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## **Review of Language, Culture, and Society** **Christine Jourdan and Kevin Tuite**

*(Language, culture, and society: Key topics in linguistic anthropology.*  
*Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006)*

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Language, Culture, and Society can be regarded as a handbook for sociolinguistics edited by Christine Jourdan and Kevin Tuite. The book has 11 chapters each written by different authors and takes a general look at the language issues in terms of studies in the social and cultural foundations of language. Furthermore, it brings information related to language based on society, culture and language discussing a range of major questions: How does language influence our perception of the world? How do new languages emerge?

The first chapter which is ‘*An issue about language*’ belongs to Charles Taylor. He begins by asking some questions asked for centuries to evoke some knowledge about the issue of language. To understand the nature of the language, he presents two theories which are enframing theory and constitutive theory. In this respect, concrete illustrations are given over the explanations of the theories above on the basis of the relationship between signs and words when they have meaning. Furthermore, the wordless world of the animals in front of a sign and the human beings’ ability to say something in front of an inarticulate action are compared without making any simulations between. In addition to that, the difference between responding appropriately to features of a specific situation and the features are illustrated while expressing that the animals’ response to features of one specific signal does not involve any definitions.

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In the second chapter, the author deals with linguistic relativities giving the information that characteristic of one's language can be effective in other aspects of life. In this respect, the linguistic diversities are maintained through two views such as universalistic view which is related to what is important about human beings and pluralistic essentialist view which seeks understanding of human experiences. To be more specific, universalism seeks law and pluralism seeks essence and they continue to be the evident choices in many disciplines (Leavitt, 1991). Therefore, it presents a great resource in grasping universals, particulars and relativity. Furthermore, the chapter supports the understanding and the interpretation of linguistic relativity with a timeline as '*Before Franz Boas*' (who is an ethnographer) and after that '*Boas and Boasian linguistics*'. In addition, other philosophers such as Herder, Humboldt and some others such as Sapir and Whorf are compared in terms of their opinions over culture and language. To be more specific, the Boasian linguistics' principles of culture are highlighted. One of the principles can be given as below: They reject any ranking of languages and cultures according to a fixed standard and believe that phonetic characteristics, the characteristics of the vocabulary and those of the grammatical concepts are necessary to compare in order to give each language its proper place. Based on the timeline, 'Sapir, Lee and Whorf' and their opinions over culture and language are presented and Einstein's ideas are added for the interpretation of linguistic relativity by mentioning about specific differences between his theory of relativity and the opinions above. Towards the end of the chapter, *Structuralism* and *Neo-romanticism* are included in the discussion of linguistic difference and the timeline is completed with the part of '*After Boas*'.

The third chapter emphasizes Benjamin Lee Whorf's thoughts over linguistic relativity with a view to the Boasian foundations of contemporary ethnolinguistics. In other words, he is brought to center stage and how his ideas are grounded in the general approach of Boasian anthropology are considered (Darnell, 1998). Whorf's life is explained like a tale from time to time mentioning about his relationship with other linguists such as Sapir. On the other hand, Whorf is criticized in that he never held an academic degree in anthropology or linguistics and his writings appeared in unconventional journals. In short, Whorf's studies and his underlying comparisons of language were criticized in that they are not scientific. However, the chapter is a fruitful resource for the ones seeking the position of Whorf in linguistics and anthropology. Towards the end of the chapter, Whorf and the cognitive science are handled.

In chapter four, *Cognitive Anthropology*, Penelope Brown makes a review of the approaches which affect the human cognition and cultural differences in linguistics and anthropology. Furthermore, he deals with how cognition is related to language and culture on broader settings. To be more specific, he searches for the answers to the issues of language and cultural systems and how knowledge is organized in the mind. Later on, the approach and aims of the cognitive anthropology are outlined along with its decrease. Afterwards, he deals with two different lines of research: one is on cultural models in the United States while the other one is on the new approaches to the question of linguistic relativity focused particularly on spatial language and cognition and centered in Europe. Finally, he evaluates those diverse approaches above and cites insight for the future of cognitive anthropology.

In chapter five, *Methodological Issues in Cross-language Color Naming*, Whorfian radical linguistic relativity is compared. In this respect, color naming hypothesis which is formed as a result of the studies upon the colors in different languages is explicitly presented in a defensive way and semantic arbitrariness is discussed. Defense of color naming hypothesis is pursued with John Lucy's three points of views. In terms of some aspects, Lucy's ideas are evaluated as a valuable contribution to semantic value. However, towards the end of the chapter, his hypothetical data is criticized in that it doesn't add up to any clear

picture. Finally, this chapter provides explicit outlines of different approaches along with the name coloring.

Chapter six which is *Pidgins and Creoles Genesis* begins with highlighting that the birth condition of a language is a cultural process as much as it is a cognitive one. Secondly, it is added that pidgins and creoles have proved to be of great interest to anthropologists since the period of European colonization when the sociocultural situations increased. Focusing on those social relationships in pidgins and creoles genesis, there are four sections. The first section presents a general introduction to the pidgins and creoles studies while the second section pays a special attention to the cultural settings such as socio-economy related to the pidgin genesis. In the third section, the genesis of pidgins and creoles are analyzed in terms of theory of power. Furthermore, it is stated that it would be not reasonable to assume all of the languages have had the same type of origin. Finally, the fourth section sheds light on the position of cognition in the genesis of pidgins and creoles. Last but not least, the chapter undoubtedly contributes to the further understanding of the conditions connected with pidgins and creoles genesis.

In chapter seven, *Monica Heller* starts by questioning the position of bilingualism as an area of enquiry for ethnolinguistics. Afterwards, she continues with a consideration of that question and for the rest of the chapter, explores some specific questions which flowed from an understanding that languages are whole and they are made up of bounded objects such as ethnic groups, nations or states. To be more specific, one set of questions whether or not bilingualism challenges linguistic theories while another examines the relationship between bilingualism and the construction of categories like ethnicity and nation on ethnolinguistic basis. In this respect, the role of language in the construction of categories arranging social organization is illustrated. Furthermore, the term bilingualism is used in a sense for covering multilingualism. As for the rest of the chapter, major areas of each line of enquiry are dealt with and critical approaches to the study of bilingualism are visited towards the end. Needless to say, these approaches provide a means for reorienting studies of language, community and identity in brief the term bilingualism.

Chapter eight, *The Impact of Language Socialization on Grammatical Development* discusses language socialization in which children are socialized with language and language usage in a community. Later, the discussion focuses directly on the role of language socialization in the acquisition of grammatical competence. With a language socialization perspective, it is reflected over grammatical development that when, how and why young children use and understand grammatical forms. In this approach, whether the frequency or infrequency of grammatical forms used around children are effective in their handling of grammatical structures. Furthermore, the difference between a language socialization approach and functionalist approaches to grammatical development is illustrated. In addition, the impact of culture on the acquisition of one particular language is allocated and the steps to a cultural ecology of grammatical development are presented. Needless to say, the chapter is a valuable resource for the ones desired to gain knowledge about grammatical development of children based on factors such as age, status, gender and other related factors.

In Chapter nine, *Intimate Grammars*, a concrete example over language and gender is introduced. A review of contemporary studies of language and gender follows and many studies are compared with regard to their targets. In addition, gendered subjects are examined. In this respect, it is summarized that all languages seem to semantically encode gender and the difference is expressed. In order to make a commonsense consensus, paradigms of sociolinguistics, linguistic anthropology and pragmatics are employed to clarify knowledge

based on the structure and function of language. Furthermore, concrete examples come out with the subject pronouns 'he and she' to show that gender functions not only pragmatically and semantically but also meta-pragmatically. Finally, under the heading of 'the subject of language', language is dealt with not the very meaning of it but is handled with referring to the human subject who is the product of language.

Chapter ten, *Maximizing Ethnopoetics*, starts by expressing writing poems and doing translations which bring distant and different worlds to the analysis of poetic matter with regard to linguistics and anthropology and especially ethnography. Secondly, several general questions including theory in ethnopoetics and theory in other fields are introduced. Other than that, ethnopoetics is defined and discussed in terms of synthesis and analysis. These synthesis and analysis are reinforced with samples from some parts of the world such as Anglophone and Russian worlds. During that process, the main concern is focused on the contradiction between 'maximizing generality, universality of meaning and audience' and 'maximizing embeddedness in the local and concrete, historically and culturally unique premises.'

In chapter eleven, *Interpreting Language Variation and Change*, Kevin Tuite, at the beginning, focuses on etymology, the study of word origins, in terms of history and historiography by giving a brief summary over it. Later on, specific examples related to the word origins such as water are rendered. In addition, language variation is dealt with respect to the Neo-grammarians and the doctrine of the 'exceptionless sound law'. Furthermore, the research studies on variation and change since Saussure are narrated. In this respect, Neo-grammarians research and variationist research are revealed referring to Labov and Chomsky on and off. Needless to say, the chapter is a beneficial source for the interpretation of language variation and change.

Taking everything into account, *Language, Culture and Society* is an essential work and beneficial for the ones interested in anthropological issues related to the language. Furthermore, although the book covers chapters each written by different authors, it can be clearly told that it has sense of coherence and cohesion. Last but not least, the book can function as a guide in the fields of linguistics and anthropology.

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