

The relationship between language and culture in studying and teaching foreign languages and international studies under a systematic perspective

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Abstract: *The paper presents a literature review of the relationship between language and culture - the core issue in teaching and learning foreign languages, linguistics and international studies. On that basis, it provides a relevant theoretical framework including previous research results.*

Keywords: Cultural Linguistics, Linguo-culturology, Foreign Language Science, International Studies

I. Sciences that study the relationship between language and culture

1. The core that connects the science of foreign languages and international studies/international relation studies is the *relationship between language and culture*, which is present in the two intra- and inter-ethnic dimensions. The first work by W. von Humboldt entitled *On the Diversity of Human Language Construction and its Influences on Mental Development of Human Species* published in 1836 (Humboldt, 1988) is a result of studying the relationship between language and culture in an inter-ethnic dimension as a diplomat with his practical experiences combining with an interdisciplinary approach of philosophy - linguistics.

There are similarities between culture and language: Both are forms of perception that reflect people's worldview. Language is seen

as a special component of culture; culture and language co-exist in coordination and interaction to develop and function as a unique system. Culture and language have both collective and individual forms of existence; they are historical, conventional, and normative to perform the functions of education and social stability; at the same time, they all change to a certain extent to ensure the functions of social adjustment and development. Culture and language are different in terms of complementary distribution: In conversations, culture is the in-depth content while language is the form at the surface. While language, by nature, is characterized as being homogeneous to function as means of communication, culture attaches importance to identity and specificity to ensure the conciseness of information conveyed in conversations to expose as identification of people.

2. Interdisciplinary characteristics of culture as well as of the relationship between language and culture as a research subject has developed a series of interdisciplinary studies between linguistics and *culturology*, *ethnology*, *anthropology*, *psychology*, *philosophy*, *sociology*, and *communication studies*, etc. These have such advantages as: (1) increasing the multidimensionality and comprehensiveness of research results; (2) improving the effectiveness of training foreign languages and international relations; (3) enhancing affability and familiarity to life and efficiencies of language and linguistics. However, the variety of inter-disciplines (*ethnolinguistics*, *psycholinguistics*, *cultural linguistics*, *sociolinguistics*, *linguistic anthropology*, *linguistic culturology*, *philosophy of language*, *linguistic and country studies*, *cross-cultural communication*, etc.) leads to their intersection, overlapping, and confusion.

However, several disciplines, on one hand, are identified as follows: *ethnolinguistics* is understood as *cultural linguistics*. It's common to come across expressions like: "ethnolinguistics or cultural linguistics"¹; "ethnolinguistics is sometimes known as cultural linguistics"². The field of cultural linguistics in the West studies the issues which are termed in Russia as linguoculturology (лингвокультурология). In Russia, linguoculturology is sometimes

identically with the linguistic and country studies (лингвострановедение). On the other hand, a discipline can be recognized as belonging to various fields, i.e., *ethnolinguistics* is considered as a sub-discipline of linguistic anthropology³ or *sociolinguistics*⁴. Similarly, *psycholinguistics* is viewed as either a sub-discipline of *psychology*⁵ or *linguistics*⁶ or of *cognitive science*⁷.

3. Besides, the second important limitation is that most of the research on cultural linguistics has been carried out by linguists (who mainly know their native cultural knowledge or acquire it through exploring the foreign language teaching/learning), which has resulted in the fact that *majority of scholars are confident and satisfied with their knowledge of culture and culturology*. However, due to the lack of basic and comprehensive knowledge about culture and cultural typology, their research results of language and culture comparisons are far from reaching the required generalization.

³ The term "linguistic anthropology > Ethnolinguistics" put in quotation marks appeared with 1,030 occurrences in Google.com, accessed on March 19, 2021.

⁴ The term "Sociolinguistics > Ethnolinguistics" put in quotation marks appeared with 1,760 occurrences in Google.com, accessed on March 19, 2021.

⁵ The term "Psycholinguistics is the branch of psychology" put in quotation marks appeared with 4,090 occurrences in Google.com, accessed on March 19, 2021.

⁶ The term "Psycholinguistics is a branch of linguistics" put in quotation marks appeared with 10,700 occurrences in Google.com, accessed on March 19, 2021.

⁷ The term "Psycholinguistics is part of the field of cognitive science" put in quotation marks appeared with 6,890 occurrences in Google.com, accessed on March 19, 2021.

¹ The term "ethnolinguistics, or cultural linguistics" put in quotation marks appeared with 216 occurrences in Google.com, accessed on March 19, 2021.

² The term "ethnolinguistics, sometimes called cultural linguistics" put in quotation marks appeared with 1,640 occurrences in Google.com, accessed on March 19, 2021.

To study and teach foreign languages and international studies more effectively, it is necessary to settle and examine the relationship between language and culture from a systematic perspective.

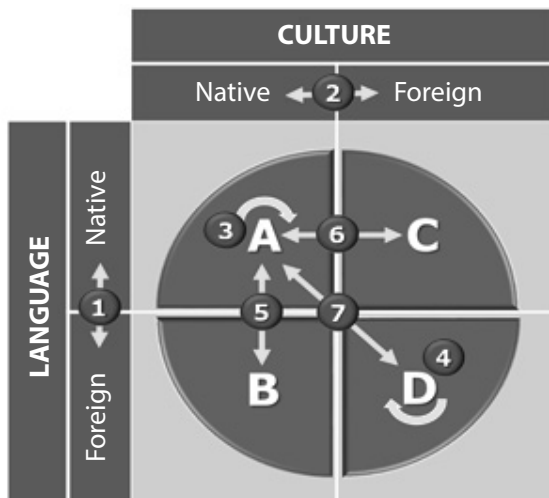
II. Theoretical framework

1. Those who are engaged in doing research in and teaching foreign languages and international studies must always work simultaneously with two pairs of opposite relationships, namely “native language versus foreign language” and “native culture versus foreign culture”. These are combined to form the four situations represented in Table 1.

Table 1: Four situations of combining language with culture

		CULTURE	
		Native	Foreign
LANGUAGE	Native	(A) Native language + Native culture	(C) Native language + Foreign culture
	Foreign	(B) Foreign language + Native culture	(D) Foreign language + Foreign culture

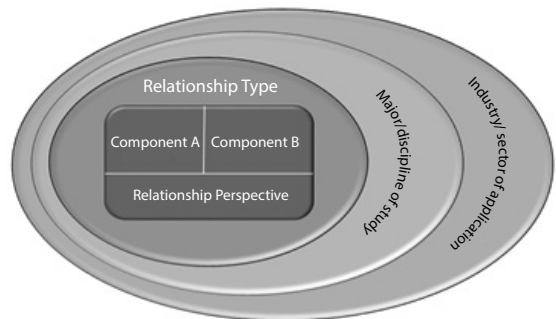
Figure 1: Models of inter-language, inter-cultural, and inter-ethnic relations



The four situations that combine the two pairs of language and culture form the seven types of inter-language, inter-cultural, and inter-ethnic relations presented in the model in Figure 1.

2. Each of these relations is composed of *four components viewed from the inside* (two relational components A and B; Relationship Perspective; Relationship Type) and *two components viewed from the outside* (Major/discipline that studies this subject; and Industry/sector in which research results are applied). Major/discipline of study and Industry/sector of application may overlap but not necessarily: Industry/sector of application is usually broader. Structures of inter-language, inter-cultural, and inter-ethnic relations are represented in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Structural model of inter-language, inter-cultural, and inter-ethnic relations



Based on this structural model, the seven types of inter-language, inter-cultural, and inter-ethnic relations mentioned in Figure 1 can be interpreted as follows:

[1] *The relationship between native and foreign languages (and between foreign languages), known as an inter-linguistic relation which is partly the subject of Comparative linguistics. Its research results are applied in linguistics as well as in studying/ teaching foreign or second languages.*

[2] *The relationship between native and foreign cultures (and between foreign cultures)*, known as an inter-cultural relation which is partly the subject of Comparative cultural studies. Its research results are applied in culturology/ cultural studies.

[3] *The relationship between native language and culture*, known as an inter-ethnic language-culture relation viewed from inside which is partly the subject of Cultural linguistics. Its research results are applied both in linguistics and in studying and teaching foreign or second languages.

[4] *The relationship between foreign language and culture*, known as an inter-ethnic language-culture relation viewed from outside which is partly the subject of Cultural linguistics. Its research results are applied in studying and teaching foreign or second languages.

[5] *The relationship between native culture expressed in native language [A] and that expressed in foreign or second language [B]*, in which native culture is a constant, and languages are variables. Language-language relations (mother tongue - foreign language; first language-second language) viewed from the native culture, which is partly the subject of Cultural linguistics. Its research results are applied in studying and teaching foreign or second languages.

[6] *The relationship between native culture expressed in native language [A] and foreign culture expressed in native language [C] (between foreign cultures expressed in its native languages)*, in which the native language is a constant and cultures are variables. That is the culture-culture relationship viewed from the native language perspective; being a part of the subject of Linguo-culturology

and International studies/International relations. Its research results are applied in researching/teaching foreign or second languages and International Studies/International relations.

[7] *The combined relationship between the native culture expressed in native languages [A] and foreign cultures expressed in foreign languages [D], and between pairs of foreign language-culture*. These are inter-linguistic, inter-cultural, and inter-ethnic relations; being a part of the subject of *Science of communication*, which is the most interdisciplinary and applicable one. Its research results are applied in all three disciplines of *Linguistics*, *Cultural studies*, and *International Studies/International relations*.

Except for the above seven types of relationships, the remaining pairs of relationship are very loose, almost no significance; therefore it is meaningless to conduct research. They are: [C] - [D] relationship between foreign cultures expressed in native languages and foreign cultures expressed in foreign languages; [B] - [D] relationship between native cultures expressed in foreign or second languages and foreign cultures expressed in foreign languages; and [B] - [C] relationship between native cultures expressed in foreign or second languages and foreign cultures expressed in native languages.

III. On the relationship between language and culture in the disciplines of “Cultural linguistics”, “Linguo-culturology” and “Linguistic country studies”

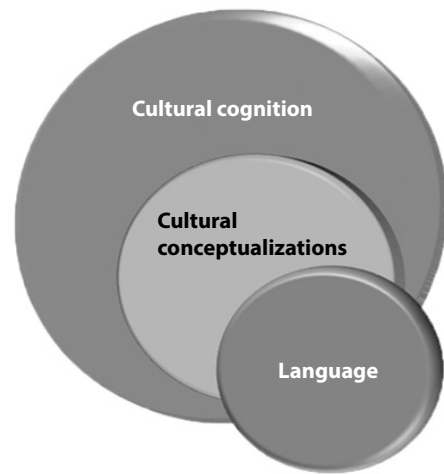
1. The two terms “*Cultural linguistics*” and “*Linguo-culturology*” are not synonym as many scholars think. Terminologically, synonymous terms can not exist. The subjects and disciplines involved in the

interdisciplinary relationship in these two terms have different “main-subordinate” orders, creating different concepts.

In “Cultural linguistics”, language is the main, culture is the subordinate; language and linguistics are the goals of research. Logically, in terms of terminological structures, “cultural linguistics” should be a discipline of linguistics with its tasks of *seeking for language in culture*; studying the relationship between language and culture is to determine the *role of language in governing the activities of culture*; explore the *influences and impacts of language on culture* in organizing cultural cognitive activities of people. Of the seven types of relationships identified in Figure 1, there are two that belong to Cultural linguistics, that is, relationships [3] and [4].

Farzad Sharifian from Monash University (in Melbourne, Australia), a pioneer scholar in the field of cultural linguistics today, believes that within the theoretical framework of cultural linguistics, *language* is the primitive element that governs the formation of *cultural conceptualizations*, which in turn govern *cultural recognition* (see Figure 3). “Cultural conceptualizations” is a term coined by F. Sharifian (2017: 2-3) to cover three concepts: “cultural schema”, “cultural category” and “cultural metaphor”. The role of language in conceptualizing culture as explained by F. Sharifian (2017: 5) is as follows: Language plays a dual role concerning cultural conceptualizations. Linguistic interactions, on one hand, are keys in the development of cultural conceptualizations, as they provide space for speakers to build and co-build meanings about their experiences. On the other hand, several aspects of linguistic structures and

Figure 3: Theoretical framework of cultural linguistics



Source: Sharifian, 2017: 3.

usages must rely on and reflect cultural conceptualizations.

2. Meanwhile, from the last decade of the 20th century, in post-Soviet Russia, a major has been developed strongly called лингвокультурология in Russian and translated into English as *Linguoculturology* and it is highly agreed by Russian scholars to be a part of linguistics.

V.V. Vorobjev argues “linguoculturology” as an independent subdiscipline of linguistics... was formed in the 1970s”; “linguoculturology is a subdiscipline of linguistics that studies the reflections of national culture in the language (Воробьев, 2000: 84). In the monograph “Linguoculturology”, V.V. Vorobjev emphasizes: “Linguoculturology is in line with a common trend of modern linguistics... Our concept of linguoculturology is based on universal premises in linguistics” (Воробьев, 2006: 6). A.B. Belozeroва and N.M. Loktionova explicitly stated in the title of their paper: “*Linguoculturology as a subdiscipline of linguistics*” (Белозерова, Локтионова, 2013).

The fact that linguoculturology is considered a subdiscipline of linguistics by Russian scholars makes it identical with Western-style “cultural linguistics”. B. Peeters from the Australian National University suggests that most Western researchers would not hesitate to assume that the term “linguoculturology” in Russian is just a *terminological variation*, no more than a different way of referring to what, in Western Europe, the Americas, and Australia/ New Zealand, is called “cultural linguistics”. B. Peeters (2019: 6-7) ascribes the use of the same terms to refer to these different objects as “*terminological indifference*” of a kind that is common in most areas of scholarly activity.

The view that linguoculturology has two ways of translation, either as a subdiscipline of *culturology* or one of *linguistics* (Буряк, 2015: 263) is uncommon. Comparing “linguoculturology” in post-Soviet Russian with “cultural linguistics” in the West, K. Mizin and J. Korostenski (2019: 13) find that despite their simultaneous emergence, they had more differences than similarities, and come to the conclusion that they *should be treated as two different fields of science* regardless of the obvious similarities in terms. Agreeing on differences, B. Peeters (2019: 9) suggests that they need to acknowledge each other, learn from and mutually enrich each other.

3. We believe that the problem is not whether to move towards isolated autonomy or unified cooperation between *cultural linguistics* with *linguoculturology*, but rather to demarcate the boundary between these two disciplines based on principles of “main - subordinate” order *among the sciences engaged in interdisciplinary relations*.

The concept “Linguoculturology” is defined according to this principle that culture must be the main, language is the subordinate; culture and culturology must be the goal of study. Linguoculturology must be a *subdiscipline of culturology* whose task is to discover cultural aspects in language; studying relationship between language and culture to recognize *roles of culture in governing language in operations*; explore the influences and impacts of culture on language in respects of language organization and communication activities. Of the seven relationships as specified in Figure 1, two are the subjects of linguoculturology, namely *relationships [5] and [6]*.

4. In Soviet Russia, before the emergence of “linguoculturology”, two scholars E.M. Vereshagin and V.G. Kostomarov founded “Linguistic country studies” (лингвострановедение) in the 1970s, which is a discipline of teaching Russia to foreigners. Accordingly, learners can activate the accumulative function of language and be culturally acculturated in terms of language teaching... to ensure the communicative nature of learning and to fulfill humanistic and education tasks overall (Верещагин, Костомаров, 1990: 37).

In other words, Linguistic country studies is a discipline of language teaching through offering knowledge about the country and culture of the language being taught.

The birth of linguo-culturology (лингвокультурология) in the last decade of the 20th century changed the initial ideas that identified it with “Linguistic country studies” into more and more opinions that demanded a distinction between the two concepts. E.I. Zinovjeva believed that “it would be logical to

admit Linguistic country studies is a linguistic methodological discipline that studies linguistic units at different levels; meanwhile, *linguoculturology* is a theoretical discipline, a part of semantics, based on the concepts of cognitive linguistics, which studies various knowledge structures” (Зиновьева, 2000: 14). Linguoculturology, to N.F. Alefirenko, “similar to Linguistic country studies in that it studies the relationship between language and culture, but different from Linguistic country studies in that it focuses on the linguistic level” (Алефиренко, 2016: 31). Regardless of the emergence of “linguoculturology”, the concept “Linguistic country studies” itself has had two problems since its inception. *First*, if “country studies” is the main (and “language” is the subordinate), it belongs to regional studies which does not relate to methodology of language teaching; therefore, it would be reluctant to incorporate the task of language teaching. *Second*, the concepts of “country/region” and “culture” are not identical: “country” encompasses natural characteristics, and “culture” contains only what is human; “country” values the modern, meanwhile “culture” values the past. Therefore, assigning “Linguistic country studies” to tasks related to language, culture, and language teaching only brings immediate benefits at the micro level but confuses at the macro level. Russian linguists have created a discipline with a name full of mistakes!

5. Excluding apparent cultural linguistic studies (see: Lado, 1957), following the principle of “main - subordinate” order among sciences participating in established interdisciplinary relationships, the research results of both the Western

“cultural linguistics” and Russian “linguoculturology” can be considered as belonging to *Cultural linguistics*:

- Researches by Polish linguist Anna Wierzbicka explore the cultural identities of people in the semantic fields of emotions, moral notions, names and titles, kinship semantics in terms of particular keywords (such as “friendship”, “freedom”, “homeland”, etc.) and systematically compare them in a variety of languages such as Latin, English, Russian, Polish, German, and Japanese (Wierzbicka, 1992; 1997).

- Researches by a Russian linguist A. Zaliznjak and et al., using keyword method, have established cultural *constants and variables* (культурные константы и переменные) in Russian in the domains of space and time, mind and body, emotions and relations, intentions and actions, moral notions, etc. (Зализняк и др., 2012). In *Language and Human World*, N.D. Arutjunova searched for Russian cultural characteristics by analytical method from texts to meanings, from normative to unusual phenomena, from the logical structure of discourse to its stylistic features (Арутюнова, 1999).

- While exploring cultural aspects expressed within language, some other issues are also interested such as *personality language* (языковая личность, see: Woodsmall & Woodsmall, 2009; Караулов, 2010); *gender and sex characteristics observed from a linguistic perspective* (See: Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2003; Коваль, 2007).

In Vietnam, this trend is followed by some scholars such as Nguyen Tai Can (2003: 11-47) who had interesting findings on the Vietnamese name of the dragon, the original name of the bronze drum, and the origin of the name “chằn” (tiger)... By tracing the

origin of the pair of words “yin-yang” in Sino Chinese together with other pieces of evidence, Tran Ngoc Them has identified the Southeast Asian origin of the yin-yang philosophy (Tran Ngoc Them, 2013; Tran Ngoc Them, 2014: 114-127).

The common point of all the above-mentioned researches is to indicate the role of language in organizing people’s cultural cognitive activities, which are jobs belonging to two types of relationship models [3] and [4] in Figure 1.

6. As a work of *linguo-culturology* to explore cultural aspects in language, to determine the *role of culture in governing performances of language*; to study the influences and impacts of culture in organizing language, it is acceptable to study “*linguistic picture of the world*” (языковая картина мира). This trend of research originated from Russia; the corresponding terms in English such as “Linguistic World Picture”/“Linguistic Picture of the World” were coined by Russian scholars (For details, see: Alefirenko & Stebunova, 2015; Иванова и др., 2017).

The “linguistic picture of the world” reflects *cultural knowledge about the world in the form of language*, which is a product of national identity and spirit, and speculates people’s perception, which is spontaneously formed along with the national history, characterized by the subjectivity, sentimentality, and innocence utilizing language (Корнилов, 2003; Пименова, 2014). This picture is a combination of the *innocent* image of the world (наивная картина мира) and folk and legendary ones of the world. During its life, it can be transformed under the influence of religious, scientific, and cognitive pictures of the world.

The linguistic picture of the world is established not only within the framework of the lexical (Апресян ред., 2006) but also in the grammatical systems and word formation (Вендина, 1998), which together with the model of the world and particular cultural categories are present in all countries such as China (Аошун, 2004), Vietnam (Ly Toan Thang, 2005; Nguyen Duc Ton, 2002),...

Works of linguo-culturology are also interdisciplinary studies in the science of communication.

IV. On the relationship between language and culture in the science of communication and international studies

1. Communication is the most interdisciplinary and applicable in all three fields of *Linguistics* (intra-ethnic linguistics and the science of foreign languages), *Culturology*, and *International Studies/International relations*. The relationship between language and culture in the science of foreign languages is obvious but has not been paid enough attention in culturology and international studies. International relations, in essence, is a communication activity, in which language is the form and culture is the content. Most of the “communication and/or diplomatic incidents” caused by inadequacies in cultural content rather than from verbal form. In the model in Figure 1, inter-language, inter-cultural, and inter-ethnic relations (relation [7]) are the subject of the science of communication.

In international relations, the role of culture is not only reflected in the fact that diplomatic activities are greatly influenced by culture and national culture (comparing with a concept of “cultural diplomacy”), but also that culture and its components

directly join in political and diplomatic activities is increasingly undeniable. Several recent books on the subject attest to this, namely *Culture and International Relations* (Reeves, 2004); *Bringing Religions in International Relations* (Fox, Sandler, 2004); *Moral Limit and Possibility in World Politics* (Price, 2008); *Culture and Order in World Politics* (Phillips, Reus-Smit, 2020), etc.

There are traditional problems related to interaction between culture and language in intercultural communication applied in studying/teaching foreign languages and International studies/International relations including rhetoric; the language of humor; or the role of silence in communication and new ones, namely, politeness and its categories (dignity, hedge expressions...); media culture, advertising... Remarkably, several valueless cases have received more attention in inter-ethnic communication such as hypocrisy, lying, misrepresenting/fabricating information, plagiarism, etc. Due to their interdisciplinary nature, these studies of communication have been applied in international studies, culturology, linguistics, and other fields of life. Truth and lies have always been present throughout the history of diplomatic relations (Деборин ред., 1964; Coleman, 1993). The valueless communication activities have recently become the research subject of legal linguistics (юрислингвистика) and the related discipline of forensic linguistics (судебная лингвистика) which is widely used in criminology.

V. Conclusion

The growth of the sciences that study the relationship between language and culture is an inevitable result of social needs and the development of theoretical ideas in

linguistics and the social sciences. From the study of language “in oneself and for oneself” (in the words of F. de Saussure), this process ends ambivalently: the study of language concerning people, on the one hand, is human-centered; the study of people and man-made products (ie., culture) concerning language, on the other hand, is an important and indispensable means of communication.

Because of this ambivalent importance, so many interdisciplinary sciences with languages have been established. After a period of the explosion, it is necessary to review the whole situation, systematize the achievements, and eliminate duplicates and overlapping concepts, etc. The paper is an attempt to do just that □

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