

Culture, Language and Literature the Inseparable Entities

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Abstract:

Culture, language and literature are the entities that function together in a common setting for the furtherance of human values and traditions. These are the instruments which function as mirror to the society in which they exist. They are voice to human communication and the reflection of their productivity, capability, inner thoughts, and congenital talents. They together provide a true basis to a sound society. This paper is meant to explore the inter relationship between culture, language and literature and the nature of relationship between them. In the light of the earlier theories and the findings of this paper show that the three entities are integral and inseparable. All languages and every literature in the world are deeply influenced by the culture in which they have their existence. Culture, language and literature are the most common things in every civilization. They are indispensable for the personality development of the civilised people. Every human being in this planet has some culture, some language and literature of which he is proud of and which explain his life style in a nut shell. Culture, language and literature cannot exist without each other: Culture is the base; language is the medium to culture and literature; while, literature is the source that reflects culture in its true spirit.

Key Words: Correlation, Culture, Language, Literature

Introduction:

The main purpose of this paper is to figure out the inseparability between culture, language and literature in every society. Moreover, this paper is also aimed at investigating the nature of relationship between the three entities. To explore the interrelationship between them, the three entities will be discussed respectively and then juxtaposed to substantiate the findings of the study.

Culture:

According to T.S Eliot (1961) culture is a capital and source for developing all cultures and knowledge so as to overcome all human sharing problems, for helping economical stabilization and political protection. Spencer (1986) considers culture the environment of super organic and explains the separation of culture from

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physical and natural elements. He highlights that the super organic element is only for man, while; the rest of the two elements are the same for man and animal. Edward Sapir (1956) defines culture as a system of behaviours and manners that rely on unconsciousness. Culture is learned and shared within social groups and is conveyed by non genetic ways (The American Heritage, Science Dictionary 2005). Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952) deem civilization and culture as one body and they think that the two terms have been used together. For them, they both depict different features of the same subject. An anthropologist named Taylor (1974) says that culture comprises of expertise, beliefs, arts, ethics, codes, customs and manners that a person, being a member of a society, receives from his own society. Goodenough (1996) says that culture is the only difference between human beings and animals, Animals also live in alliance but culture is a specific kind. There are a lot of uniform features between human and an animal life such as responsibility towards children and so on, but culture is for men only. Nowadays, the word culture is commonly used to mean some trend such as food culture, tourism culture, urban culture, rural culture, British culture, education culture and so on. The word culture is now linked with all disciplines of knowledge. Culture means ideas, manners, convictions, norms, knowledge, which are congenital and which are received from the earlier generations. Culture means the style of living and the behaviours of a specific group of people who have common customs which they receive and impart to the later generations.

It is not our choice to see light of the day in an environment of our desire and choice. Every human being becomes a part of some smaller or larger group at birth. Thus, we are bound to be the integral part of some culture. Such a group gives us a unique identity in terms of manners, ideas, skills, standard and style of living, creativity and costumes. Culture also differentiates civilised from the uncivilised. We do not bring culture with us when we are born; rather we are bound to be part of some culture when we are born. Our culture is our first ever school which provides us with an environment in which we flourish to be civilised and learned. We must not forget that the nature of a culture in which we are born has great significance in our lives. If we get a culture at birth which is rich in all aspects, we are lucky enough to receive many productive elements without effort. There are cultures which have , thanks to the efforts of the earlier generations, environment of knowledge, literature, ideas, traditions, creativity. People who get such a culture at birth make good in life because they receive the seeds of a civilized life at an early age. On the other hand, there are also cultures which are deficient in knowledge and learning. It is an unfortunate situation to be part of such a culture at birth.

Literature and language are the most prominent tools of a culture. Language is the medium, while; literature depicts a culture in its purest and realistic form. Language is the element that gives a voice to both culture and literature.

Language:

Crystal (1971, 1992) explains language as “the systematic, conventional use of sounds, signs or written symbols in a human society for communication and self expression”. Saussure (1956, 1972, 1974,1983) introduces language as the system of differences. “If words stood for pre-existing concepts, they would all have exact equivalents in meaning from one language to the next; but this is not true” (Saussure, 1974). According to Saussure (1974), language is a system of sounds. For him, a sign has a signifier in the form of the sound-image or the written shape and a signified (a concept), in a way that, they both are inseparable with each other. According to him, the sound-image cannot be separated from the concept. He compares language and thought to a sheet of paper: thought is the front part of the paper and sound the back part.

Literature:

The word literature comes from the Latin *Litaritura/litteratura* which stands for “writing formed with letters”. There are tens of thousands of definitions for literature. Therefore, the definition of literature has always been a difficult question. In a strict sense, literature stands for works of literary merit only but generally and broadly speaking, literature includes any written work. Literature is both fiction and non-fiction. Literature can be poetry and prose; it also includes novel, short story and drama. According to Merriam-Webster Dictionary, literature means written works (such as poems plays and novels) that are considered to be very good and to have lasting importance. It includes books, articles, etc., about a particular subject. The definition also includes into literature the printed materials (such as booklets, leaflets, and brochures) that provide information about something.

In antiquity and in the Renaissance, literature or letters were understood to include all writing of quality with any pretense permanence (Wellek 1978). According to McFadden (1978), literature is a canon which consists of those works in language by which a community defines itself through the course of its history. It includes works primarily artistic and also those whose aesthetic qualities are only secondary. The self-defining activity of the community is conducted in the light of the works, as its members have come to read them. Thus, in antiquity, the focus to define literature was on some set criteria that were mandatory to be met so as to come at par with the standard. Today, the term literature is used in a broader sense than it was done in the antiquity.

Culture, language and literature

The American anthropological linguists Benjamin Lee Whorf (1897-1941) and his teacher Edward Sapir (1884-1939) developed a hypothesis which explains that a language determines the thought and perception of its speakers. In a way that, no language can exist except it is in the context of culture and reciprocally, the culture which does not have at its centre the structure of a standard and ordinary language

cannot survive (Sapir, 1921). This hypothesis is a theory of the kinship between language and thought developed by the two linguists. This is the theory of the linguistic relativity. The focus of this hypothesis is that every human being views the world by his own native language.

Language and literature are part and parcel; therefore it is important to ascertain their relationship before trying to juxtapose them with culture. Language is the medium without which literature has no existence. Literature finds its expression in language in which it is produced. Literature functions as a garment to a language. Language gives voice to literature but despite it a language without rich literature fails to achieve prominence. All famous and developed languages in the world have their prominence and glory thanks to rich and prolific literature. Literature in its true nature enjoys more freedom than language. Language is bound to have some limitations of the environment of its existence. Literature on the other hand, has universality and comprehensiveness that allows it at times to ignore limitations and barriers of the environment in which it is produced. Literature is an art that flies on the wings of soul. Literature and language both are deeply influenced by the culture to which they belong.

Language and literature reflect the culture of their existence. But literature is more universal and comprehensive and independent in most cases than language in relation to culture and other like factors in an environment. It is not that only language and literature depend on culture, culture also depends on them for its projection and development. Language and literature are the most prominent features of a culture. Without them, a culture cannot be rich and prominent. They portray different colours of culture and also transmit these colours to the later generations.

Discussion:

Language and literature have close correlation with some culture in a common environment. Language is a medium for both literature and culture. It is not easy to get comprehensive understanding of the languages except when they are taken in terms of the cultures in which they are deeply rooted. Culture, language and literature are always studied together. English, for instance, is spoken by most of the people around the world no matter whether they are native speakers or they speak it as their second language. British Empire in the history spread to out skirts of every continent and this made English lingua franca of the World. English language has glimpses of many cultures, ethnicities and religions. English language has vocabulary imposed on it by the speakers of the land where it is either used as native language or second language.

Culture in the present world has more than one meaning. Culture stands for a trend also in a broader sense; it stands for civilization in its specific sense; it also specifically, stands for beliefs, skills, dress, art (music, literature etc.), manners, standard and style of living and language of people who have lived through many generations in a common setting. These elements have been passed through ages

generation to generation. The words 'culture' and 'cultured' are commonly taken as synonyms for civilization and civilized respectively. This concept reminds us of the antiquity where being cultured and civilized meant having great skills in art, literature, modes and institutions. This concept prevailed throughout the reawakening epoch of the Renaissance and the Augustan Era of eighteenth century.

The word culture may have several interpretations. Culture also means knowledge gained in a social life: the knowledge that some one gains thanks to being member of a specific society. With regard to most of the cultures, we must keep in view different levels of reality, for instance that the truth in a religious knowledge is analysed at different levels from that of factual statement. In this Science is also a part of culture. Moreover, with regard to language and culture, common sense knowledge has more significance than scientific knowledge.

There are a number of features in human life which are the outcome of transmission. There is undoubtedly, a congenital capability in humans to acquire some language. But, this is not true for the most part when it comes to the kind of language that we are bound to learn in a specific culture. But, we must not forget that it is because of our culture that we receive the kind of language that we must in our particular environment. We get a particular language thanks to a specific society in which we exist. By virtue of genes, we have this special ability to acquire language; still we cannot be able to learn the language of our choice unless we get an environment required for it. We have to learn a language that we encounter within a particular society. This proves the strongest interrelationship of language and culture. This also substantiates the argument that a human being requires both biological faculty and a culture so as to learn a particular language. Linguistic capability is never out of the range in which the word culture is rendered for definition.

The influence of language on thought is the focus of the hypothesis presented by Sapir and Whorf. It may be borne in mind that memory and thoughts are greatly influenced by well-chosen words and expressions. People always enjoy the things for which they have suitable words and expressions available in their language. The interrelationship of culture, language and literature is dealt with at general and with a plea that people who share same language should have a shared culture and literature. This may not be true in case of many languages and cultures. The perception widely exists throughout the world.

The correlation of culture, language and literature is commonly accepted throughout the world. There are languages in the world and most of them have their respective literatures. In the same way these languages are the part of some respective cultures. Language is the key to a culture and to a literature. Even, a language is always interpreted and deemed important only in terms of a culture and a literature to which it belongs. This is true in case of all the languages, literatures and cultures of the world. We have many regional languages over here in Pakistan and we have languages such as Pashto, Balochi, Brahvi, Urdu, Sindhi and the so on. All

these languages are associated with some specific cultures and they reflect the colours of their respective cultures. These languages are nothing without their cultures and literatures and vice versa. Every literature seems to take culture as its base so as to give the true representation of the society in which it has to get some receptivity. Thus culture, language and literature are so inseparable that the three entities without each other seem to be the missing of one integral part. Languages and literatures get response when they represent the ethos of some particular cultures; in the same way, a culture achieves a universal status only when the language and literature, associated with it, succeed to spread and promote it in the real sense.

Conclusion:

In the light of the above arguments and discussions, it may be concluded without any fear of contradiction that the three entities, culture, language and literature are closely related with each other. There is strong interrelationship between culture, language and literature and there is even stronger correlation between every language and literature with their particular culture. These are the entities that if separated, leave each respective entity without any significance. Of these three entities, culture is the body; while language and literature are the parts for the body which are integral to the existence of the culture. Language is the mirror to reflect different ethos of a particular culture. Culture is the tree and language is the source that rears its existence. Literature on the other hand is the tool that with the help of some strong language, attempts to illustrate culture its true sense. Literature is something that remains alive through thousands of ages. Literature is immortal and bestows its eternity upon culture and language. Literature is the transmission channel for culture and language through countless ages. Literature makes it possible for generations that come centuries later to gain knowledge of the culture and language of the generations years and years back. Literature chooses the best words and expressions from language and portrays culture in a way that makes a lasting impression. Language may go through different stages and get changes with the time, but literature on the other hand depicts language in its original shape from every age. Thus, it may be said that none of the three entities have a proper existence without the other two. The three entities are undoubtedly, inseparable and together only make a proper representation of a sound society.

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