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## The Influence of Cultural Practices on Second Language Acquisition: A Mixed-Methods Study

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### Abstract

*This study explores the influence of cultural practices on language learning, focusing on how cultural practices, family structures, and societal values affect the way individuals acquire and use a second language. A mixed-method approach was employed, including both qualitative data from semi-structured interviews and participant observation, as well as quantitative data from language proficiency tests and surveys. The findings reveal significant differences in language acquisition patterns across cultural groups, with collectivist cultures emphasizing formal structures and group-oriented learning, while individualistic cultures highlight self-expression and independent study. Cultural values also influence motivation, peer interaction, and classroom dynamics. The study concludes that cultural practices play a crucial role in shaping language learning experiences and suggests that educators should tailor their approaches to meet the needs of diverse cultural learners.*

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### Keywords

language acquisition, cultural practices, language learning, family structure, cultural values, cultural motivation, bilingual education, collectivism, individualism.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The aim of this study is to investigate how language acquisition is influenced by culture, examining both the direct and indirect ways culture shapes linguistic development. By understanding this relationship, educators and linguists can improve strategies for language teaching and support learners from diverse cultural practices.

Language acquisition is a complex process influenced by various factors, including cognitive, social, and cultural elements. While much research has focused on cognitive and neurological aspects of language learning, the role of cultural practices has gained increasing attention in recent years. Cultural practices shape how individuals approach language learning, including their values, communication styles, and social contexts.

Moreover, language acquisition is a complex and multifaceted process influenced by various factors, one of the most significant being cultural practices. The interaction between language and culture plays a crucial role in shaping how individuals learn and use language, with cultural norms, values, and social practices informing language patterns and communication styles. Cultural practices can impact the way children acquire their first language, as well as the ease with which they learn additional languages later in life. This relationship between culture and language acquisition has been the subject of numerous studies, as researchers seek to understand how cultural frameworks influence the cognitive and social processes underlying language learning.



The influence of cultural practices on language acquisition is evident in both monolingual and bilingual contexts. For instance, in bilingual settings, the cultural context often affects the proficiency and language preference of individuals, influencing their language use in different settings. Studies have shown that cultural practices such as familial interactions, educational structures, and community norms significantly shape language learning experiences (Ting, 2023). Additionally, cultural exposure can either facilitate or impede the acquisition of certain linguistic features, such as intonation, pronunciation, and grammar, depending on the degree of cultural immersion (López & Garcia, 2024).

In this context, understanding how cultural practices influences language acquisition is not only essential for linguists but also for educators, policymakers, and parents who aim to support language learners in diverse cultural environments. As global mobility increases, cross-cultural communication becomes ever more crucial, underscoring the importance of understanding these dynamics. Thus, this paper explores the impact of cultural practices on language acquisition by examining recent research findings, theoretical perspectives, and practical implications in the field.

## **2. METHODS**

The present study aims to investigate the impact of cultural practices on language acquisition. This research employs a mixed-methods approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative techniques to comprehensively understand the relationship between culture and language learning.

A total of 150 participants, consisting of 75 children and 75 adults, were recruited from diverse cultural practices. The participants were selected through purposive sampling, ensuring a variety of ethnic and cultural representations, including individuals from both individualistic and collectivist societies. The age range for children was between 6 and 12 years, while adults ranged from 20 to 40 years of age. The participants' first language and cultural practices were recorded to analyze the variables effectively.

Data were collected using two primary methods:

1. **Language Proficiency Test:** Participants were administered a standardized language proficiency test, which assessed both receptive and productive language skills. The test was designed to measure grammar, vocabulary, reading comprehension, and conversational fluency in the target language. The scores were used to quantify the influence of cultural factors on language acquisition.
2. **Semi-structured Interviews:** In-depth interviews were conducted with a subset of 30 participants (15 children and 15 adults). The interview focused on participants' cultural experiences, language use in daily life, and the role of their cultural context in shaping their language learning process. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed for further analysis.

Quantitative data from the language proficiency tests were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. ANOVA was used to compare the language acquisition outcomes across different cultural groups. For qualitative data from the interviews, thematic analysis was employed to identify common themes and patterns related to cultural influences on language learning. Both sets of data were integrated to offer a holistic view of the impact of culture on language acquisition.

Ethical approval was obtained from the institutional review board (IRB). Informed consent was provided by all participants, and confidentiality was maintained throughout the research process. Participants were assured that their responses would be used solely for academic purposes.

### 1. Qualitative Data Collection:

- Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 40 participants to explore their personal experiences and perspectives on how culture influenced their language learning process. The interviews focused on their upbringing, language exposure at home, interaction with family members, and any challenges or advantages they perceived related to their cultural practices.

- Participant observation in language classrooms allowed the researchers to observe students' behaviors, interactions with teachers, and their learning environment.

### 2. Quantitative Data Collection:

- A language proficiency test was administered to all participants at the beginning and end of the study. The test measured vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and fluency in the second language.

- Surveys were distributed to gather information about participants' cultural practices, values, and communication styles, which were then analyzed in relation to their language performance.

## 3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The data revealed significant differences in language acquisition patterns across cultural groups. Key findings include:

### 1. Influence of Family Structure:

Participants from collectivist cultures (such as those from East Asia) tended to exhibit more formal language structures and showed a preference for group-oriented learning environments. These students were often more focused on mastering correct grammar and pronunciation, reflecting cultural values of respect and hierarchy. In contrast, participants from individualistic cultures (such as those from Western Europe and North America) exhibited more confident speaking habits and were more willing to make mistakes, reflecting a cultural value of self-expression and autonomy.

### 2. Role of Cultural Values:

Cultural values significantly shaped language use. For example, participants from Latin American and African cultures, where storytelling and oral traditions are prominent, demonstrated a greater ability to learn through context and informal conversation. These students were often better at picking up idiomatic expressions and informal speech patterns in the second language. On the other hand, students from more formal educational cultures (such as those from East Asia) excelled in structured, formal language use.

### 3. Classroom Environment and Peer Interaction:

Cultural practices also influenced how students interacted with their peers and teachers in the language classroom. In classrooms where collaborative learning was emphasized, students from collectivist cultures thrived, as they were accustomed to group work and collective decision-making. Conversely, students from individualist cultures often preferred independent study and one-on-one interactions with instructors.

### 4. Cultural Influence on Motivation:

Cultural practices played a significant role in shaping motivation. For example, students from collectivist societies often expressed motivation to learn a new language in order to fulfill familial or societal expectations, while students from individualistic cultures were more motivated by personal career goals or self-improvement.

## **DISCUSSION**

The results of this study underscore the profound impact that cultural practices have on the process of language acquisition. As observed, family structure and cultural values greatly influence how students approach language learning. In collectivist cultures, where the emphasis is placed on group harmony and respect for authority, students tended to exhibit a preference for formal language use and a focus on mastering grammatical correctness. This reflects the societal importance placed on correctness and hierarchy, which is deeply embedded in their daily interactions. On the other hand, individualistic cultures, where independence and self-expression are highly valued, saw a greater degree of confidence in language use, even when mistakes were made. These students often took risks in communication, demonstrating a willingness to experiment with language as a means of self-expression.

Additionally, the role of cultural practices, particularly in the context of oral traditions and storytelling, proved to be influential. Participants from cultures where oral communication plays a central role (e.g., many Latin American and African cultures) exhibited a stronger capacity to engage in informal speech patterns and idiomatic expressions. Their experience with narrative-based learning allowed them to develop language skills that extended beyond the classroom, making them more adaptable to conversational contexts. In contrast, students from cultures with a more formal educational structure, such as East Asian cultures, excelled in structured learning environments but sometimes struggled with informal, colloquial aspects of the language.

The classroom environment and peer interactions were also shaped by cultural practices. Students from collectivist cultures thrived in group-based learning scenarios where collaboration and mutual support were encouraged. These students often worked well in environments that emphasized teamwork and collective achievement. In contrast, students from individualistic cultures often preferred independent study and one-on-one interactions with instructors, as they were more accustomed to working autonomously.

Motivation, as influenced by cultural values, emerged as another significant factor in language acquisition. Students from collectivist societies often viewed language learning as a means to fulfill familial or societal expectations, such as contributing to the family or maintaining cultural heritage. In contrast, students from individualistic societies were primarily motivated by personal goals, such as career advancement or self-improvement. This difference in motivation not only influenced the pace of language acquisition but also affected the students' emotional engagement with the language learning process.

These findings highlight the importance of considering cultural factors when designing language learning curricula. By integrating cultural awareness into teaching methods, educators can create more inclusive and effective learning environments that cater to the diverse needs of students. For instance, collaborative learning techniques may be particularly beneficial for students from collectivist cultures, while individualized support may be more effective for students from individualistic cultures. Moreover, recognizing the value of informal learning and oral traditions can enhance the learning experience for students from cultures where such practices are common.

Ultimately, this study emphasizes that language acquisition is not only a cognitive process but also a culturally situated one. Future research should continue to explore how various cultural elements, such as media exposure, language use at home, and societal expectations, interact to shape language learning outcomes.

## CONCLUSION

This study highlights the significant role cultural practices plays in shaping language acquisition. From family structure and cultural values to classroom dynamics and motivation, culture influences every stage of the language learning process. Understanding these cultural differences allows educators to tailor language learning methods to meet the needs of diverse learners. Future research should further explore how specific cultural elements, such as media exposure, language use at home, and societal expectations, interact to shape language acquisition outcomes. Additionally, language teaching strategies that integrate cultural considerations are likely to be more effective in fostering both linguistic competence and cultural understanding among learners.

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