Weekly Assignment 3
Thinking About Culture through the Lens of Language
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Reading Questions

1. What is Whorf’s theory of language?

Whorf’s theory states that the language we speak affects our thinking because everyone’s reality is modeled unconsciously by the language habits of the group to which it belongs. In this way, language shapes our world experience.

The theory Whorf uses to explain language is Determinism. This means to consider language as a tool that determines our thinking. He came out with his theory through some studies in comparing languages of different countries and realized that these differences were marked by their language. He came to the conclusion that the language determines thought.

According to Whorf, there are two versions of linguistic determinism: weak and strong.

Weak: The language of a speaker has some influence on the way it is conceptualized and memorized as the "reality" primarily at the semantic level.

Strong: Language determines thought fully, so much so that language and thought are the same.

2. How do people who speak languages that rely primarily on geographic coordinates seem to experience space differently than others?

Deutscher states that different languages certainly make us speak about space in very different ways, but this does not necessarily mean that we have to think about space differently. When we give directions, we normally and automatically use relative directions, without ever considering that this could be anything but the ‘ordinary’ and ‘natural’ way of doing things. People that speak different languages describe the orientation of the world around in the same way. Using a geographical system in language means that speakers will also remember past events based on
geographic coordinates. As the directions we use move with us, we will in certain circumstances remember things ‘differently’ than other geographical language speakers.

3. What is Deutscher’s conclusion about how language influences thinking?

Deutscher concluded that there was no evidence that people of different cultures with different mother tongues essentially think the same way. He states that our daily decisions are made on the basis of deductive logic. We have habits of mind that our culture has instilled in us from childhood, shaping our orientation to the world and our emotional responses to the objects we encounter. These habits of mind may also have a marked impact on our belief, values and ideologies. In conclusion, not all people think the same.

4. What does Lakoff mean by “framing” and “re-framing”?

The framework, according to Lakoff, is our way of seeing the world, which becomes visible in the way we think and what we mean by "common sense". It is also visible in speech. Each worldview implies a different language. Only a change the framework would proposes a change in the language and expressions of metaphorical system in political argument. This is why the effects of framing can be seen in many journalism applications.

5. How does language selection relate to framing?

Cognitive science has established that we think in terms of mental frames and metaphors, before entering the analytical reasoning. These mental frames have material existence; they are in the synapses of our brains, physically configured in neural circuits. When the information (data) we
receive is not correlated to registered frames in our brain, we are left with just frames and we ignore the facts.

In other words the language you select when to communicate is closely related to the context and the information that our brain has framed.

6. **What is the “strict father” model (frame) and how does it relate to US politics**

The “strict father” model is one that values discipline and obedience, and therefore bases its moral in punishment and the imposition of fear.

The author examines how American conservatives prevailed in the media discourse that favors the strict father model to legitimize certain political decisions, such as military operations against Iraq.

An alternative proposal based on the denial of the strict father model would be equivalent to stating “do not think of an elephant,” as said by the author. Therefore, the specific proposal of political action that Lakoff holds is to build a different perspective, establishing a different speech.

7. **What is the nurturing parent model (frame) and how does it relate to US politics?**

The vision of the nurturing father is neutral in terms of gender, as it understands that parents are equally responsible for their children's education, and believes that the world is essentially good and can work to improve, despite the difficulties. Also, the education of children involves two basic attitudes such as empathy and responsibility, which can be recognized as progressive political values which in turn derive specific policies based on concern for others, justice,
protection the fulfillment in life, liberty, opportunity, prosperity, service, cooperation, trust, honesty and communication.

8. **What is Hypocognition?**

Lakoff described Hypocognition as “the lack of having a progressive philosophy framed around the progressive core values of empathy and responsibility such as ‘effective government’ versus ‘less government’ or ‘broader prosperity’ versus ‘free markets.’”

In other words, hypocognition is a linguistic style meaning to lack the appropriated phrases and vocabulary to effectively communicate an idea. It means the words or expressions that need to exist to frame an idea in a way that can lead to persuasive communication are either non-existent or ineffective.
Works Cited
