

Ukrainian language and culture

[Linguistics](#), [Language](#)



Every day we use, transmit and sometimes learn both language and culture. We are most likely oblivious to it, but our language is inevitably influenced by the culture we live in - e. . the way we are taught to treat people and speak are connected. We are also most likely to have the same traditions and customs as the people speaking the same language. In this essay I will briefly define language and culture and present some examples of the influence on each other from my own Ukrainian culture. What is culture? Found in Oxford Dictionary Online, culture means " the customs, arts, social institutions, and achievements of a particular nation, people, or other social group... " The word itself comes from the Latin word cultura - meaning growing, cultivation.

Edward Tylor (1871) summarized it the following way: Culture ... is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society. We practice what we learn throughout life and transmit to our children what we have been taught - the basic behaviour, such as greeting, table manners and dressing but inevitably also traditions, such as birthday and Christmas celebration. Without investigating we know that this type of behaviour was taught and found in many generations before us, and will be long after we die.

The culture - the way we do things - is transgenerational - it continues beyond lifetimes (Rosman&Rubel 2001). Neither does culture stand still - it changes and develops over time (Ferraro, 1998). What is language? Language, or speech, is the primary human communication tool which conveys ideas, transfers messages and makes people interact. Apart from

the verbal communication we find the other two - written and non-verbal (body language). Languages are made out of devices like grammar, syntax, phonemes and morphemes (Ferraro, 1998). Language is also one of the things that differs us from animals (Rosman&Rubel 2001).

Just the same way as we experience and practice culture, we do with language. The dictionary definition of the word is “ 1. the method of human communication, either spoken or written, consisting of the use of words in a structured way 2. ... used by a particular country or community” (Oxford Dictionaries Online, 2012). Here it is evident that language is, apart from being a body of words and systems and speech, tightly connected to a specific group of people and consequently a culture. How does language influence culture and vice versa?

Based on the information above, we see a very clear pattern - the ways humans speak and behave are connected. Language is the tool through which cultural ideas can be conveyed, transmitted and kept, and “ when a group begins to lose its language, its cultural tapestry begins to unravel” (Rosman&Rubel, 2001, pp. 41). Some examples of language and culture going hand in hand, can be found in my Ukrainian culture: In addition to your name, you also carry a middle name - a patronymic. According to Oxford Online Dictionary, it is “ a name derived from the name of a father or ancestor, typically by the addition of a prefix or suffix”.

For instance, my full name is Anastasia Oleksandrivna Semenova. My father's name is Oleksandr and being a female, the ending is -ivna. Males' endings are typically -ov or -ich. Culturally this links the father being highly honored in the typical Ukrainian family- he is the head of the house and the provider.

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The patronymic is kept for life. This is also essential when addressing to each other. In everyday life people typically use the first name and the fathers name, if not being family or very close friends, e. g. Anastasia Oleksandrivna. When addressing someone formally, different types of ' you' is used - e. . a friend would be addressed as " ty" (??) but a teacher, a boss or, in a childs case, everyone that is older would be addressed as " vy" (??). Showing respect this way is a strict rule, but is a habit since it is taught from infancy. Culturally, this links with the politeness taught from a very young age - to respect the older, non-familiar and higher-educated people than you. Changing the " vy" to " ty" is a sign of entering into the friend circle.

Conclusion The broad term culture includes behaviour, customs, traditions, cuisine, law and morals of a specific group of people.

It is taught, transmitted, transgenerational and changed over time. Language is the primary tool of interaction and communication of man. It is shared by a community or a group of people and is tightly connected to the culture of the group - by language culture is taught and transmitted. The Ukrainian culture values and teaches respect when addressing one another. Two good examples are the use of patronymics as a middle name (links to high position of the father) and a formal and informal ' you' (links to respect toward older and unfamiliar people). Bibliography&references