# A New Analytical Model of Cultural Linguistics

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By

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# PREFACE

Notwithstanding the great potentials of Cultural Conceptualization, there exists culturally-constructed concepts for which Cultural Conceptualization stands in need of further explications. The authors came across this shortcoming while applying the Cultural Conceptualization model to a book chapter for Springer in 2019. More specifically, we realized that there is a number of culturally-constructed concepts which can be accounted for neither by Cultural Conceptualization nor by Semiotics alone. This gave the authors the impetus to work on a new analytical model encompassing the premises of Cultural Conceptualization and Semiotics to develop a more inclusive and dynamic analytical framework, which is introduced in this volume for the first time. To support the model, data are provided from Persian and English proverbs in which natural elements are encoded linguistically. The analysis of the data reveals that the underlying semiotic relationship between natural elements and conceptualizations is largely a symbolic one. Moreover, a considerable number of natural elements are metaphorically conceptualized in the two languages; however, in some cases, speakers in each community apply distinct conceptualizations to those elements. Another finding of this research-based volume is that Persian significantly outweighs English in the use of natural elements at the cultural level of cognition. Finally, compared to immediate and dynamical interpretants, it is the final interpretant through which a symbol is culturally conceptualized among members of a speech community.

The book is intended for a wide range of readers, particularly students and researchers in the fields of Cultural Linguistics, Semiotics, and Anthropology. Therefore, it could be used as a text or reading for university courses such as Linguistics, Pragmatics, Semiotics, Cultural Studies, Sociolinguistics, Anthropology, and Applied Linguistics. It is hoped that the new analytical model presented in this book will lead to further in-depth analyses of linguistic and cultural aspects of life in different communities at the level of cognition.

To spell out the culture-specificity of natural elements used in English and Persian proverbs, this book adopts a hybrid model of Cultural Conceptualizations and Semiotics with the view that the former part of the model stands in need of further explications for culturally-constructed

concepts derived from cultural symbols. Accordingly, descriptive, and cognitive data analysis is performed to accomplish the objectives of the study.

The substantive themes of the book are organized into nine core chapters, as described below.

Chapter 1 serves as an introduction to the field of Cultural Linguistics. It discusses how Cultural Linguistics evolved and how it addresses the relationship between language, culture, and conceptualizations. The chapter begins with the description of language and its components. This is followed by the definition of culture and its relationship with language as well as the conceptualization of culture. The chapter ends with the description of Cultural and Cognitive Linguistics.

Chapter 2 introduces the field of Semiotics. It gives an account of the typologies of *signs* (Icon, Index, and Symbol), *levels of interpretant* (Immediate, Dynamic, and Final), and *object* under the rubric of Semiotics. The chapter finds symbolic signs and final interpretant as the most relevant themes in the analysis of cultural conceptualizations.

Chapter 3 is concerned with the theoretical framework of cultural conceptualizations. The chapter sheds light on the essential relationship between language, thought, and culture within the multidisciplinary field of Cultural Linguistics. This is followed by a brief introduction of underlying human cognitive processes (which would, in turn, result in the development of schema, metaphor, and category) under the rubric of conceptualizations. The predominant concern in this chapter, however, is the representation of those conceptualizations in the form of 'distributed representation'. The chapter further continues with a comprehensive account of cultural conceptualizations at the level of cultural cognition with a primary focus on distributions among all members of a given cultural community. It is worth noting that Cultural Linguistics comprises three components: cultural schemas, cultural metaphors, and cultural categories. Cultural schemas are shared and conventionalized cognitive patterns that guide the thought or behavior of a cultural group. Cultural metaphors, on the other hand, are figurative expressions that reveal how a cultural group maps one experiential domain onto another. Finally, cultural categories are meaningful and relevant classifications of entities or concepts for a cultural group.

Chapter 4 deals with the analytical framework of cultural conceptualizations. It elaborates on the notion of cultural conceptualizations and gives an explanation on how its cognitive constructs, i.e., schemas, metaphors, and categories are studied within the multidisciplinary field of Cultural Linguistics. This chapter demonstrates that such constructs may

partially address conceptualizations in a cultural group and overlook a bulk of conceptualizations in inter- and intracultural communications.

Chapter 5 is by far the largest and most important chapter of the book as it introduces our new analytical model incorporating features of Cultural Conceptualization and Semiotics. At the core of this chapter is the rationale why cultural conceptualization in its status quo cannot explicate all culturally-constructed concepts in world languages. The chapter covers several symbolic representations of natural elements unique to and shared between the two languages under study, i.e., English and Persian. It also introduces cultural symbols as an integral component of cultural conceptualizations in the field of Cultural Linguistics. This being the case, the chapter clearly shows how the third component of Semiotics, i.e., final interpretant, makes ground for the conceptualization of phenomena culturally constructed in any speech community. This is accomplished through the analysis of English and Persian proverbs.

Chapter 6 covers a variety of cultural schemas derived from natural elements used in English and Persian proverbs and manifested in daily interactions of the speakers of the two languages in order to provide empirical data in support of the proposed model. The chapter begins with image, moving to event, role, proposition, and ends up with emotion schema.

Chapter 7 presents data on cultural metaphors derived from natural elements to provide further evidence for the Semio-Cultural Conceptualization model. As it will be demonstrated, English and Persian people avail themselves of special features of natural elements so as to communicate the widely-used concepts of social lives which may quintessentially pertain to the close relationship they establish with nature. Accordingly, this chapter focuses on the metaphorical use of natural elements prevalent among the speakers of English and Persian languages. In particular, this chapter argues that the effective use of metaphor is considered a defining feature of cultural cognition of people in both communities (i.e., English and Persian) through the use of different proverbs, as illustrated by the following example.

Chapter 8 is dedicated to cultural categories derived from natural elements. More specifically, this chapter discusses how subcomponents of nature make up various categories which are culturally conceptualized among the speakers of cultural groups. Furthermore, the chapter compares Persian with English language in terms of cultural categories derived from natural elements at the cultural level of cognition. More importantly, the chapter concludes that Persian significantly outweighs English in terms of cultural categories in the use of natural elements at the cultural level of

cognition. However, the general cultural category of nature includes almost every natural element in nature in English, but not in Persian. Consider the proverbs 'what belongs to nature lasts to the grave', and 'let nature takes its course', in which nature encompasses an enormous variety of animate and inanimate elements in nature.

Finally, Chapter 9 (the concluding chapter) provides arguments in support of the proposed framework in conjunction with suggestions for further research in the broad field of Cultural Linguistics. Using the proposed framework, this chapter provides a few sample analyses to highlight the applicability of the framework in various contexts and sub-disciplines. In particular, this chapter draws on the proposed framework to further assess how materials in second language acquisition reflect the dynamic nature of culture and whether texts, tasks, and visuals simultaneously present corresponding cultural conceptualizations.

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**August 2023**

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# PHONETIC SYMBOLS USED IN THIS BOOK

## Consonants

| Symbol | Keyword | Persian Consonants not found in English |
|--------|---------|------------------------------------------|
| p | pen | x   xub 'good' |
| b | book | q   qæʃæng 'nice, beautiful' |
| t | ten | ʁ   ʁæzā 'food' |
| d | day | |
| k | cake | |
| g | get | |
| f | fat | |
| v | view | |
| Ɵ | think | |
| ð | then | |
| s | soon | |
| z | zoo | |
| š | ship | |
| ʒ | pleasure | |
| ç | cheese | |
| ǰ | judge | |
| m | moon | |
| n | soon | |
| l | let | |
| r | red | |
| w | wet | |
| y | yet | |
| h | head | |

# **Vowels**

| Symbol | Keyword |
| --- | --- |
| i | deed |
| ɪ | did |
| e | bed |
| a | bad |
| ā | father |
| u | too |
| ə | about |

# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

OM      =      Object Marker

3PS     =      Third Person Singular

ELT     =      English Language Teaching

RQ      =      Research Question

# CHAPTER 1

# CULTURAL LINGUISTICS

## 1.1 Introduction

This chapter serves as an introduction to the field of Cultural Linguistics as a relatively new discipline. It discusses how Cultural Linguistics evolved and how it addresses the relationship between language, culture, and conceptualizations. The chapter begins with a brief discussion of the components of language followed by a definition of culture. Then, the notion of linguistic relativity (both in its strong and weak versions) follows in which the pivotal focus owes its centrality to the diversity of languages with implications for both social and natural phenomena. The rationale behind the inclusion of this topic in Chapter 1 is that "linguistic relativity stands in close relation to semiotic-level concerns with the general relation of language and thought, and to discourse-level concerns with how patterns of language use in cultural context can affect thought" (Lucy, 2001, p. 13486).

The chapter further continues to shed light on the intricate relationship between language and culture within the multidisciplinary field of Cultural Linguistics encompassing cultural conceptualizations. Finally, the chapter ends in a discussion on the relationship between Cultural Linguistics and Cognitive Linguistics.

Before elaborating on the complex relationship between language and culture, it seems pertinent to briefly define and discuss these two phenomena separately.

## 1.2 Definition of language and its components

### 1.2.1 Language

Language is perhaps the most complex human phenomenon. Despite this, it has commonly been defined simplistically as 'a vehicle of communication'. However, restricting language to 'a system of communication' appears to be relegating its status as being species-specific and unique to man. Some animals and insects also have sophisticated systems of communication, e.g., dolphins, ants, and bees. They can communicate various messages to one another, including feelings and emotions (love, fear, anger), warning, sexual desire, etc. For instance, "when a honeybee finds a source of nectar and returns to the beehive, it can perform a complex dance routine to communicate to the other bees the location of this nectar" (Yule, 2010, p. 12). Similarly, some birds like parrots and mynahs can imitate human speech sounds or even words and phrases, but, as Fromkin et al. (2019) assert, "their utterances carry no meaning. They are speaking neither English nor their own language when they sound like us" (p. 304). Thus, none of these systems of communication can qualify as 'language'. They lack the essential properties of human language, such as creativity, arbitrariness, and displacement. For example, bees may be able to communicate the location of nectar sources to other bees via dancing, but they cannot do so referring to the past, or future, e.g., yesterday I found a great source of nectar nearby. Similarly, although chimpanzees like Washoe and Nim Chimsky were able to show limited ability to produce American Sign Language, they lacked creativity in doing so. According to Chomsky (1965), only humans have the ability to produce an infinite number of sentences, having acquired a limited number of grammatical rules. More importantly, most of these sentences are novel as they have never been heard or produced before in exactly the same way. An English-speaking child who produces the so-called ungrammatical sentence "I goed to the zoo with my grannie yesterday" is unlikely to have heard this sentence from his parents or other people in the environment, thus showing the creative aspect of human language.

Unlike animals, we use language not only to express our feelings, thoughts, and emotions, but also to describe objects and ideas and to talk about past events and future plans. We also use language to reveal or conceal our identity. A grandfather who boasts about his grandson who is a medical student is in fact inducing his identity in order to show off. Similarly, individuals can also conceal their identity or that of their family through language if they are ashamed of what they do to earn a living through wrongdoing, e.g., money laundering.

As the subject matter of linguistics, 'language' can be defined as a system of relating sounds or sound combinations to meanings and objects. In this sense, language is semiotic since it consists of a set of signs or symbols, i.e., a sequence of letters representing sounds (or 'signs' in sign languages), to signify objects and ideas. The relationship between sounds and symbols on the one hand and meaning on the other hand is by and large arbitrary and is not based on any logical explanation. For instance, there is no logical relationship between the sound combination ç, eə, and r /çeər/ and the object it signifies, i.e., 'chair'. In other words, the naming of objects is conventional and arbitrary as it is based on random choice, rather than any logic or reason. As Shakespeare says "a rose by any other name would smell as sweet". Nevertheless, this arbitrary relationship may be influenced by the environment and culture. As an example, the Persian equivalent of 'airport' is *frudgah*, which literally means a place where a flying object lands. The reason for this is that people in Iran, as in many other parts of the world, have seen those flying objects called 'airplanes' land, and not being ported to the air, as was the case for the first time by the American Wright Brothers in 1903. It is worth mentioning that even in the case of onomatopoeic words, i.e., a limited number of words like 'buzz' and 'bang' "that imitate the sounds associated with the objects or actions they refer to, … the sounds differ from language to language, reflecting the particular sound system of the language" (Fromkin et al., 2019, p. 289).

As a system, language subsumes some subsystems which are labelled as components of language. These include phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics, as illustrated in Figure 1-1.

Figure 1.1. Components of language

These are briefly discussed below.

## 1.2.2 Phonetics and Phonology

Phonetics refers to the scientific study of speech sounds which "deals with the concrete phonetic characteristics of sounds used in human speech, in general. This concrete level is often distinguished from the more abstract phonological level" (Keshavarz, 2018, p.8), which is the subject matter of phonology, as it "concerns how speech sounds function in a systemic way in a particular language" (Cruttenden, 2014, p. 3). That is, phonology deals with the way in which human speech sounds form systems and patterns.

Phonetics encompasses different branches, such as articulatory phonetics, acoustic phonetics, forensic phonetics, and clinical phonetics. The description of these branches of phonetics is beyond the scope of this brief introduction. (For further details see Cruttenden, 2014; Crystal, 2008; Keshavarz, 2018; Ladefoged & Johnson, 2011; and Roach, 2009).

### 1.2.3 Morphology

Morphology deals with the study and analysis of morphemes as the minimal unit of meaning or grammatical function in a given language. For example, the word 'rewritten' consists of two minimal units of meaning, i.e., RE and WRITE plus one grammatical function (-EN). Morphemes are used to form words. Some morphemes can stand alone, i.e., they can be used independently, hence they are called free morphemes. Free morphemes can be lexical or grammatical. Free lexical morphemes include main parts of speech, such as nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs, e.g., pen, book, chair, read, drink. Grammatical or functional free morphemes, on the other hand, include prepositions (e.g., on, at, in), articles (a, an, the), conjunctions (e.g., and, but, or, nor), and pronouns (she, we, they, him). Examples of bound lexical morphemes include 'convert', 'include', 'exclude', each of which consists of two morphemes that cannot be used alone. In other words, the morphemes *con* and *vert* together form a word, but they cannot be used in isolation. That is, if these words are broken down into two parts, they would become meaningless.

Bound grammatical morphemes are subdivided into inflectional and derivational morphemes. There are only eight inflectional morphemes in English, namely -s, -s, -'s, -ing, -ed, -en, -er, -est, while there are hundreds of derivational morphemes in the form of prefixes and suffixes. Some languages like Turkish are also famous for having a large number of infixes. As an agglutinating language, Turkish relies on infixes and suffixes to form grammatical structures. For instance, the simple form *gelmediniz* which appears as a single word is in fact a sentence meaning 'You didn't come'. This form consists of the four morphemes *gel* 'come', *me* 'negative marker', *di* 'past tense marker', and *iz* 'you' ('plural addressee or formal singular addressee), with the letter *n* functioning as a buffer letter between the two vowels for the ease of pronunciation.

### 1.2.4 Syntax

Syntax is concerned with the study of structural properties of language, i.e., the way words are put into the right order to produce phrases and sentences to communicate meaning. This is a universal principle of

language, i.e., all languages of the world, regardless of whether they have a writing system or not, have ways of putting words together to express meaning. However, the parameters of this universal feature (i.e., word order) may vary from language to language. For example, as Keshavarz (2022) states, "this universal category is realized as SVO (Subject-Verb-Object) in English (e.g., 'I like/love you'); SOV in French (e.g., *Je t'aime*, which translates literally to 'I you love'); and OVS in Turkish (e.g., *Seni seviyorum*, which literally means 'You love I')" (p. 7). Variation can even be found within a language. For instance, "the basic English word order SVO changes to SV in the case of intransitive verbs (e.g., Birds fly), and in Turkish, it sometimes changes to VS (e.g., *Geldim*, literally, 'came I' = 'I came.'), similar to Persian *umadam* (came I)" (Keshavarz, 2022, p. 7).

## 1.2.5 Semantics

Semantics deals with decontextualized meaning, that is, the meaning of words and sentences devoid from social context. Semantics is of two types: lexical and sentential. Lexical semantics concerns the literal meaning of individual words and their relationship, e.g., synonymy, antonymy, polysemy, hyponymy, homophony, and the like. As an example, antonyms which express opposite meaning, such as tall/short, can be divided into two main categories "gradable (opposites along a scale) and non-gradable (direct opposites). Gradable antonyms can be used in comparative constructions" like 'She's taller than her sister.' "The negative of one member of a gradable pair does not necessarily imply the other. For example, the sentence 'My car isn't old', doesn't necessarily mean 'My car is new'" (Yule, 2010, p. 117). Non-gradable antonyms, on the other hand, are not normally used in comparative constructions. Thus, one cannot say: 'Her younger sister is femaler than her', or 'His grandfather is deader than his father' because he died before him. Unlike gradable antonyms, "the negative of one member of a non-gradable pair does imply the other member. … Therefore, the sentence My grandparents aren't alive does indeed mean My grandparents are dead" (Yule, 2010, p. 118). For a full discussion of other lexical relations, see Fromkin et al. (2019) and Yule (2010).

Sentence semantics, or sentential semantics, on the other hand, is concerned with the semantic features of syntactic units larger than words, i.e., phrases, clauses, and sentences. The meaning of a sentence is composed of the meaning of its constituents or components, which should go together semantically. Otherwise, they would violate co-occurrence restriction rules and end up in anomalous sentences, as illustrated by the popular example in Generative Transformational Grammar tradition, namely 'colorless green ideas sleep furiously'. As can be seen, the semantic features of different parts of this sentence cannot cooccur, hence the sentence is anomalous.

### 1.2.6 Pragmatics

Unlike semantics, which deals with the literal or dictionary meaning of words and sentences, pragmatics is concerned with the contextual use of language and the speaker's meaning, i.e., the invisible meaning conveyed through speech acts. Austin's theory of speech acts suggests that

Certain actions can be carried out only through language, such as the act of promising, betting, naming, and the like. One type of speech acts is called 'illocutionary speech act', which refers to what the speaker intends to be done by uttering a sentence, i.e., indirectly commanding, requesting, etc. (Austin, 1975). The speaker's meaning in such cases may or may not be the same as the meaning of words and sentences one produces, i.e., their sematic meaning. To illustrate this point, let us compare the semantic and pragmatic meanings in a single sentence, namely 'What time is it?'

The semantic or literal meaning of this interrogative sentence is simply asking for the current time when one has forgotten his/her watch and asks a colleague or a stranger to tell them the time. However, when the same question is asked by your boss when you are an hour late for work, it has the pragmatic meaning of reprimanding. That is, the speaker uses this seemingly direct question to mean "Why are you late again? Didn't I tell you if you want to keep this job you should be on time, if not in time? If you're late again you'll be fired", hence 'the speaker meaning'. As can be seen, the speaker means a lot more than what he says, none of which is explicitly stated. Thus, pragmatics deals with invisible meaning, which is left for the listener to decipher and interpret accurately. In other words, the job of the listener is to infer or understand the intended meaning of the

speaker. In order to arrive at accurate interpretation of the speaker's invisible meaning, the listener has to rely on contextual clues, shared knowledge, and worldview.

The speaker may also mean just the opposite of what s/he says. For instance, in a classroom situation, if a student is half an hour late and the teacher says 'You are early today!', s/he is reprimanding the student for being late.

From the above, it can be concluded that while other components of language like phonology and syntax deal with linguistic forms, pragmatics deals with functions. For example, 'The dog is going to eat the meat' in terms of syntax and semantics is a statement, but pragmatically speaking it can have the function of warning in an appropriate context. Thus, pragmatic functions are far more important than linguistic forms per se, particularly in second language communication since second language learners often understand the meaning of linguistic forms but fail to figure out the pragmatic functions of those forms. For instance, in the following exchange, the student's answer is inappropriate since s/he has failed to understand the illocutionary speech act (warning, reprimanding). Thus, instead of apologizing (or promising not to be late again), the student utters a statement.

Teacher: You were absent last week.
Student: I know.

Unlike grammar, where the object of linguistic analysis is complete grammatical sentences, the unit of analysis in pragmatics is 'utterance'. An utterance can be a fragment of a sentence, such as 'No smoking!'. It can be a single word, e.g., 'stop', as a traffic sign, or even a letter, e.g., 'L', written on the rear window of a car, as a warning to the drivers behind that car to take precaution and not to get close to that car as the driver is novice. Utterances can also be pictorial and symbolic, as in the portrait of a nurse with her finger on her lips asking for silence. In all of these examples, it is the pragmatic function of the utterance which is important, not the linguistic form. In fact, a number of sentences put together to express a single function can be considered an utterance. Consider, for example, the following sentences

uttered by an angry mother being upset with her children, which together have the function of complaint:

Mother: How many times should I tell you that you should wash your hands before coming to the dinner table? You never listen to me. I'm fed up with you.

To shed light on how pragmatics is related to Cultural Conceptualizations as the core theme of the present book, it can be highlighted that concepts which have been culturally constructed are stemmed from the use of language in their unique contexts. This is quintessentially true in terms of illocutionary and perlocutionary speech acts where an intentional utterance is either performed or the effect of that intentional utterance is produced, respectively. As an example, diverse cultures have different ways of expressing politeness, which influences the way speakers use language in those cultures and contexts (Sharifian, 2011). Pragmatics is also closely related to the semiotic component of the proposed model in this book since utterances can be symbolic, as in the case of the letter 'L', which signifies the novice driver, and the portrait of a nurse in the hospital, as explained above.

### 1.2.7 Discourse Analysis

Like pragmatics, discourse analysis deals with contextualized use of language. The main difference between the two, however, is that pragmatics is concerned mainly with spoken language while discourse analysis deals with both spoken and written language. Another difference between these two subfields of linguistics is that unit of analysis in pragmatics is 'utterance' while in discourse analysis it is 'conversation' or 'text'. Yet another difference between the two is that pragmatics is primarily concerned with the function of utterances while discourse analysis with both function and form. Form in this case refers to the structure of discourse, rather than its traditional meaning referring to formal properties of language, ranging from phonemes, to morphemes, and sentences, as explained above.

Discourse is not considered a component of language like grammar and phonology; however, since it is included in the theoretical and analytical frameworks in the subsequent sections, it is briefly described here.

The word *discourse* usually refers to stretches of language beyond the sentence level, either in speaking or writing, e.g., conversation, debate, paragraph, essay, and the like. The word *usually* in this definition implies that *discourse* does not always have to be larger than a sentence; it can, indeed, be a fragment of a sentence. For example, a newspaper headline like 'plane crashes, 100 die' can be considered a piece of discourse. Despite the fact that this headline is not in the form of a complete sentence, we understand what happened and why 100 people got killed. In other words, with this short piece of text we get the full picture of incident. In spoken language, too, a word or phrase will be sufficient to convey and/or understand a message. For instance, when during an exam the teacher says "No cheating!", the students interpret the message as a warning and become cognizant of the consequences of cheating.

As mentioned earlier, Discourse Analysis deals with both spoken and written language. The former is referred to as Conversational Analysis and the latter Textual Analysis. Conversation/conversational analysis, as an extension of ethnomethodology, is concerned with what goes on in the process of interaction between individuals in a speech event. Conversational Analysis owes its origin to the American sociologist Harvey Sacks (1972), who was inspired by Goffman's (1967, 1969) ideas claiming that face-to-face interaction can be considered as an analytically independent domain of inquiry. Sacks' ideas were further developed and elaborated on by his student, Emanuel A. Schegloff (1989).

Conversation Analysis deals with the study of naturally-occurring data, i.e., recorded talk-in-interaction between two or more speakers. The aim of analyzing conversations is to discover certain features of human interactions, such as adjacency pairs, turn-taking, topic shifts, and the like. It is concerned with how participants negotiate for meaning and understand one another during the process of conversation.

In short, Discourse Analysis deals with the intriguing question of why individuals communicate in specific ways, and for what purposes. Put differently, 'why individuals talk the way they do, and what objectives do they want to achieve'. As an example, consider the speeches of presidential candidates in the run-up to elections, when they artfully craft their speeches to persuade the public to cast their votes for them.