scientific study and where they apply their new knowledge to everyday, social interactions in their own lives and communities, Huffman, (2013); the individual (where culture exists in each and every one of us individually as much as it exists as a global, social construct; where individual differences in culture can be observed among people in the degree to which they adopt and engage in the attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors that, by consensus, constitute their culture. Our failure in the past to recognize individual differences in constructs and concepts of culture has undoubtedly aided in the formation and maintenance of stereotypes, (Matsumoto, 1996); and the society (where we may agree that human being is a social creature because in his effort to fulfill his daily need, he has to work together between one and another. This cooperation can only be conducted in a community. Based on an example such as this, we have a clear picture that all the members of a community need help from one another. They cannot live alone and try to fulfill their daily need, such as food and clothes by themselves. This is to say that they need working together. The cooperation among members of a social group will run well by a means of communication, known as "language". By using a language, man can express his ideas and wishes with other people such as when he needs their help. There will be a close cooperation among members of the group. The three elements mentioned above: human beings, community, and language are thus closely related to each other (Fatchulfkip, 2008); and culture (... culture is a derivative of

individual experience, something learned or created by individuals themselves or passed on to them socially by contemporaries or ancestors ...., Avruch, 1998). In this way, language, individual, society and culture are to be studied in close association to each other Daslis, 2011).

Language, Sapir (1970) said, is "a guide to social reality" and a symbolic guide to culture". As will be seen shortly, it was largely due to Sapir's influence that Whorf studied the relations between languages, culture, and thought more closely. Whorf (1956) believed that learning different categories of grammar would improve an individual's perspectives on culture was therefore of tremendous significance as it could expose unconscious biases and stereotypes in our own thinking. Whorf's opinions stirred widespread interest and led in due course to many debates and studies on the validity of his thesis. Over the last two or three decades several investigations have tested the Whorfian hypothesis with conflicting results by studying different aspects of language in relation to extra-linguistic factors in different cultures, such as kinship terms, color terms, number words, disease terminologies, or modes of address. The consensus on this question is well expressed in the following three statements;

a)   "Languages primarily reflect rather than create sociocultural regularities in values and orientations" Crystal, (2010).

b)   "Languages throughout the world share a far larger number of structural universals than has heretofore been recognized" Fishman (1972), and cited by Crystal (2010).

c)   "Languages and societal behavior are equal partner rather than one or the other of them being "boss" and "giving orders" to the other (Fisherman, 1972 and cited by Crystal (2010).
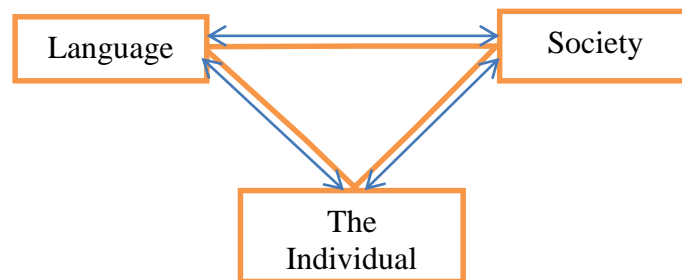

Figure 1: Tripartite relationship between language, the individual and society**.** All three components significantly influence each other, and have been described as inseparable.

Language and the Individual

Like Mead (1934), Elliott (2008) develops a theory that the mind of the individual and the individual's perception of himself are formed by the social relations between the individual and his social environment, and that the individual's role is defined by verbal symbols. This theory led to recognition of the profound influence which verbal "labeling" and the use of language in interpersonal relations had on the individual's self-image.

Language in its Social Context

The study of language in its social context starts from the assumption that speech varies in different social circumstances and that there are speech varieties within a speech community. It is the business of linguistics to account for these and to study the rules of these variations as normal phenomena of language use (Holliday, Hyde & Kullman, 2004). It is also clear that the social and regional variations of language use makes the description of language an even more complex task, than if they are disregarded. Language in social context is closer to real life, but variations make the teaching learning-task more complex. The effect of this trend in sociolinguistics (Denzin, 1997) is a socially more differentiated description of linguistics: a phonology, morphology, syntax, and lexicology in which the distinctions in the use of language by different groups in society and by individuals in different situations are not rubbed. The act of communication is therefore seen not as basically an exchange of linguistic messages, but rather as a socially meaningful episode in which the use of language plays a part only inasmuch as the social rules and functions are already previously agreed upon or are known by the participants in the verbal exchange. Thus in a given situations, it is the sequence of interpersonal events that sets the stage for a given massage. It has been demonstrated that if an individual breaks the rules of social act by saying something unexpected he can cause confusion or annoyance in the speech partner in the episode.

The characteristics of language are looked at more as indicators of a social relationship: As an early task of the ethnography of communication, O'Reilly (2009) developed a conceptual scheme for the analysis of speech events in their social setting. One essential set of concepts in these models always identifies the participants in the speech act: the speaker and the listener, writer and reader, or in more general terms, addresser and addressee, or performer and receiver. The next major concept is the message itself. A speech act is carried by a medium or channel which in physical terms establishes a relationship between participants. The speech event takes place in a setting or scene. The situation, as interpreted by the participants, may determine the topic, the verbal behavior, and expectations of the participants (Trudgill, 2001). A massage is further distinguished by its topic or content. In a given situation, participants select a particular variety of speech. The studies of the social roles, situations or functions that control the use of different speech acts have different purposes or functions.

What functional elements, then, can be identified?

The first category, common to most schemes, recognizes that a speech act serves to express the speaker's personal state of mind or attitude. Another function of a speech act is to bring the participants in relationship to each other. (Robinson, 1972 & cited by Homes (2008). Saville-Troike (1997) has succinctly summarized many speech functions in these terms;

> "... we tell people how things are, we try to get them to do things, we
> commit ourselves to doing things, we express our feelings and
> attitudes and we bring about changes through our utterances. Often,
> we do more than one of these at once in the same utterance".

The various conceptual schemes recognize that the different elements represented by these categories in a given culture are interrelated in a rule-governed way, so that one can say that there are norms of interaction and norms of interpretation, appropriate to participants in a particular situation (Apte, 1994).

Communicative Competence

The intuitive mastery that the native speaker possesses and for interpreting language appropriately in the process of interaction, and in relation to social context, has been called by Hofstede, (2001) "communicative competence". This is a conception that in recent years has been widely acknowledged in language pedagogy. Communicative competence no doubt implies linguistic competence but its main focus is the intuitive grasp of social and cultural rules and meanings that are carried by any utterance (Spencer-Oatey, 2008). It further suggests that language teaching identifies with social, interpersonal, and cultural constraints. It attributes to language teaching just as much importance as it does to the grammatical or phonological aspect. This leads to the notion that communicative proficiency of a second language learner must be conceived differently from that of an inherent native speaker. It suggests the existence of complex grammatical and sociocultural competences which are seemingly limited in a second language user. A third element is an additional skill, which the second language use needs. That is the second language learner need comport himself as someone with limited sociocultural and grammatical competence, for example, and to know how to be a "foreigner". This skill has been called by Saville-Troike (2004) as "Strategic competence". Naturally as the language learner's communicative capability increases in the first two elements, the third gradually becomes less and less significant.

The Sociology of Language

Sociology of Speech refers to the intellectual and emotional response of various members of the society to the languages and varieties in their social environment. It is part of the native speaker's communicative competence to be able to distinguish his first language from all other languages and to identify different language varieties. Different language and language varieties have been identified which are often connected with deep- entrenched and emotionally laden responses manifested through thoughts, feelings, stereotypes, that reflect prejudices about persons from other cultural, social, ethnic and religious groupings. Not infrequently, political entities are strongly associated with different languages or varieties of a language. Feelings about languages can run high, and if languages or varieties of a language become an issue of language policy or educational policy, they can lead to language conflicts, Trompenaars & Hampten-Turner (1997).

Culture:

Sapir's studies ranged over language, culture, personality and society, and his writings appeared in psychological, linguistic, and sociological journals. Sapir's name is associated with the theory of linguistic relativity which argues that language determines thought and world-view, and that, therefore, culture and thought are dependent upon language. Sapir always saw the relationship between language and culture as an important problem for anthropology, linguistics and psychology. For example, in an assessment of the value of linguistics for anthropology, he acknowledged language as a valuable guide to the scientific study of a given culture, because the network of cultural patterns of a civilization is indexed in the language.

Like Boas, Whorf was convinced that field-work demanded familiarity with the tribal language. At the same time, he believed that an understanding of the language was impossible without constantly relating it to the culture in which it was operative. A characteristic example of Machinowski's views on language and culture can be found in his view on meaning in primitive language. Using as an illustration an utterance of a native in the Trobriond islands

who was talking about a canoe trip and the superiority of his canoe, Malinowski points out that such an utterance in a primitive language is totally without meaning unless used in the cultural context and consideration of the settings in which it occurs. He eloquently argued for this point of view: "language is essentially rooted in the culture, tribal life and customs of the people, and cannot be explained without constant reference to the broader contexts of verbal utterance" (Malinowski, 1923)

Sociolinguistic thought:

Malinowski (1923) saw the uses of language as:

1. Language patterns and usage should be studied in the context of human activities and behavior.

2. Another form of language use is for narrative, in which case language may be used in as a mode of engendering social action, preferably over being a mere reflection of thought.

3. Malinowski viewed language in "its primitive function and original form as especially pragmatic in nature, as a mode of behavior, an indispensable element of concerted human action." Malinowski's view on the functions of language and the relationship between language uses, situational contexts, and culture remains relevant in today's sociolinguistic environment.

In order words, the context of situation brings it into relation to:

a) The relevant features of participants' persons, personalities:

    i. The verbal interaction of the participants;

    ii. The non-verbal interaction of the participants;

b) The relevant objects; and

c) The effect of the verbal action

Malinowski's ideas on the social function of language since the twenties, were re-echoed by Firth at least in the thirties, and have been rediscovered in the sociolinguistics of the sixties and seventies (Robins, 1971).

Language, Sapir (1970) noted is "a guide to social reality" and a "symbolic guide to culture". Here are some of the different understandings of culture,

  i. "Culture… is that complex whole which includes knowledge , belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society" Tyler (British Anthropologist) 1870; and cited by Avruch 1998.

  ii. "Culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behavior acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievement of human groups, including their embodiment in artifacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e. historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values. Cultural systems may, on the one hand, be considered as products of action, on

the other, as conditional elements of future action" Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1952 and cited by Adler (1997).

iii. Culture, which may be seen as an organized activity, learned or created by members of a community, may incorporate the experiences as well as images or encodements passed on from earlier generations, learned from a social group, or may originate from individuals themselves (Zegarac, 2007).

iv. Culture is the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another" (Hofstede, 1994).

v. The set of attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors shared by a group of people but different for each individual, communicated from one generation to the next" (Matsumoto, 1996).

vi. "Culture is a fuzzy set of basic assumptions and values, orientations to life, beliefs, policies, procedures and behavioral conventions that are shared by a group of people and that influence (but do not determine) each member's behavior and his/her interpretations of the "meaning" of other people behavior" (Spencer–Oatey, 2008).

A general line of argument maintains that culture determines child training; child training influences personality; and personality characteristics' consequently reflect on prevailing beliefs and values (Whiting and Child, 1953 & Jenks, 2005). All these studies influence modern conceptions of culture and "national character" and they are therefore important for an understanding of the treatment of culture in language pedagogy (Inkeles and Levinson, 1969) cited in Kotthoff & Spencer–Oatey, 2007).

 Radcliffe Brown (1952) believes that culture must meet 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. In his writing on culture, Shaules (2007) substantiates this assertion when Dasli (2011) asserts that the responses to these three sets of needs constitute its culture. Indeed, an anthropological study of culture is made out, at all these three levels. Then Corbett (2003) emphasizes that the study of society and culture are embodied in sociology. A study an anthrophony, for this reason, places relevance on a language curriculum which aims to relate language teaching to the socio-cultural context.

Effect of above language pedagogy on teachers: The language pedagogy surveys and analysis of language situations in speech community are significant in several ways:

i. They provide teachers with information on the language situation within which they teach and to which, their efforts contribute, by extending the language competence, in certain directions (Crystal, 2010).

ii. The target language, as the language of another speech community, can be viewed by teachers against the background of the language situations in the speech community. By adapting this sociolinguistic perspective, teachers can understand and interpret more effectively the language they teach, and the sociolinguistic situations in which they operate (Spolsky 1989; Holmes, 2008);

iii. Through concepts such as "communicative" or functional language teaching or 'communicative competence as the primary goal of language teaching", theorists have

made an effort to incorporate into language teaching insights that have been derived from speech act theory, insights from principles of discourse analysis as well as ethnography of communication (Huffman, 2013);

iv. By introducing perspectives of sociolinguistics generally, theorists since the last decade have attempted to come closer to the reality of language use (Bavelas, 2005)

v. Language use in social settings has to be specified precisely in the expectation that language education would thereby become more relevant to the putative needs of language learners (Fitch & Sanders, 2013);

vi. The definition and identification of these language needs have constituted a first and important stage in the procedures of making language teaching communicative (Richterich, 1980).

vii. Teachers often find language too complicated to be taught mainly by analytical methods, structural methods or by using sociolinguistics. Instead teachers recommend ways which systematize and supplement language "acquisition" processes, that is, natural language learning without formal tuition (Maynard, 2003);

viii. Language teaching through the study and practice of structural, functional and socio-cultural aspects approximates closely with the basic principles of language learning (Valverde, 2006);

ix. It should offer opportunities to live the language as a personal experience through direct language use in contact with the target language community (Seelye, 2009).

CONCLUSION

In nursing these implications of a communicative perspective for practical language pedagogy, we must remind ourselves that for the present, many of these ideas are largely pragmatic and are as yet relatively untried. They are only beginning to be implemented. They have not yet been the subject of systematic empirical research. They can be proposed somewhat cautiously as suggestions to promote language teaching in a sociolinguistic direction. As such they appear promising and invite experimentation as well as dispassionate enquiry. As linguists and sociolinguistics merge, one would expect the grammar and the guide to become more and more integrated. Together they would be resource of authentic and accessible material for curriculum development and for teaching the second language in its socio-cultural and sociolinguistic context.

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