

Alternative pronoun forms expressing different kinds of orientation to the addressee. The T forms (so-called from the initial of French *tu*) are typically singular and mark familiarity; the V forms (from French *vous*) are typically plural and mark politeness. A mutual use of T encodes intimacy and social closeness; a mutual use of V encodes respect and social distance. Asymmetrical usage identifies a power or status imbalance.

1.5 Language and culture

There is a tradition of study in linguistic anthropology which addresses the relationship between language and **culture**.

We follow Ward Goodenough in taking culture as socially acquired knowledge:

a society's culture consists of whatever it is one has to know or believe in order to operate in a manner acceptable to its members ... Culture, being what people have to learn as distinct from their biological heritage, must consist of the end-product of learning: knowledge, in a most general ... sense of the term.

(Goodenough (1957, p.167)

Such knowledge is socially acquired: the necessary behaviours are learned and do not come from any kind of genetic endowment. Culture, therefore, is the 'know-how' that a person must possess to get through the task of daily living. For language use, this is similar to the concept of communicative competence. The key issue addressed here is the nature of the relationship between a specific language and the culture in which it is used.

There are several possible relationships between language and culture. One is that social structure may either influence or determine linguistic structure and/or behaviour. Certain evidence may be adduced to support this view. For instance, given the evidence of the **age-grading** phenomenon (i.e. young children speak differently from older children, and, in turn, children speak differently from mature adults), we could argue that the social organization of age groups influences the language used in these groups. Another possible piece of evidence for this direction of influence is studies which show that the varieties of language that speakers use reflect such matters as their regional, social, or ethnic origin and possibly even their gender. In both cases it might be that social structures (age group, region, social class, ethnic group) account for – possibly even determine – linguistic structure (language varieties of various kinds).

A second possibility is directly opposed to the first: linguistic structure and/or behaviour may either influence or determine social structure or **worldview**. This is the view that is behind the **Whorfian hypothesis**, the claim that the structure of a language influences how its speakers view the world.