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## FROM WORDS TO WORLDVIEWS

CULTURE AT THE HEART OF LANGUAGE  
EDUCATION

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# INTERVIEW WITH LECTURER ABDULLAH ERTIT

## THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CULTURE AND LANGUAGE

HOW DO YOU CONCEPTUALIZE THE ROLE OF CULTURE IN LANGUAGE EDUCATION? SHOULD CULTURE BE TREATED AS A SEPARATE COMPONENT OR AS AN INTEGRAL PART OF LANGUAGE SKILLS INSTRUCTION?

Culture plays a vital role in language education, and there are different perspectives on how it should be integrated. Given the fact that Culture is an integral part of language skills instruction, and Language is deeply rooted in culture, and understanding cultural nuances is essential for creating effective motives for communication in language classes. Integrating culture into language instruction helps learners develop intercultural competence, which is critical for real-life interactions, but fulfilling all these requirements to the point is not so easy. However, as a teacher, you try to utilise authentic materials, such as videos, podcasts, and texts, that reflect real-life situations and contexts. Language skills, such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing, are sure to be more effectively reached by providing more meaningful and relevant real-life cultural situations. Realia and media releases affluent chances both for both teachers and learners.

In Language Teaching, when taught at a higher level, students' culture should/may be taught separately to provide a deeper understanding of the target culture's history, customs, and values.

This approach allows for a more systematic and explicit teaching of cultural knowledge, which can help learners avoid stereotypes and misconceptions. This is valid for those learners who have already attained some degree of language proficiency in the target culture.

In language teaching, the key is to strike a balance between language and culture, recognizing that they are intertwined and reciprocally supportive. This can be achieved by piecemeal treatment of the linguistic and cultural components. The teacher and his/her skill in creating a kind of brain elasticity in learners' minds. Creating an alert learning group-class, inspiring them to indulge in extramural activities other than the class, which also leads to self-learning, research phase.

THE SAPIR-WHORF HYPOTHESIS SUGGEST THAT LANGUAGE INFLUENCES THOUGHT. HOW CAN THIS IDEA BE PEDAGOGICALLY INTERPRETED IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING CONTEXTS?



The Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis is not that fascinating topic! Still, this hypothesis is dear in that language influences thought, and this idea has significant implications for foreign language teaching. I believe in the view that language determines thought and perception, and equally well, it influences the thought and perception. Being the case as such, Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis, linguistic relativity otherwise specified, elevates the role of the teacher in raising learners' awareness of how language shapes the mindset of people, their vision of the world and their immediate environment, fears and joys, values indigenous to a specific geographical area and its inhabitants.

Thought and perception pave the way for language learners to explore cultural differences and nuances. Focus on teaching culture-specific concepts, idioms, and expressions that reveal the target culture's worldview. All these components of a language for the most part rely on the existing physical, geographical, urban, rural, nomadic lifestyle and sense of joy, pain, hostility, friendship and security. Each pattern of lifestyle breeds new, concrete, conceptual inputs in a language. All these features create Conceptual metaphors: Explore how different languages conceptualize abstract concepts (e.g., time, space, emotions), highlighting linguistic and cultural differences.

Language and cognition like to embrace using activities that promote critical thinking about language and its relationship to thought, such as comparing and contrasting linguistic structures.

In a nutshell, by acknowledging the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis, awe-inspiring teachers can create a more culturally sensitive and awareness-raising language learning environment

## IN WHAT WAYS DO LEARNERS' CULTURAL BACKGROUND AFFECT THEIR COMPREHENSION, INTERPRETATION AND PRODUCTION IN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE?

Learners' cultural background plays a significant role in shaping their language learning experience. Here are some ways it can impact comprehension, interpretation, and production:

**Comprehension** matters in that learners' existing cultural knowledge and experiences influence how they process and understand new information. Cultural references are a prerequisite to grasping the very soul of idioms or expressions, which may lead to misunderstandings or misinterpretations. Learners may struggle to understand context-specific language use, such as humor, irony, or figurative language, which literally means contributing to tasks such as sentiment analysis, creative writing, and social media analysis. However, figurative language detection is still a barren area, while its importance in understanding non-literal language, including metaphors, similes, and synecdoche, etc. Figurative language is described as any language in which the speaker conveys a meaning that differs from the literal interpretation, serving as a fundamental element of daily communication. Alkhamash (2022), they often carry meanings beyond their literal interpretations, making them challenging to detect computationally. Complexity arising from linguistic ambiguity, cultural variations, and the chances to model abstract relationships between concepts effectively are sure to deserve unyielding effort. For both learners and teachers to deal with these challenges, great effort is needed to have a good command of semantic understanding in the target language as well as the learners' native language. Semantic understanding without a serious gap is only possible by delving into intrigue roots of both sides.



**Interpretation** is how one views the world, concepts relying on the existing norms and values of the cultural and physical spheres s/he borns into.

Learners' cultural background employs a filter, influencing how they interpret meaning and intentions. Learners' assumptions and expectations about the target culture may be shaped by preconceived notions, leading to misinterpretations. Daily protocols on politeness and formality are the other pillars of any culture and language, affecting the interpretation of a given item in/about a target language.

- Learners' **cultural identity** can influence their language use, including accent, vocabulary, and communication style.
- Learners may transfer their native language's **pragmatic norms** to the target language, potentially leading to misunderstandings.
- Learners' cultural background can influence **the topics** they feel comfortable discussing or the way they approach discussions.

As to teaching implications, suggestions may roughly be as follows:

- Teachers should culturally be responsive to and be aware of learners' cultural backgrounds and adapt their teaching approach accordingly.
- Their preferences should embrace teaching cultural differences explicitly and pointing out nuances to promote understanding and empathy.
- Learners need help to recognize how their cultural background influences their language use and learning. Teachers' encouragement of learners to release their reflections is a must. By acknowledging and addressing these cultural influences, teachers can create a more inclusive and effective learning environment.

IN EFL CONTEXT SUCH AS  
TURKIYE, HOW SHOULD  
TEACHERS BALANCE TARGET  
CULTURE, INTERNATIONAL  
CULTURE AND LOCAL CULTURE  
IN THEIR LESSONS, AND HOW  
DO YOU OPERATIONALIZE THIS  
BALANCE IN YOUR OWN  
TEACHING PRACTICE BASED  
ON YOUR CLASSROOM  
EXPERIENCE?

This is a crucial problem in language classes depicting diverse aspects in terms of creating an effective language teaching setting and synergy on both sides: language teachers and learners.

Emotional appeal, sense of belonging to the group, setting goals, sense of identity and achievement, creating awareness, mediation of meaning, and helping learners use what is previously taught in other contexts. All these stated features are time-consuming and require an enormous amount of energy that a teacher first has to exert. Master teachers, not I, actually, can excel at balancing target culture, international culture, and local culture in EFL contexts. Here's a practical approach:

How and why is balance needed? To provide understanding of the target culture (e.g., English-speaking countries) is essential for language learning. In an international culture, learners need to engage with global issues and cultures to develop intercultural competence. Local culture Connecting language learning to learners' lives and local context enhances relevance and motivation.

Act and actions to be taken in and out of the classroom situations and strategies for maintaining balance are:

**Integrating cultural content:** Incorporate authentic materials (texts, videos, podcasts) reflecting target, international, and local cultures. This means a well-equipped teacher and an awe-inspiring awareness-raising effort.

**Comparing and pointing at contrasts:** Allowing learners latitude to compare cultural practices, values, and beliefs across cultures.

**Contextualizing language:** Using local examples to illustrate language points, making it more relatable. Localisation and coaching learners, giving them think time and searching for authentic words and phrases dearly used in their household and among elderly people.

**Global issues:** Exploring global topics (e.g., climate change, war, political conflicts, social media) to foster international awareness.

**Learner-led discussions:** Encouraging learners to share their local culture and experiences, promoting peer learning.

Operationalizing balance in teaching practice without considering the following landmarks lacks success:

**Needs analysis:** Identify learners' interests, needs, and cultural backgrounds to inform lesson planning.

**Cultural awareness:** Develop learners' cultural awareness through explicit teaching and reflection.

**Authentic materials:** Use diverse, authentic materials reflecting various cultures and contexts.

**Flexible approach:** Be adaptable and responsive to learners' cultural needs and interests.

In my teaching practice, I'd prioritize learner-centeredness, encouraging learners to explore and share their own cultures while exploring target and international cultures.

## WHAT ROLE DO LITERATURE, MEDIA, AND AUTHENTIC MATERIALS PLAY IN DEVELOPING CULTURAL AWARENESS IN LANGUAGE CLASSROOMS?

Literature, media, and authentic materials are powerful tools for developing cultural awareness in language classrooms. Here's why:

Literature allows cultural insights, provides a window into the target culture's values, customs, and experiences. It not only preaches but also gives due samples of contextualized language. Literary texts offer authentic language use, helping learners understand cultural nuances, marking etymological information on words and phrases, dating back to history and events, showing evidence of how they evolve through the ages. Literature encourages learners to adopt different perspectives, fostering empathy and cultural understanding.

**Real-life representation:** Media (films, billboards, posters, TV shows, podcasts) showcase real-life language use and cultural practices.

**Current events:** News and media coverage help learners stay informed about global issues and cultural trends.

Media engages learners through visual, auditory, and textual channels in the form of multi-dimensional learning:

Authentic materials (menus, signs, advertisements, bills, payrolls) expose learners to genuine language use. These materials provide context-specific language and cultural information.

Authentic materials make learning more engaging and relevant to learners' lives.

Attainments are:

**Cultural awareness:** Learners develop a deeper understanding of the target culture and its nuances.

**Language skills:** Authentic materials and literature improve language skills, including reading, listening, and speaking.

**Intercultural competence:** Learners become more adept at navigating cultural differences and complexities.

By incorporating literature, media, and authentic materials, teachers can create a rich, culturally immersive learning environment.

### FINALLY DRAWING ON YOUR TEACHING EXPERIENCE ACROSS DIFFERENT EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT- YOUR TIME LIVING AND TEACHING IN POLAND- HOW THESE EXPERIENCES SHAPED YOUR UNDERSTANDING OF CULTURE IN LANGUAGE EDUCATION, AND WHAT PRACTICAL ADVICE WOULD YOU OFFER TO TEACHERS SEEKING TO ADOPT A CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE AND THEORETICALLY INFORMED APPROACH?

My experience living and teaching in Poland, as well as working with diverse learners, has profoundly shaped my understanding of culture in language education. Here are key takeaways and practical advice:

**Culture is complex and multifaceted:** Culture is not just about traditions or customs, but also about values, attitudes, and power dynamics.

Cultural norms and expectations vary greatly across contexts, and teachers need to be aware of these differences.

**Learners bring cultural capital:** Learners' cultural backgrounds and experiences are valuable resources that can enrich the learning environment.

At the very onset of my teaching experience in Poland, I myself was in a state of an intake period, trying to observe and understand what really goes on around. I experienced a dynamic, fast-moving period, partly at a loss for some time to accommodate the expectations of learners as well as my assumptions about their needs! Self-confidence and sincere attractions I made as a teacher created a large circle of interest among learners and a multinational community of teachers from other countries. I was not shy to ask anything that I couldn't figure out; in Polish, Turkish, and both. We became an enthusiastic group of learners and teachers as a whole. Every day, we began to exchange questions and answers on daily routines, events, including cause and effects, historical and geographical stances of the people on certain subjects like tradition, beliefs, social and economic aspirations, family affairs, as well as countless other human relations within the Polish sphere. Thus, my teaching and learning practice also moved outside the physical academic walls. Extramural and interpersonal relations and activities enriched our sense of achievement, sense of sharing knowledge and information based on confidence, regardless of time and place! Mutual respect and readiness to learn and teach created an emotional appeal for us. There were at times fake problems with the administrative body, which desolved by time and misinterpretations were erased.

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LECTURER ERTIT'S PRACTICAL ADVICE IS:

**Be culturally aware and reflective:** Recognize your own cultural biases and assumptions, and be willing to learn from learners.

**Get to know your learners:** Understand their cultural backgrounds, interests, and motivations to tailor your teaching approach.

**Use authentic and diverse materials:** Incorporate materials that reflect learners' lives and cultures, as well as global issues and perspectives.

**Encourage critical thinking and reflection:** Help learners analyze cultural differences and nuances, and reflect on their own cultural assumptions.

**Be flexible and adaptable:** Be prepared to adjust your teaching approach to accommodate learners' cultural needs and preferences. Culturally responsive teaching: Prioritize learners' cultural backgrounds and experiences, and use them as a foundation for learning.

**Intercultural competence:** Focus on developing learners' ability to navigate cultural differences and complexities.

My advice is to approach culture as a dynamic and multifaceted aspect of language education, and to prioritize learner-centeredness and cultural responsiveness.

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# VYGOTSKY'S SOCIOCULTURAL THEORY IN LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

Yağızhan Akgül

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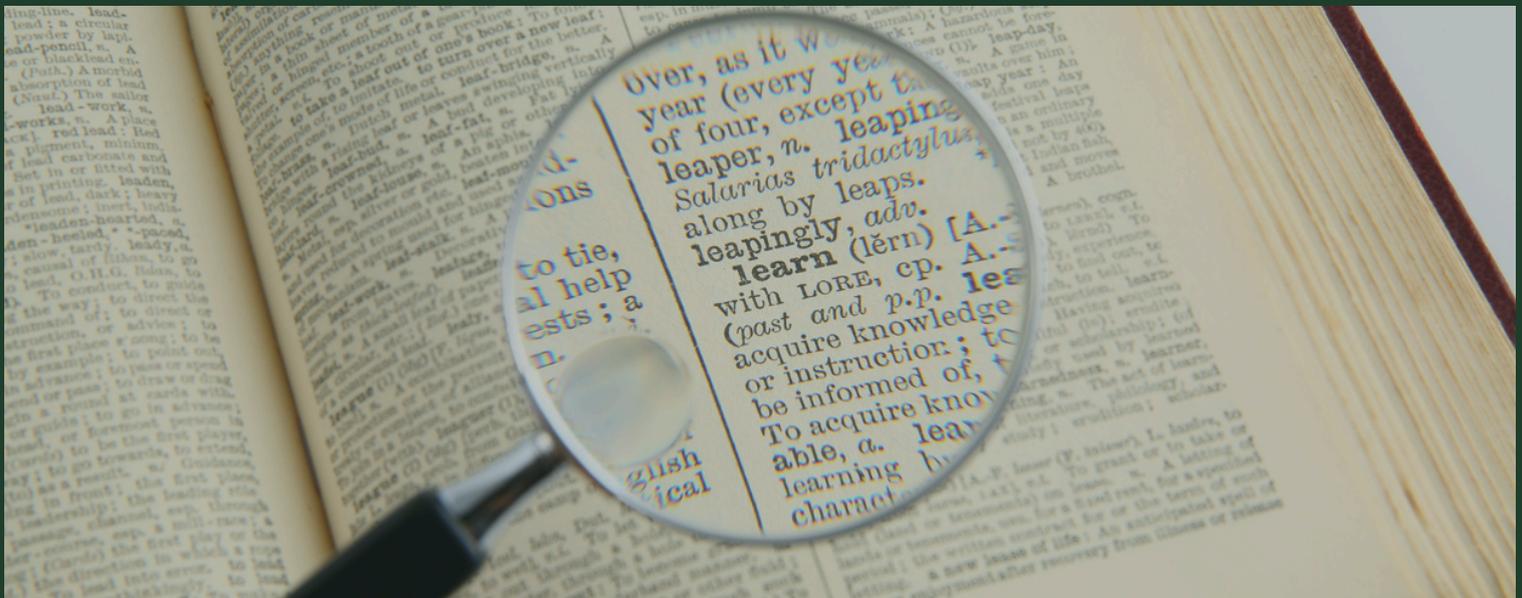
Sociocultural theory, proposed by the Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky, represents a paradigm in developmental psychology that emphasizes the dynamic interplay between social interaction, cultural context, and cognitive development. Fundamentally, this theoretical framework clarifies the subtle dynamics of learning within collaboration and mentoring by introducing numerous important concepts, such as the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and the concept of scaffolding. This paper seeks to explore the profound implications of sociocultural theory, specifically within the domain of language acquisition. Recognizing the close relationship between social interaction and cognitive growth, Vygotsky posited that meaningful dialogues and shared activities shape an individual's linguistic proficiency and intellectual ability. Furthermore, the cultural context in which language learning occurs emerges as an essential component, as cultural tools such as language, symbols, and artifacts mediate the internalization of knowledge. Therefore, the objective of this paper is to underscore the significance of comprehending the role of social interaction and cultural context in language acquisition, interpreting how educators can apply these insights to enhance pedagogical practices and develop more productive language learning experiences. In pursuit of this objective, the discussion will delve into Vygotskian principles, empirical research findings, and practical implications for language educators.

Lev Vygotsky's sociocultural theory provides a subtle and varied framework for comprehending the complex relationship between social interaction, cognitive development, and language acquisition. In compliance with this, Vygotsky's theoretical foundation is built around the concept of the ZPD. The ZPD distinguishes between what an individual can accomplish independently and what can be achieved with the guidance and support of a more competent person. Within this zone, learning is most effective, as it navigates the delicate balance between challenging the learner and providing the necessary scaffolding for their intellectual development. On the other hand, scaffolding is another crucial term in Vygotsky's framework, which involves the dynamic process through which a knowledgeable mentor provides support to the learner's needs, gradually diminishing assistance as the learner gains proficiency. Moreover, Vygotsky highlights the indispensable role of social interactions in cognitive development. He states that meaningful dialogue, collaboration, and shared activities not only shape thought processes but also facilitate the internalization of cultural tools, such as language. In the scope of language acquisition, Vygotsky's ideas form the basis for understanding that linguistic development is fundamentally tied to social interactions. Also, language, as both a cultural tool and an instrument for interpersonal communication, plays a decisive role in shaping an individual's cognitive capabilities. Vygotsky's theoretical foundation thus lays the groundwork for comprehending how language acquisition occurs within the complex interplay of social interactions and cultural contexts, pointing out the inseparable connection between language learning and cognitive development within a sociocultural framework.

Within the realm of sociocultural theory in language acquisition, Vygotsky's profound influence on language development stems from his unique perspective on the relationship between language and thought. His theoretical framework suggests that language is not only a vehicle for expressing pre-existing thoughts but a transformative tool that actively shapes cognitive processes. Vygotsky argued that thought itself emerges through language, highlighting the reciprocal relationship between the two. In his work "Thought and Language," Vygotsky underlined that "words are the building blocks of thought," stressing the idea that language is instrumental in constructing and enlightening cognitive structures. This perspective aligns with his broader sociocultural theory, emphasizing the social origins of cognitive development. Vygotsky theorized that language plays a crucial role in shaping cognitive development through the process of internalization, where external social interactions become key constituents of inner speech. For instance, his studies on problem-solving tasks provided concrete evidence that individuals often employ verbal strategies to navigate complex problems, demonstrating how language becomes a cognitive tool. Additionally, his investigations into the development of voluntary attention and memory underscored the vital role of language in shaping cognitive functions. By illuminating the reciprocal relationship between language and cognition, Vygotsky's theoretical insights provide a strong foundation for understanding the inseparable link between language learning and cognitive development within the sociocultural framework of language acquisition.

The application of sociocultural theory in language teaching has significantly shaped methodologies by emphasizing collaborative and interactive learning approaches. Educators have incorporated Vygotskian principles into instructional strategies, recognizing the pivotal role of social interaction in language acquisition. Scaffolding, a fundamental concept in sociocultural theory, has been employed as a pedagogical tool to facilitate language instruction effectively. This encompasses providing modified support to learners within their Zone of Proximal Development, gradually reducing assistance as proficiency increases. For instance, language educators often employ guided discussions, interactive tasks, and cooperative learning activities to scaffold language learning experiences. These methodologies are designed to challenge learners just beyond their current capabilities while ensuring that adequate support is available for meaningful engagement. Within the sociocultural framework, the importance of collaborative dialogue in language learning is underscored as a mechanism for knowledge internalization and skill development. Learners engage in shared activities and discussions that mirror real-world language use, creating an environment in which linguistic competence is developed through social interactions. This collaborative approach not only enhances language proficiency but also cultivates a socio-culturally rich environment that mirrors the complexities of real-life communication. Therefore, the application of sociocultural theory in language teaching integrates scaffolding and collaborative dialogue, contributing to more dynamic and effective language learning experiences.

Empirical research on sociocultural theory in language acquisition has yielded valuable insights into the effectiveness of this theoretical framework. Numerous studies have been conducted to investigate the application of sociocultural principles in explaining the dynamics of language development. For instance, research findings by Lantolf and Thorne (2006) have indicated that the incorporation of sociocultural elements in language learning environments positively correlates with enhanced language acquisition outcomes. These studies demonstrate the importance of social contact in language development. However, it is essential to acknowledge criticisms and limitations in applying sociocultural theory to language acquisition. Some scholars argue that the emphasis on social interaction may not adequately address individual differences in learning styles and preferences. Additionally, concerns have been raised about the potential challenges in implementing sociocultural approaches in diverse educational settings. Despite these critiques, the empirical evidence supporting the positive impact of social interaction on language development remains strong, suggesting that the sociocultural framework offers valuable insights for understanding and enhancing language acquisition processes.



In conclusion, the examination of sociocultural theory within the context of language acquisition reveals a strong framework that demonstrates the interconnectedness of social interaction, cognitive development, and linguistic proficiency. Lev Vygotsky's foundational ideas, represented by the Zone of Proximal Development and the concept of scaffolding, illuminate the optimal conditions for effective learning by integrating collaborative activities and meaningful dialogue. Basically, sociocultural theory remains highly relevant in both understanding and enhancing language acquisition, offering educators a comprehensive framework to optimize pedagogical practices and foster culturally enriched language learning experiences.

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# LINGUISTIC CHANGE AS A REFLECTION OF CULTURAL EVOLUTION

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## Introduction

Conservative notions often hold that changes in language indicate a loss of cultural integrity, corruption, or decay in values. This perspective views language as a fixed and perfected heritage and criticizes forms of linguistic change, associating them with loss of cultural cohesion (Erdocia, 2022). However, recognizing that language and culture are inseparable leads to the conclusion that they are in a constant process of shaping one another. Change in language is not a sign of deterioration but a reflection of cultural evolution. As culture adapts, language adapts, and the two evolve together. Far from weakening the culture, linguistic change preserves its relevance, expressiveness, and capacity to reflect ever-changing life. This paper, therefore, aims to challenge the myth of cultural and linguistic purity and to elucidate the adaptive, historically interconnected, and mutually reinforcing evolution of language and culture.

## Historical Mobility and the Myth of Cultural Purity

Contrary to the popular bias, human societies were far from isolated long before globalization. Socio-historical processes such as trade, migration, and conquest drove the circulation of cultural practices, technologies, and languages between communities. The Silk Road, for instance, was an immense network connecting continents and enabling not just the exchange of goods but also religions, languages, and technologies, resulting in the intermingling of cultures and innovations (Liu, 2023). The notion of a “pure” culture is, therefore, a misconception, as all cultures have historically been heavily shaped by contact.

adaptation, and the incorporation of external influences. This mobility enabled communities to endure environmental, social, and even technological challenges, demonstrating that both cultural and linguistic flexibility are essential survival mechanisms.

Even societies that attempted to limit outside influence support this point. Pre-modern Japan during the Tokugawa period provides a clear example. Although the state implemented the sakoku (‘closed country’) policy, cultural and linguistic exchange continued nonetheless. Japan not only absorbed Chinese philosophical vocabulary and many literary forms, but also adopted scientific and technological terminology from Dutch traders. As Jansen (2000) documents, absolute isolation was never possible, and even the most restrictive societies evolved through persistent contact with the outside world.



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## Cultural Evolution and Linguistic Ecology



Resistance to change often stems from nostalgia and a longing for a “golden age” when language and culture were allegedly stable and original. This viewpoint creates the illusion that past forms were superior, even though, as mentioned, historical evidence reveals constant change. While moderate attention to cultural and linguistic preservation can help protect communities from cultural domination or homogenization, resisting natural evolution ignores the adaptive strength of both language and culture (Baioud, 2025).

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Cultural evolution theory provides a framework for understanding how these processes occur systematically (Kunst & Mesoudi, 2024). Simply put, communities retain novelties that are socially meaningful and culturally resonant to them, while also incorporating them into their unique identity. Borrowed words are rarely copied exactly; on the contrary, they are reshaped to align with local sound patterns, usage preferences, or social norms, being changed in subtle but significant ways. In essence, the evolution of language mirrors the evolution of culture and resembles biological evolution (Kirby, 2017).

This evolutionary perspective aligns closely with and supports linguistic ecology, as described by Suzuki and Arita (2025), framing language as part of a larger cultural ecosystem that interacts continuously with speakers, other languages, and social structures. Languages thrive when exposed to diverse influences and adapt accordingly; thus, isolation or rigid conservatism threatens their vitality (Lee, Siew, & Ng, 2022). As in biological systems, linguistic variation and selection are essential for the survival of a language. Culture shapes language, while language simultaneously encodes and transmits culture, making their adaptive interchange a hallmark of living systems. Linguistic change allows societies to reflect contemporary realities and changes while maintaining continuity with historical practices, ensuring that cultural knowledge and social values remain relevant.

### Example of Cultural and Linguistic Interplay

A clear example is the Turkish expression “akan su yosun tutmaz” (“flowing water does not gather moss”). Traditionally, the proverb was often interpreted as emphasizing the value of stability and suggesting that constant movement undermines durability and efficiency. Today, however, it is widely interpreted to highlight flexibility and adaptability, as continuous motion prevents stagnation. The moss, originally seen as a symbol of fertility, acquired a new meaning of deterioration and stagnation as societal priorities shifted toward valuing flexibility, adaptability, and personal growth.

The conservative viewpoint might argue that this modern meaning is “incorrect” or a deviation from tradition. From an academic perspective, however, this semantic shift demonstrates the natural adaptability of language to changing cultural norms. It shows how cultural practices, values, and new priorities leave traces in linguistic forms. As societies evolve, meanings evolve as well, reflecting broader social and environmental changes. Far from weakening the proverb, its evolving interpretation demonstrates the dynamic and living relationship between language and culture.



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### Conclusion

Ultimately, fears about linguistic decay arise from a misunderstanding of the intimate link between culture and language. Linguistic change is not random erosion but a continuous, adaptive process, shaped by mobility, social selection, and cultural priorities. Borrowing and semantic shifts are evidence of resilience, similar to how variation and retention sustain biological populations. Language evolves because culture evolves, and culture evolves because language evolves: the two are mutually sustaining. Far from signaling decay, change is the mechanism by which both culture and language remain vibrant, relevant, and deeply connected to human life. Understanding language as a living cultural system allows us to appreciate its adaptability and its capacity to mirror and keep up with the continuous evolution of human society.

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# THE IMPACT OF CULTURE ON LANGUAGE: PERSPECTIVES FROM THEORY AND EXPERIENCE

M. Utku ATAN

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## Introduction

It is commonly acknowledged that language and culture are mutually constitutive, with language helping to transmit and preserve cultural values while culture shapes language and its meanings (Kramsch, 1998). Language functions as a social practice that regulates interaction, signals belonging, and shapes people's perceptions of reality rather than serving merely as an objective code (Hymes, 1972). Thus, an understanding of the cultural roots of language is essential in linguistics, education, and intercultural communication. This article explores how cultural norms impact linguistic behavior and how language learners can enhance their cultural awareness in addition to their language skills, drawing on research perspectives and my personal experience working in the United States.



## Language, Thought, and Cultural Worldviews

The degree to which language influences awareness has long been a topic of discussion in linguistic anthropology. The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, commonly referred to as linguistic relativity, claims that speakers' thoughts and categories of the world are influenced by linguistic categories (Sapir, 1929; Whorf, 1956). Current research indicates that language may guide attention toward culturally salient distinctions, such as time, politeness, or social status. However, strong determinist versions of this hypothesis have been widely disputed. For instance, some languages emphasize clarity and equal forms of address, whereas others have complex etiquette systems that convey expectations about hierarchy and respect (Hall, 1976). Cultural values give rise to these structural patterns, which are then reinforced in daily interactions.

## Pragmatics: Culture in Use

The influence of culture becomes even more visible at the pragmatic level—the ways speakers use language to accomplish social goals. Politeness strategies, indirectness, turn-taking, and the management of disagreement vary widely across societies (Thomas, 1983; Wierzbicka, 2003). What counts as “polite,” “assertive,” or “rude” cannot be determined solely by grammar; it depends on shared cultural interpretations of relationships and situations. As a result, learners may produce grammatically correct sentences yet still experience pragmatic failure if they overlook pragmatic conventions. Intercultural competence, therefore, requires an understanding of how meanings are negotiated beyond literal words (Byram, 1997).

## Working and Communicating in the United States as an Example

Working in the United States gave me a practical perspective on how culture affects language use. Performance, individual responsibility, and precise task distribution were prioritized in the workplace. Communication norms reflected these values: clear and concise instructions, prompt feedback, and encouragement to ask clarifying questions were all common. In contrast to the more indirect communication styles I was accustomed to, this approach initially felt unexpected. I eventually came to understand that being direct was viewed as a sign of openness rather than hostility, a perspective consistent with research on low-context communication cultures (Hall, 1976). Effective communication required both linguistic and cultural knowledge.

Another interesting aspect was the practice of small talk—brief discussions about the weather, hobbies, or weekend plans that accompanied professional interactions. Despite its apparent superficiality, small talk performed crucial social functions by promoting a collaborative atmosphere, fostering trust, and reducing social distance (Kramsch, 1998). Effective engagement required awareness that both relational and informational competence were necessary for successful communication. In this way, what was considered appropriate or expected behavior in professional settings was shaped by cultural norms. Forms of address were also influenced by the organization’s relatively flat hierarchical structure. Coworkers generally used first names to minimize overt markers of hierarchy. At the same time, word choices and awareness of sensitive topics were shaped by an institutional emphasis on inclusion and diversity (Deardorff, 2006). These practices demonstrated how language functions within broader social frameworks and how linguistic behavior is closely connected to underlying ethical and organizational values.

## Identity, Belonging, and Language Choice

Cultural norms also influence the construction of identity through language. In multilingual settings, speakers often shift registers, adopt new discourse styles, or switch between languages depending on the audience and context (Kramsch, 1998). During my stay in the United States, I observed that I adjusted my level of formality, rhythm of speech, and even sense of humor to align with the social expectations of both customers and coworkers. This adaptation revealed that identity is shaped through language rather than being fixed. In expanding my linguistic repertoire, I was simultaneously learning how to position myself as an employee, a peer, and a visitor.

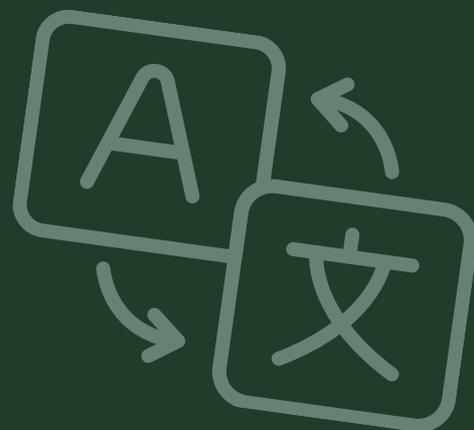
## Pedagogical Implications



These observations have significant implications for language teaching. Approaches that focus exclusively on grammar and vocabulary risk underestimating the cultural knowledge required for effective communication. Authentic materials, role plays reflecting real-life scenarios, and reflective discussions about cultural norms are particularly beneficial for learners (Seelye, 1993; Brown, 2007). Additionally, opportunities for immersion—whether physical or virtual—allow learners to develop sensitivity to nuances such as humor, gesture, silence, and indirect meaning. My own experience of integration enhanced both my language proficiency and my contextual awareness.

## Cultural Hybridity and Language Change

When individuals from different cultural backgrounds live, study, and work together, conversational habits begin to blend. Speakers may incorporate regional idioms, English vocabulary, and culturally specific communication styles within the same interaction. This phenomenon has become increasingly common as a result of globalization. For example, many speakers adapt English to local idioms, accents, and communicative conventions (Kramsch, 1998). During my stay in the United States, I observed how such hybridity could be advantageous: multinational coworkers developed shared communication styles drawing on multiple cultural frameworks, allowing collaboration while preserving individual identities. This illustrates how the influence of culture on language is dynamic and continually evolving as societies interact and renegotiate meaning.



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## Conclusion

Culture plays a significant role in shaping how language is used, interpreted, and negotiated. This influence is evident not only in theory but also in everyday practice. During my stay in the United States, for example, I observed that people commonly addressed one another by first names, favored direct communication, and used small talk to establish friendly relationships. These practices are not arbitrary; rather, they reflect broader social values such as equality and openness (Hall, 1976; Kramsch, 1998).



These observations suggest that vocabulary and grammar alone are insufficient for language learners. Effective communication also requires an understanding of the cultural norms that underlie language use, including how to express politeness, when to be direct, and how relationships shape discourse. As international contact continues to increase through travel, employment, and technology, this awareness becomes even more crucial. In an increasingly interconnected world, sensitivity to the cultural dimensions of language helps prevent miscommunication, promote mutual respect, and support more effective collaboration.

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# EFFECTS OF GAMING AND DIGITAL MEDIA ON LANGUAGE USAGE

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Digital culture and its effects on language use among young adults have many different aspects to be examined. However, the digital culture that allows individuals to fully benefit from these effects lies deeper within the digital world itself. Nowadays, many people use social media to keep up with news around the world, communicate with others, and socialize. However, very few users go beyond the boundaries set by their own countries. For example, making friends from abroad through social media platforms, following international news sources, observing global events, or even following the same topics, such as sports, from another country's media perspective, are practices that remain relatively uncommon.

Most adult or elderly segments of society either do not use these aspects of digital media or use them very rarely. In contrast, young adults and individuals younger than them engage with digital media extensively and more naturally. This difference in usage leads us to the more subtle aspects of digital media mentioned earlier.



One of the most significant components of digital media is the gaming sector, which plays a major role in language exposure. People tend to communicate and exchange ideas about the games they play, including strategies, future updates, or features they would like to see implemented. Additionally, players often rely on guides, journals, and walkthroughs to improve their gaming experience. Unfortunately, meaningful participation in these activities is often only possible through the use of English. As a result, English has become the core language of gaming culture, since most games and game developers primarily use English, even when they are not from English-speaking countries. Because games are predominantly produced and distributed in English, the broader digital media environment surrounding gaming also operates mainly in English. This leads to gamers being heavily

exposed to English vocabulary and expressions, including many terms that are not commonly encountered in formal school-based English education. For instance, even a basic verb such as get is frequently replaced with more advanced alternatives like acquire in gaming contexts, a word that is more commonly used in academically inclined texts.

Digital media also plays a crucial role not only in vocabulary development but also in speaking and listening skills. As mentioned earlier, individuals in gaming-related digital spaces frequently exchange ideas, which naturally encourages communication in the target language, most often English. Players attempt to speak through in-game voice chats, write messages to ask for opinions, participate in online chat rooms, socialize with others, and become part of fan communities related to the games they enjoy.

As emphasized in English language teaching studies, many of these activities serve as strong examples of natural learning environments. Online chat rooms function as natural writing practice involving real interaction, while voice chat environments help develop both speaking confidence and fluency. Furthermore, exposure to a wide variety of accents from players around the world poses challenges for non-native speakers, which ultimately contributes to the improvement of listening skills. When all these elements are considered together, it becomes clear that digital gaming environments provide not only opportunities for language learning and cultural exchange but also peer-based learning settings. Without the presence of a teacher or authoritative figure, individuals who may feel anxious about being corrected are often more willing to participate actively. This encourages them to write, speak, listen, and engage with the language while enjoying their involvement in digital media.

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Another important aspect of digital media and games is their ability to develop intercultural communication skills. Players interacting with people from different countries are exposed not only to language but also to diverse perspectives and cultural differences.

Through teamwork, competition, and collaboration in online environments, players learn how people from diverse backgrounds communicate, solve problems, and express their ideas. These experiences help individuals become more open-minded and adaptable in global communication environments. Furthermore, many games require collaboration and teamwork, encouraging players to reflect on and reach conclusions about clear and understandable communication, resolve misunderstandings, and strategically use language to achieve common goals. In this way, game environments create more personal and rare communication situations that are difficult to replicate in traditional classroom settings, allowing students to practice language in meaningful and engaging ways.



As the world continues to evolve and technological advancements accelerate, keeping up with these changes may feel increasingly difficult. Languages themselves also continue to transform, sometimes giving the impression that people no longer speak in the same way as before. However, when individuals learn to adapt and harmonize with the opportunities offered by digital media, these changes can become valuable tools that help them navigate and benefit from the modern world.

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# ARTWORK REVIEW:

Özden Duru ÇOLAKOĞLU



## *The School of Athens by Raphael*

*“Framed by the grandeur of classical architecture, Raphael’s School of Athens transforms philosophy into a living vision of the Renaissance, where reason, knowledge, and artistic brilliance unite in a timeless celebration of human thought.”*



# THE SCHOOL OF ATHENS: A MASTERPIECE WITH ALL HIDDEN DETAILS

## Introduction

Many people, when asked about the world's most important architectural structure, immediately think of the Great Pyramid of Giza and understandably so. However, other extraordinary buildings, such as the Pantheon, often do not come to mind. When you visit Rome, your first destination will most likely be the Colosseum, while the Pantheon may be overlooked. Yet it certainly should not be, because it is one of the most influential and best-preserved monuments of ancient architecture. Its perfect proportions, massive dome, and innovative engineering still inspire modern architects today.

In the same way, if I mention the world's greatest painters, names like Michelangelo and Leonardo da Vinci will probably appear in your mind. But what about Raphael? Although he is less frequently mentioned, his artistic style shaped the High Renaissance and influenced generations of artists. His delicate compositions, balanced forms, and emotional expressions make him just as remarkable as the other two masters.

Both examples show that some of the most significant achievements in human history can be forgotten or overshadowed simply because others are more famous. That is why taking a closer look at artists like Raphael or architectural masterpieces like the Pantheon can change the way we understand cultural heritage.

## Work of Art

If you go to the Vatican, you will probably rush to see The Creation of Adam on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel; it is a masterpiece worth seeing. However, you might walk past the nearby rooms without realizing that The School of Athens is painted on one of their walls. You certainly should not skip it, because Raphael's fresco is just as impressive in its intellectual depth and artistic composition. It brings together the greatest philosophers of the ancient world in one harmonious scene, blending architecture, perspective, and symbolism in a way that changed Renaissance art forever.

The figures in this painting have dual meanings. At first glance, The School of Athens seems to be a simple gathering of ancient philosophers, but Raphael intentionally painted them in a way that represents not only historical figures, but also the intellectual spirit of the Renaissance. Each character symbolizes a different branch of knowledge, and many of their poses secretly reference well-known Renaissance artists.



Raphael painted the entire set of library walls, illustrating the four major branches of human knowledge: poetry, justice, religion, and philosophy. In *The School of Athens*, fifty-eight individuals are shown almost life-size, gathered together in the same architectural space. Within this single scene, we can recognize some of the greatest mathematicians, philosophers, and scientists of all time, brought together in one harmonious composition.

Something immediately catches our attention: the two figures standing at the very center of the fresco. Do you recognize them? They are Plato and Aristotle. Aristotle is dressed in shades of blue and brown, while Plato wears a reddish robe and is shown with bare feet. A little further to the left, we see Socrates, who is engaged in a lively discussion with several young men. This detail reflects his famous teaching method, "the Socratic method," which is based on dialogue and questioning.



But let us return to Plato and Aristotle. How do we actually know that these two central figures represent them? The answer lies in the books they hold. Plato wrote the *Timaeus*, one of his most influential works on cosmology and the nature of the universe. Aristotle, on the other hand, holds the *Ethics* (*Ethica*), symbolizing his focus on moral philosophy and practical virtues. These visual clues allow viewers to identify them instantly and understand the contrast between their philosophical ideas.

Hypatia of Alexandria is particularly meaningful in this composition. She was one of the earliest known female mathematicians and philosophers, renowned for her work in astronomy, geometry, and Neoplatonist philosophy. Her presence in the fresco symbolizes intellectual courage and the pursuit of knowledge, especially in a world where women were rarely recognized as scholars. By including Hypatia, Raphael not only honors her tragic yet influential life but also broadens the painting's message to show that the history of ideas is shaped by both men and women.

### Left Side

There are also several statues in the fresco. On Plato's side, we see the statue of Apollo, the Greek god of music, poetry, and the sun. On the opposite side stands Athena, the goddess of intelligence, the

arts, and strategic wisdom. These statues are not random decorations; they symbolize the two different worlds of thought represented by Plato and Aristotle.

Below them, we notice a figure kneeling on the floor, making a geometric drawing with a compass. This is Euclid, or in some interpretations, Archimedes, because of demonstrating a mathematical principle. In addition, Raphael included Diogenes, shown lying casually on the steps to symbolize his rejection of material wealth, and Heraclitus, portrayed with Michelangelo's features, representing deep philosophical reflection.

## Right Side

On Aristotle's side, the figures are more focused on practical knowledge, logic, and the physical sciences. While Plato's side emphasizes abstract ideas, this half of the fresco reflects observation, ethics, and empirical learning. For example, the group around Aristotle includes students studying the measurable aspects of the world, such as geometry, biology, and logic. Nearby, Ptolemy holds a celestial globe, representing astronomy, while Zoroaster holds a terrestrial globe, symbolizing earthly knowledge. Their presence highlights the Renaissance belief in uniting scientific discovery with philosophical inquiry. Together, the two sides of the painting visually express the balance between theoretical thought and practical reasoning, illustrating Raphael's understanding of the harmony between different branches of human knowledge.

## Duality and Artist

Besides, many of the figures in the fresco actually represent other people from Raphael's own time. If you look at Plato more carefully, you will notice that he closely resembles Leonardo da Vinci, sitting calmly and lost in thought. The figure of Heraclitus, also shown alone and contemplative, represents Michelangelo, whom Raphael admired deeply. And remember, Raphael painted all of this when he was only 26 years old. Instead of signing the painting, do you know what he did? He placed himself inside the fresco. On the right side of the composition, Raphael included a small self-portrait: a young man in a black cap looking directly at the viewer. This subtle inclusion was his way of "signing" the masterpiece and placing himself among the greatest thinkers of history.



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# ERASMUS EXPERIENCE:

Salih Kerem AKDEMİR



## *Discovering France Through Erasmus*

***"From the France of postcards to real social interactions, this Erasmus experience reveals how language and culture intertwine in everyday life."***

# DISCOVERING FRANCE THROUGH ERASMUS

Hello everyone. I am Salih Kerem Akdemir. I am a senior studying English Language Teaching at Afyon Kocatepe University. I studied at the ICES (Institut Catholique de Vendée) last year for six months. In this piece, I will talk about my personal experiences with language and culture during that time. I had some prejudices and misconceptions about France before I went there, but living there taught me that culture reveals itself through subtle details and nuances.

I am not sure where to start, but firstly, let me take you beyond the postcard pictures of the Eiffel Tower to the real interactions and social contacts. I took French language classes with a native teacher there. Furthermore, they gave me a “buddy” to fast-forward my adaptation process, and that buddy taught me French as well. I want to start with the linguistic aspect. Spoken French and daily French are two separate things. They do not make sense to a Turkish person like me, at least. In Turkish, our daily life conversations are similar to school Turkish. They are like “alligator” and “crocodile”. However, the similarity between school French and spoken French is like the similarity between a mammal and a reptile.



Do you know how to say, “How are you?” in French? Well, you can say “Comment allez-vous?”, “Ça va?”, “Comment ça va?” or “Ça va bien?”... In the beautiful streets of La Roche-sur-Yon, I always heard strange things like “Ça roule ma poule?” which translates to something like “How is it rolling my chicken?” Well, a foreign reader might think that is not that strange at all. I think alike. The strange thing is the answer to that question. You might hear sounds like “Bof” or “pfff”. As far as I could observe, French people are very vocal. They make mouth noises a lot. As an example, I'd like to mention the lady who worked at the dormitory where I stayed. Whenever she used the keyboard, which incidentally had a design unfamiliar to me, she accompanied every keystroke with sounds like 'tic' or 'tac'. She was a very original person. I think all French people are authentic. I remember every single French person I met there. They all had something that stood out from the rest of the people.



Secondly, I want to talk about the challenges I have faced regarding restaurants and food culture. What I experienced wasn't really challenges, but I was surprised when I experienced them, and I think you might find them strange too. First, I think “eating” is treated like a ceremony in France, not just eating something. They consider all meals-breakfast, lunch, and dinner- to be very important and special. For example, you give greetings to everyone in the restaurant, just like in Turkey. We say “Selamun Aleykum”, they say “Bonjour”. However, you can never call or holler at the waiter; you must wait for him to come to the table. In Turkey, we just call them “Abi, bakar mısın?” which means “Big bro, can you look at here?” In France, that is a rude thing, my friend.

In addition, even if you do not have any space for dessert, just for the culture, you must order one after your food because “it delights the soul more than the stomach.” You need to finish your meal to pay respect to the chef. Bread is not meant to be sliced; it must be broken by hand. In Turkey, some people might find this a bit unhygienic. You can get free tap water by using the correct words “une carafe d'eau”. In Turkey, you must buy a bottle of water. If you are French, I think you might be judged for ordering a croissant after breakfast, but as a foreign student, I had the privilege of eating croissants whenever I wanted. After my first month, I adapted to these rules as if I were born French. I respected the culture.

Thirdly, the thing I admired and respected most, which I still admire and respect, was the bond between the people. They would greet each other, whether they saw each other for the first time or knew each other. We used to have that in Turkey. We would greet each other with "Selamun Aleykum" or "Nasılsın?". I think we lost it. We are more ghosts than people now. I was happy that I got the privilege to have quick chit-chats with people. Also, I observed a great respect for pedestrians. Whenever I walked to a crosswalk, the drivers stopped and waited for me. That respect made me feel like I was being heard and seen.

Although the cultures are different, people's search for hope is the same. There is a superstition in Paris that if you leave a note at Sainte-Geneviève's grave asking for her help to find true love, she will listen to you and make it come true. This is similar to the Turkish tradition of visiting tombs and leaving offerings.



Looking back now, I realize that living in France wasn't just about learning French from grammar books. It was about understanding those 'pfff' sounds, the patience in restaurants, and the smiling faces on the street. It was a chaotic, loud, and beautiful experience. I learned to listen to the culture, not just the words. In conclusion, some habits stick, and some don't. I still hesitate to tear the baguette with my bare hands, but I never hesitate to say 'oui' to a chocolate fondant.



About Dry Grasses, directed by Nuri Bilge Ceylan, offers a contemplative exploration of teaching, personal dissatisfaction, and the emotional realities of life in a remote environment. The film takes place in a small Anatolian town and follows the experiences of a teacher who struggles with isolation, professional frustration, and the expectations placed upon educators in challenging contexts. Although the narrative primarily focuses on an individual character, the film gradually expands into a broader reflection on the nature of teaching itself. For teacher candidates and educators, About Dry Grasses provides an opportunity to reflect on professional identity, the ethical responsibilities of teachers, and the complex relationships that develop within educational settings.



## Teaching in Peripheral Contexts

One of the most striking elements of About Dry Grasses is its portrayal of teaching in geographically isolated areas. Schools in rural settings often function as important social institutions within their communities, yet teachers working in such environments may experience a sense of emotional and intellectual distance from their surroundings.

The film captures this tension through its quiet landscapes and extended dialogues. Rather than presenting the profession through an idealistic lens, it acknowledges that teachers may feel boredom, disappointment, or professional stagnation. These emotions are rarely discussed during teacher training programs, which frequently emphasize dedication and inspiration but less often address the psychological demands of the profession.

From an educational perspective, the film highlights the importance of context in shaping teaching practices. Educators who begin their careers in remote regions must adapt not only to limited resources but also to unfamiliar social expectations. As a result, teaching becomes an ongoing process of adjustment in which empathy and cultural awareness play a central role.

## Ethical Responsibility in the Teaching Profession

Another important theme in About Dry Grasses concerns the ethical dimensions of teaching. Teachers occupy positions of authority and influence, which means that their actions often carry greater consequences than they might initially realize. The film demonstrates how even ordinary interactions between teachers and students can become ethically complex.

Instead of presenting a simple image of the teacher as either inspirational or problematic, the narrative offers a more nuanced portrayal. Educators are shown as individuals who experience doubt, frustration, and contradiction. Moments of professional responsibility coexist with moments of personal dissatisfaction, creating a realistic representation of the emotional challenges involved in teaching.

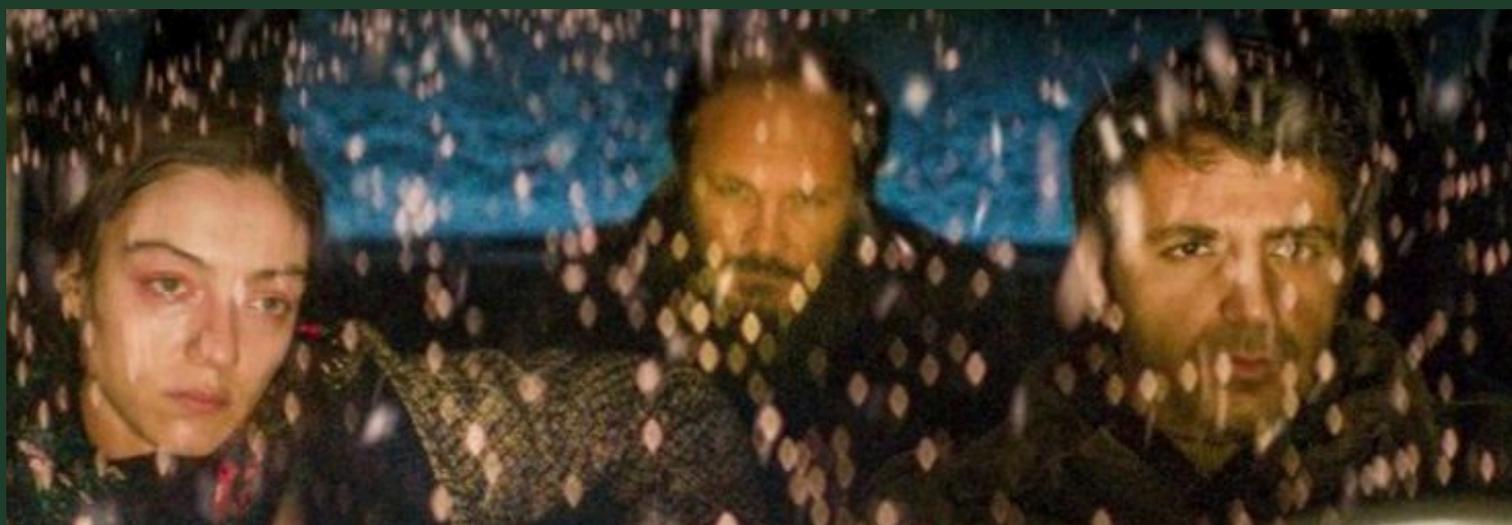
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For future educators, this portrayal encourages reflection on professional boundaries and responsibilities. Teachers must balance authority with approachability while maintaining a respectful learning environment. The film subtly reminds viewers that educational relationships require careful attention because the influence of a teacher often extends far beyond the classroom.

## Power and the Teacher–Student Relationship

The dynamics between teachers and students form an important aspect of the film’s narrative. In many educational films, classrooms are depicted as spaces where charismatic teachers immediately transform their students’ lives. *About Dry Grasses* presents a more complex reality.

In the classroom scenes, communication between teachers and students appears shaped by expectations, personal ambitions, and institutional structures. Students seek recognition and understanding, while teachers attempt to maintain authority and professionalism. These interactions illustrate that teaching is not simply the transmission of knowledge but also the management of human relationships.



This perspective resonates with contemporary discussions in language education and pedagogy. Effective teaching involves emotional intelligence, awareness of classroom dynamics, and the ability to create an environment where students feel respected. At the same time, teachers must remain aware of the power they hold and ensure that this authority is exercised responsibly.

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## Disillusionment and the Limits of Idealism

A recurring theme throughout *About Dry Grasses* is the gradual erosion of idealism. Many teachers begin their careers with strong beliefs about the transformative potential of education. Over time, however, professional realities may challenge these expectations.

The film portrays this process with subtlety and patience. Rather than relying on dramatic plot developments, it focuses on conversations and moments of introspection that reveal the internal conflicts experienced by educators. Through these scenes, the narrative suggests that disillusionment is not necessarily the result of a single event but often emerges from prolonged dissatisfaction and uncertainty.

At the same time, the film has received criticism for its slow pacing and extended dialogue sequences. Some viewers may find that the narrative progresses too gradually, which can reduce the emotional immediacy of the story. However, this deliberate pace also reflects the monotony and reflective nature of the environment depicted in the film. In this sense, the film’s structure mirrors the psychological experience of



## Lessons for Teacher Candidates

Despite its contemplative tone, *About Dry Grasses* offers several valuable insights for aspiring educators. First, it emphasizes that teaching is fundamentally relational. Knowledge and subject expertise are important, but they are not sufficient on their own. Empathy, patience, and ethical awareness play equally significant roles in shaping meaningful educational experiences.

Second, the film highlights the importance of self-reflection. Teachers must continually evaluate their motivations and behaviors to maintain professional integrity. Moments of frustration are inevitable, yet educators must learn to manage these emotions

carefully so that they do not negatively influence their interactions with students.

Finally, the narrative illustrates that teaching cannot be separated from its social and cultural context. Schools operate within communities that shape expectations, values, and opportunities. Teachers who recognize these dynamics are better equipped to create learning environments that are both respectful and effective.

## Conclusion

As a reflective exploration of teaching and personal uncertainty, *About Dry Grasses* offers a thoughtful perspective on the complexities of the teaching profession. Instead of presenting an idealized image of educators, the film portrays teachers as individuals navigating ethical dilemmas, emotional struggles, and challenging working conditions.

For teacher candidates, this portrayal can serve as an invitation to reflect on the realities of their future profession. Teaching requires more than knowledge or enthusiasm. It demands patience, self-awareness, and a deep sense of responsibility toward students. By encouraging viewers to question the



nature of authority, integrity, and professional identity, *About Dry Grasses* ultimately becomes a meaningful cinematic reflection on what it means to teach with awareness and responsibility.

the emotional impact of art is one of its most profound qualities. Art can evoke joy, sadness, anger, or awe, connecting with the viewer on a visceral level. This emotional resonance is why art is used in therapy and healing. Creative expression can help individuals process trauma, cope with stress, and find inner peace. Art therapy has been shown to help foster self-awareness, underscoring the importance of creativity and well-being. Art is a powerful tool for self-expression, an exploration of emotions, and a way to connect with others. It is subjective and personal, and it can be a source of artistic inspiration and well-being.

Art is not confined to galleries or concert halls; it is an integral aspect of life. From the design of everyday objects to the architecture of buildings, artistic principles shape our environment. The pervasive presence of art in our surroundings underscores the importance of creating environments that inspire and uplift. The vibrant colors of a mural, the intricate details of a piece of furniture, or the rhythm of a well-composed melody all contribute to the quality of our daily lives. The value of art is immeasurable, and it deserves recognition and support. Many artists face challenges, but the resilience of the art world and the enduring importance of art ensure that it will continue to create, inspire, and drive progress.



# TRANSLATION: *University Education in Italy*

Esra KARA  
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## UNIVERSITY EDUCATION IN ITALY

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Tertiary education in Italy is mainly provided by a vast network of universities that comply with the framework of the Bologna Process: a series of ministerial agreements among European countries aimed at ensuring the comparability of standards and the quality of higher education qualifications.

Italy participates in the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS), which facilitates student mobility. Credits are units used to measure the total amount of study required of a student in terms of study hours and classes. One credit corresponds to 25 hours of work. One academic year requires a total of 60 credits, which are obtained by passing examinations or through other forms of assessment established by each university. Credits do not measure students' performance in examinations, which is instead expressed through a grading scale out of thirty.

Italy has adopted the "3+2 system," offering a first-cycle degree after three years and a second-cycle degree after an additional two years. These correspond approximately to a Bachelor's and a Master's degree, respectively. The third level of higher education is a postgraduate programme called the Dottorato di ricerca, which corresponds to a PhD.

### **Bachelor's Degree (Laurea triennale)**

This first-cycle degree is equivalent to a bachelor's degree. It takes three years to complete and requires the accumulation of 180 ECTS credits (60 per year). To be admitted to a bachelor's degree programme, students must hold a secondary school diploma or an equivalent foreign qualification.

### **Master's Degree (Laurea magistrale)**

This second-cycle degree is equivalent to a master's degree. It can be obtained through a two-year programme following a bachelor's degree and requires an additional 120 ECTS credits (60 per year). It provides advanced education and training for professions in specific fields that require a high level of qualification. Admission to a master's degree programme requires possession of a first-cycle degree or an equivalent foreign qualification.

### **Single-Cycle Master's Degree (Laurea magistrale a ciclo unico)**

If you choose to study Medicine, Law, Pharmacy, or Pharmaceutical Chemistry and Technology, you must enroll in a single-cycle master's degree programme. This is a five- or six-year master's degree (300 or 360 ECTS credits) that does not require a prior first-cycle degree for admission (similar to an integrated master's degree in the United Kingdom).

### **"University Master" (Master universitario)**

The so-called "Master" in the Italian Education System should not be confused with the master's degree in English-speaking countries. It is an advanced postgraduate course (similar to a postgraduate diploma in the UK) aimed at strengthening, expanding, and refining the skills and competencies of graduates in order to meet the needs of the professional world.

To be admitted to a first-level "Master" (Master di I livello), candidates must hold a first-cycle bachelor's degree. These programmes generally last from six months to one year, and 60 credits are required to obtain the qualification.

To be admitted to a second-level "Master" (Master di II livello), candidates must hold a second-cycle degree (a master's degree or a single-cycle master's degree). This type of "Master" also generally lasts from six months to one year and requires the accumulation of 60 credits. Admission to these programmes usually involves passing an entrance examination.

## Doctorate (Dottorato di ricerca – PhD)

This corresponds to a doctoral degree and is the highest academic qualification awarded by Italian universities upon completion of a programme lasting no less than three years. It provides the skills necessary to carry out high-level research activities in universities, public institutions, and private companies. Admission is subject to an entrance examination. Doctoral programmes are open, without age or nationality limits, to all applicants who already hold a master's degree or an equivalent qualification obtained abroad. The number of available places is specified in the official call for applications.



## Specialisation Schools (Scuole di specializzazione)

These correspond to what are known as postgraduate schools in English-speaking countries. They provide the knowledge and skills required in specific professional fields (mainly medical studies). Admission to a "specialisation school" requires possession of a second-cycle degree. The duration of the programme and the number of credits vary depending on the school.

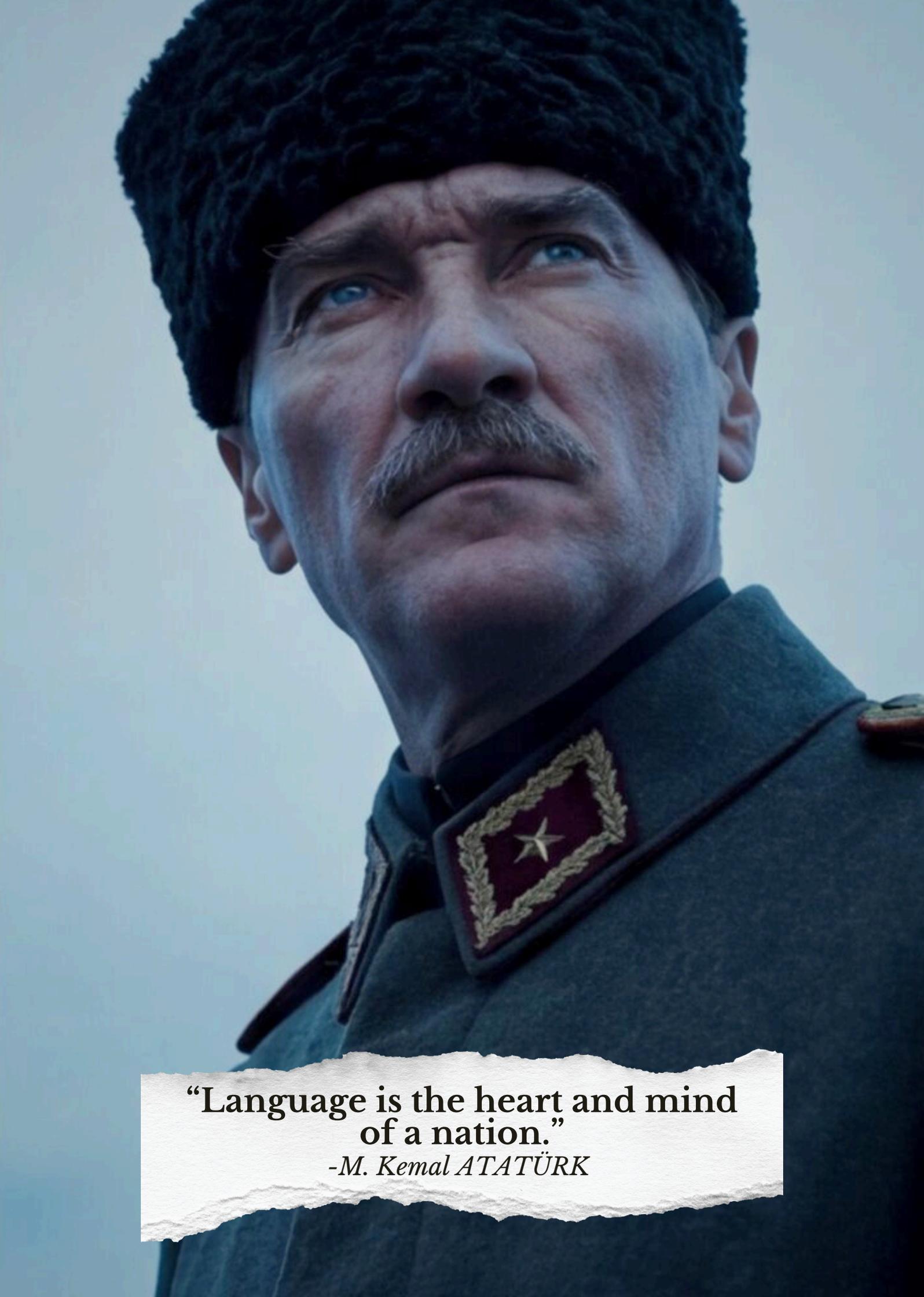
## Advanced Training Courses (Corsi di perfezionamento)

These are advanced courses, mainly for professional development, which allow participants to further develop their skills and advance their professional careers. Unlike a "Master," a corso di perfezionamento does not award an academic degree, but only a certificate specifying the competencies acquired during the course. Admission requires possession of either a first- or second-cycle degree. The duration of the course may vary.

"To see the original form of the text in Italian, please go to website below:"



<https://www.uniupo.it/it/internazionale/studenti/vuoi-venire-all%E2%80%99upo/che-cosa-puoi-studiare/istruzione-universitaria-italia>



“Language is the heart and mind  
of a nation.”

*-M. Kemal ATATÜRK*

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