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Pishghadam, R., Ebrahimi, S., Naji Meidani, E., & Derakhshan, A. (2020). An introduction to cultuling analysis in light of variational pragmatics: A step toward euculturing. *Journal of Research in Applied Linguistics*, 11(2), 44-56. <https://doi.org/10.22055/RALS.2020.15945>

## Research Paper

# An Introduction to Cultuling Analysis in Light of Variational Pragmatics: A Step Toward Euculturing

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Received: 07/01/2020

Accepted: 20/07/2020

## Abstract

Because language and culture are inextricably intermingled, scrutinizing the indispensable role of the language of a speech community can yield significant information about its culture. Conceptualized under an overarching field of study, culturology of language, Pishghadam (2013) postulates how the realizations of cultuling (culture in language) and metacultuling can be entrenched in a language. Each metacultuling is composed of interrelated cultulings, appearing in the form of linguistic expressions. Cultuling can be manifested if we embark upon the macrosocial factors such as region, ethnicity, age, social status, and gender on language in (inter)action and on intralingual pragmatic conventions embedded in variational pragmatics (VP). This study elaborates on the aforementioned conceptualizations along with the previous studies drawing on cultuling analysis (CLA) as an innovative method for the analysis of language. It also illuminates how CLA can manifest the cultural memes hidden in language and the cultural functions of linguistic expressions. Finally, it discusses how identifying defective cultural memes can help purify culture and pave the way for euculturing.

**Keywords:** Culture; Cultuling; Metacultuling; Euculturing; Variational Pragmatics (VP)

## 1. Introduction

The interconnectedness between language, thought, and culture has been foregrounded by such outstanding scholars as Wilhelm von Humboldt, Franz Boas, Edward Sapir, Benjamin Whorf, Paul Friedrich, Michael Agar, and Karen Risager. These scholars' major surmise was whether a language embodies a culture and whether a language constrains the thinking of its speakers. The question of whether a language inhibits the thinking of its speakers due to its morphosyntactic peculiarities was raised by Humboldt (as cited in Risager, 2012), and later the idea was endorsed by Sapir and Whorf (1956) whose hypothesis, presented in two versions, has been the most polemical and dominant view in this area: The strong version states that language determines thought (linguistic determinism), and the weak version propounds that speaker's thoughts are shaped by his or her L1 (linguistic relativity). Accordingly, people think differently because they speak different languages.

To demystify and "help to get rid of the decades-long balancing act between 'language *and* culture' (how much of each?), 'language *in* culture' (culture *in* language)" (Friedrich, 1989, p. 307, italics in the original), Friedrich (1989) conceptualizes *linguaculture* as a "domain of experience that fuses and intermingles the vocabulary, many semantic aspects of grammar, and the verbal aspects of culture; both grammar and culture have an underlying structure while they are constantly being used and constructed by actual people" (pp. 306-307). Friedrich (1989) accentuates that there are dimensions of culture that are not related to language. Concomitantly, he presupposes that there are dimensions of language that are not cultural. To him, the interface of language and culture does not encompass all of culture, but rather "the verbal aspects of culture" (1989, p. 306). For him, language and culture account for a single domain (i.e., linguaculture), where the verbal aspects of culture merge with semantic meanings. Another influential trend of work on



the interrelation between language and culture has been described as the social-anthropological/sociolinguistic approach, which was advocated by the work of scholars such as Michael Agar who considers culture as residing in language and language as being loaded with culture. Borrowing the term from Friedrich (1989), Agar (1994) propounds the concept of *linguaculture* to manifest the relationship between language and culture, especially in conjunction with the discussion of Sapir-Whorf's (1956) linguistic relativity, the extent to which language determines or influences thought. Agar (1994) postulates that "language, in all its varieties, in all the ways it appears in everyday life, builds a world of meanings. Language fills up the spaces between us with the sound; culture forges the human connection through them" (p. 28). He lucidly encapsulates this interrelation as "culture is in language, and language is loaded with culture" (p. 28). Agar's (1994) alteration of the term linguaculture and his suggestion of linguaculture put a premium on meaning in discourse, particularly in conversation, and the meanings include, but go beyond, what the dictionary and the grammar offer. Agar (1994) endorses the weak version of the Whorfian (1956) hypothesis that states that language, thought, and culture are interrelated.

Whereas Agar (1994) puts emphasis on ethnographic studies of linguaculture in local settings, pinpointing the inseparability of language and culture, Risager's (2006, 2011, 2012) most comprehensive account of the interrelation of language and culture takes a transnational and global vantage point toward her first postulations of linguaculture as well as her recent writings of linguaculture. The transnational viewpoint extends Hannerz's (1992) theory on transnational cultural flows and cultural complexity. Whereas Hannerz (1992) expounds that the world is characterized by diverse cultural flows like images, music, food, clothing, and so on, Risager (2006) contends that these flows encompass linguistic flows: flows of English, Danish, and so forth, including varieties and mixtures of these. She intermingles sociolinguistics with cultural and social anthropology to instantiate the relationship between language and culture. She persuasively argues that the interface between language and culture needs to be investigated in terms of social linguistic practice, of the individual's psychological resources, and of language as a system. Language is primarily characterized as language practices and linguistic resources spreading in social networks across national structures and communities in the world. She believes that people carry their linguistic resources with them from one cultural context to the next, as they move around the world. In the first position, language and culture are separable entities inasmuch as the fact that individual languages are utilized in multifarious ways, cultures, and contexts, whereas in the second position, language and culture are inextricably bound in the psychology of the individual. The third position maintains that a language can be realized as a system; yet, there is no corresponding systematic realization of culture. In other words, she holds the view that language and culture can be separated, and that language is never culturally neutral, extending the national paradigm to a transnational view of both language and culture.

Risager (2006) extends the scope of linguaculture by examining it in three interrelated dimensions: semantic-pragmatic, poetic, and identity. The semantics and pragmatics of language is the dimension explored by Sapir, Whorf, and Agar. This dimension takes into account the interplay of constancy and variability in the semantic and pragmatic potentials and practices of specific languages as opposed to other languages. The poetic dimension has to do with the aesthetic uses of language in play and ritual and is associated with the studies of literature. The identity dimension of language is also called social meaning by some sociolinguists like Hymes (1967). This dimension is related to the social, cultural, and personal variation of the choice of language or variety of language, not least its pronunciation. Risager (2011) reiterates that linguaculture is "both structurally constrained and socially and personally variable. It is a bridge between the structure of language and the socially constituted personal idiolect" (p. 109). When a person speaks English, he draws on the meaning structures and conventions of the English language and, simultaneously, embodies his personal connotations and life experiences in his speech which can be influenced by macrosocial pragmatic variations, encompassing such five factors as region, ethnicity, age, social status, and gender on language in (inter)action and on intralingual pragmatic conventions.

The variation in the semantic-pragmatic dimension as well as the identity dimension can be explained by variational pragmatics (VP; Barron, 2005, 2017, 2019; Barron & Schneider, 2009; Schneider, 2010, 2012, 2017; Schneider & Barron, 2008, 2014). VP is conceptualized as a subdiscipline of intercultural pragmatics and situated at the intersection of pragmatics and modern dialectology, as a branch of contemporary sociolinguistics. It is characterized as the systematic analysis of the effects of regional and social factors on language in action and interaction. VP, on the one hand, intends to examine the effects of such factors as region, ethnicity, age, social status, and gender on language in (inter)action and on intralingual pragmatic conventions in pragmatics research; on the other hand, it makes an attempt to

add the pragmatic level to the other language levels which have been dominantly analyzed in dialectology, especially phonology, lexis, and morphosyntax. Barron and Schneider (2009) distinguish five levels of pragmatic analysis that are conceptualized as formal, actional, interactional, topic, and organizational.

The starting point of the formal level is the linguistic forms such as discourse markers to establish form-to-function mapping in interaction. Function-to-form mapping is the focus of the actional level to establish the formal realizations available to perform the respective speech act. On the interactional level, the analysis goes beyond individual acts and focuses on dialogical units such as adjacency pairs, speech act sequences, and the structure of complete speech events. The topic level is the level on which propositions and sequences of propositions as well as topic selection, topic management, and topic development are dealt with. Also included is the question which topics may be selected under which circumstances (Schneider, 2010). The organizational level aims to integrate findings from ethnomethodology and conversation analysis. It takes into consideration the mechanisms of turn-taking, dialogical discourse, and such phenomena as simultaneous speech and silence are involved.

All these enterprises about the relationship between language and culture can be subsumed as part of the broad discipline of cultural linguistics. A number of cognitive linguists were inspired by Palmer's (1996) paradigm of cultural linguistics to explore the underlying mechanism of language in culture. Palmer (1996) mentions that "language is the play of verbal symbols that are based in imagery" (p. 3) which is culturally constructed and reconstructed. Palmer (1996) argues that culturally constructed imagery impacts narrative, figurative language, phonology, semantics, and grammar. Palmer (1996) cogently fleshes out that analytical tools of cognitive linguistics like schema, image schema, and conceptual metaphor have cultural bases.

Culture has received due attention in diverse fields of study. In anthropology and sociology, culture is viewed as people's way of living and includes their beliefs, values, behaviors, manners, norms, literature, art, architecture, customs, and so on (Henslin, Possamai, Possamai-Inesedy, Marjoribanks, & Elder, 2015). Exploring the relationship between language, culture, and context from a sociocognitive perspective, Kecskes (2015) conceptualizes culture as a set of shared knowledge structures that manifest the norms, values, and customs to which the members of a society have access. He views context as a dynamic construct that captures both prior context, residing in the speaker's mind, and the actual situational context, existing in the external world. Thereby, culture is a means of communication and interaction among the members of a group, and so the analysis of a culture reflects its people's lifestyle, attitudes, beliefs, and ways of thinking (Wardhaugh, 2010). Alternatively, Brown (1994) considers culture a context in which people learn how to think, feel, and connect with others. Hofstede and Minkov (2010) also believe that a society's culture has a great influence on its people's thoughts, feelings, and actions through which the cultural attitude dominant in a society affects people's attitudes. In effect, culture is transmitted and created by symbolic-meaningful systems (Parsons, 1977) and one begins to build a knowledge base of acceptable behaviors (Bertsch, 2011).

Language, a symbolic communicative system, is one of the ways through which culture is transmitted (Bates & Plog, 1990; Derakhshan, 2018; Pishghadam & Ebrahimi, 2020; Rabiah, 2012). Positing cultural semiotics or semiotics of culture, Torop (2002, 2014) elaborates that cultural semiotics aims to explore cultures as a type of human symbolic activity and as a system of cultural languages. Highlighting that language and the concept of text are the major constituents of cultural semiotics, Torop (2002, 2014) mentions that text is used as a manifestation of a language, whereas, at the same time, texts are thought to create languages. Besides, Torop (2002, 2014) argues that every culture has tools for self-description and every culture is a metasystem of object and metalanguages, including verbal, visual, audiovisual, and so on. The close relationship between language and culture (i.e., culture-in-language) demonstrates a great overlap between them (Langacker, 1994) which *per se* leads us to contemplate that language is tantamount to culture (Kramsch, Cain, & Murphy-Lejeune, 2009; Liddicoat, Papademetre, Scarino, & Kohler, 2003) whereby its teaching needs to be implemented as an integrated part of language classes (Byram, 1997, 2012; Crozet & Liddicoat, 2000) and "the meanings of a particular language represent the culture of a particular social group and to interact with a language means to do so with the culture which is its reference point" (Nabi, 2017, p. 91). Likewise, Lakoff (1987) expounds that language is influential in shaping one's behavior and in order to learn about the habits and culture of a group of people, one can analyze their language. Based on this hypothesis, language and thought are inseparable, both of which can affect people's way of acting (Richards & Schmidt, 2002; Zlatev & Blomberg, 2015).

Regarding the relation between language and thought, Vygotsky (1978, 1986) considers the two in line with each other and believes that humans think with language and no thought would exist without it. By introducing the mediation theory, Vygotsky (1978) claims that culture is a kind of social behavior and that there exists a strong relationship between the culture of a speech community and the thoughts of its people. There is also the view that does not assume any relationship between language, thought, and culture. Proponents of this position include Chomsky (1965, 1995) and Pinker (1994) who consider language separable from its sociocultural context.

With respect to the indubitable roles of culture-in-language and language-in-culture, this study is based on two premises: (1) The culture of a country can, as its intellectual infrastructure, bring about progress and development in the society, and (2) language is the product of interactions, beliefs, and behaviors in culture (Pishghadam & Ghahari, 2012). Thus, “an accurate analysis of a language can reflect the culture that governs the society where it is spoken” (Pishghadam, 2013, p. 52). In other words, by examining the linguistic components and the effects of the macrosocial factors of region, ethnicity, age, social status, and gender on language in (inter)action and on intralingual pragmatic conventions (Barron, 2015, 2017, 2019; Barron & Schneider, 2009; Schneider, 2010, 2012, 2017; Schneider & Barron, 2008, 2014) that include cultural information, we can learn about the dominant culture of a speech community. From this point of view, it is assumed that “by better understanding each element of language, culture, and thought, it may be possible to have a better cultural system and to accelerate growth and advancement” (Pishghadam, 2013, p. 52). Just as linguistic analysis can be done at the phoneme, lexicon, sentence, and discourse levels across the formal, actional, interactional, topic, and organizational levels (Barron & Schneider, 2009), it can also be carried out at the level of culture and can yield important and invaluable information regarding the thoughts and attitudes dominant among a group of people. To this purpose, first a brief account of the notions underlying the study (i.e., cultural meme and cultling) will be given, and then CLA, as a new method for the analysis of language, along with a review of the related studies will be presented.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

### 2.1. Cultural Meme

Inspired by Darwin’s ideas, Dawkins (1976) coined the term *meme* in his famous book, *The Selfish Gene*, and founded the science of *memetics*. Meme, rhyming with the word *gene*, means “cultural gene.” According to this theory, memes are considered as units of information in the brain, just like genetic information that resides in the DNA (Dawkins, 1982). These codes are a combination of biological and mental factors intertwined with social and cultural factors. Patterns, concepts, and ideas are stored in the memes. Clothing styles, music, common idioms, and the like are examples of cultural memes (Dawkins, 1989).

According to Dawkins (1976), cultural memes are like genes of living beings which are informative in nature and are identical (Aunger, 2002). He believes that just like genes, cultural memes undergo transmission, mutation, and replication, and may even be healthy or defective. Sometimes, genes spread rapidly and slowly at times. People can be considered as carriers of these information codes, which play an important role in their transmission through communication. It should be noted, however, that memes do not literally adhere to the features of genes, but evolve and replicate like them symbolically (Blackmore, 2010).

Because the common norms and behaviors in a culture are shaped by its cultural memes, it can be said that culture is a gene that can be passed on from one generation to another and has a great influence on the lives of individuals. If the gene is good, we will see good behavior and people will have social and mental health; if the gene is bad, we will witness inappropriate and abnormal behavior and people will malfunction socially and mentally. In other words, “a healthy culture creates rational behavior that can cause its people to grow. An unhealthy culture, on the other hand, by producing mental illness makes pathogenic behavior, which slows down the process of human development” (Pishghadam, 2013, p. 48).

Memes can be considered as subunits of culture which are usually transmitted by copying and imitation, so we learn them from our ancestors and transmit them to our children (Dawkins, 1989). These memes can be transmitted in various forms: language (oral and written), architecture, music, art, and so on. In general, the adaptability of culture to the environment makes it possible to capture, transmit, and reproduce information in the memes. Therefore, in different environments, we see different cultures (Blackmore, 2010).

Dawkins (1976) argues that the reproduction of memes is subject to modification, synthesis, and change by others' beliefs. As language and linguistic norms evolve and change in society, the morals, patterns, and norms of a society can also evolve. For example, in today's audiovisual world, social media and the Internet have accelerated the transmission of cultural memes and helped to transform them. In addition, some memes are short-lived and die within one or a few generations, whereas others are strong enough to remain with humans throughout many generations. The short-term example is the many linguistic expressions that were only around for some decades and no one ever mentioned them again, and the long-term example is the concept of God and religious beliefs that have always been important in human life and have been passed down from one generation to another. Some memes are easily visible and recognizable. Others, on the other hand, are taken for granted. There are also memes which are hidden and may reappear after a few generations like clothing trends.

In line with Dawkins, Lynch (1996) compares memes to germs that are contagious and talked about thought contagion. He states that similar to Darwin's evolutionary theory, some ideas and beliefs have survived throughout history and have been passed on from one generation to the next, whereas others have been lost. Some thoughts are strong and some are weak, and those that survive are the ones most people tend to like.

In addition, Brodie (2009) drew on the term *viruses of the mind* as a simile to introduce memes. According to him, memes are particles of culture that spread like a virus quickly and can infect all members of a society. Viruses are everywhere. For example, when you read a newspaper or listen to the radio, you may get a mental virus. You are controlled by the news and you may not know it yourself. Viral language can be influential, generate discourse, and create new behavior. It is a language that can last for years and become part of a culture. Clothing trends, too, can be viral and epidemic and persist for years in a country and become part of its culture. New products or inventions can also be pervasive, contagious, and lasting. Occasionally, the environment itself plays the role of the virus. Living in a particular environment (e.g., desert or mountainous) creates certain types of behaviors and forms the culture of the people living there. Viruses also play an important role in jobs and professions. As each profession has its own requirements, it entails specific activities and produces special behaviors and discourse. As can be seen, cultural memes play an important role in the language and behavior of the members of a society.

## 2.2. *Cultuling*

Acknowledging the relationship between language and culture, Pishghadam (2013) holds that by examining the language of a society, one can gain insight into its people's culture, which he calls the *culturology of language*. He cogently argues what is required for the culturology of language is knowledge of the history and L1 of that culture, as well as expertise in sociology and psychology. Pishghadam, Firoozian Pour Esfahani, and Tabatabaee Farani (2018) postulate that "since the cultural characteristics of each society are reflected in its language, one can gain knowledge of the dominant culture through the analysis of language and, in particular, the linguistic components containing cultural information" (p. 68).

In this regard, inspired by the ideas of Halliday (1975, 1994), Vygotsky (1978, 1986), Sapir-Whorf (1956), and Agar (1994), Pishghadam (2013) combines the two words *language* and *culture* and conceptualizes the concept of *cultuling*, which means "culture in language." Cultuling refers to the structures and expressions of language that represent the cultural background of a nation and includes a reciprocal relationship between language and culture. That is, "language can represent the culture of a society" (Pishghadam, 2013, p. 47). Finding these cultulings requires a careful scrutiny of language within the context of history and society. In other words, investigating the language of a society can reveal its hidden culture.

From a multitude of cultulings, one can obtain *metacultulings* which give a better picture of a country's cultural system. "Metacultulings depict the general outline of a culture and also manage their subcultulings" (Pishghadam, 2013, p. 58). In other words, the cultulings within a speech community actually fit into a larger category called metacultuling, and each metacultuling incorporates subtler but interrelated cultulings. Therefore, each metacultuling can be defined as a set of deeper-linked cultulings. Figure 1 depicts these relationships:



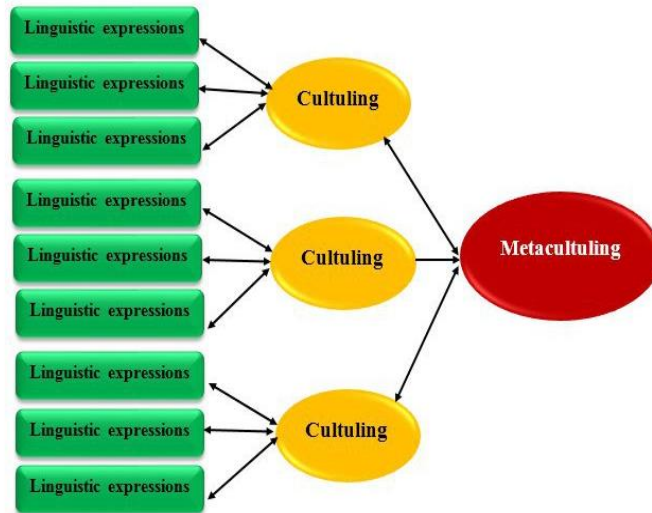


Figure 1. Cultuling and Metacultuling

(Adapted from “Introducing Cultuling as a Dynamic Tool in Culturology of Language” by R. Pishghadam, 2013, *Language and Translation Studies*, 45, p. 58. Copyright 2013 by *The Journal of Language and Translation Studies*)

What follows is an example of a metacultuling, with one of its cultulings and the related linguistic expressions.

2.2.1. Metacultuling: Collectivism

According to Hofstede (1986), collectivism refers to societies in which people belong to strong and cohesive groups, right from birth. This is in contrast with individualism, which pertains to societies in which the individual is important and ties between individuals are loose. In sum, the major differences between individualist and collectivist societies are depicted in Table 1:

Table 1 Ten Differences Between Collectivist and Individualist Societies

Individualism	Collectivism
Everyone is supposed to take care of himself or herself and his or her immediate family only	People are born into extended families or clans which protect them in exchange for loyalty
“I” – consciousness	“we” – consciousness
Right of privacy	Stress on belonging
Speaking one’s mind is healthy	Harmony should always be maintained
Others classified as individuals	Others classified as in-group or out-group
Personal opinion expected: One person one vote	Opinions and votes predetermined by in-group
Transgression of norms leads to guilt feelings	Transgression of norms leads to shame feelings
Languages in which the word “I” is indispensable	Languages in which the word “I” is avoided
Purpose of education is learning how to learn	Purpose of education is learning how to do
Task prevails over relationship	Relationship prevails over task

Note. Adapted from “Dimensionalizing Cultures: The Hofstede Model in Context,” by G. Hofstede (2011), *Online Readings in Psychology and Culture*, 2(1), p. 11. Copyright 2011 by The International Association for Cross-Cultural Psychology.

Overall, collectivist societies put a great deal of emphasis on relationships among people. These relationships are usually hierarchical and based on power distance and respect. Individuals’ identities depend on their group membership, and so the notion of “we” is prevalent in language. In other words, each individual is seen as belonging to a larger group, whose norms must be followed and disagreements should be avoided as much as possible.

2.2.2. Cultuling: Overgeneralizing

This cultuling is very similar to the concept of *stereotyping*, which comes from the combination of two Greek words: *stereos* (meaning “solid”) and *typos* (meaning “model”; Miller, 1982). Stereotyping is mostly used for applying characteristics to people based on their macrosocial factors of region, ethnicity, age, social status, and gender on language in (inter)action and on intralingual pragmatic conventions (Barron, 2019; Barron & Schneider, 2009; Schneider, 2004, 2017; Schneider & Barron, 2008, 2014). In this sense, we can say that overgeneralization is a kind of stereotyping or vice versa. Overgeneralizing statements usually bear pronouns such as *every*, *all*, *no one*, *none*, or adverbs like *always*, *none*,

only, and so on. Note the following examples: *All Tehrani people are frank. Everyone says the students of this class are smart. Men never cry.*

This cultuling can have several functions, including complimenting and self-complimenting, downgrading, not taking responsibility for what one says, confirming something by quoting someone else, and persuasion, as exemplified below:

- *You are always the best.* (complimenting)
- *Everyone says I'm beautiful.* (self-complimenting)
- *Men are messy.* (downgrading)
- *She is a very weak student. Well, you know, they say that female students are weak in math.* (not taking responsibility for what one says)
- *I'm sure you're doing the right thing. You always win!* (persuasion)

Overgeneralization demonstrates a high-context culture (Hall, 1976), in which messages are transmitted implicitly; thus, context plays a great role in communication. In other words, communication happens mostly in indirect forms, leaving room for interpretation on the basis of many factors such as the tone of voice, gestures, and the context of a situation. In addition, cultures which overgeneralize can be classified as principles-first reasoning, in contrast to applications-first reasoning (Meyer, 2014). Principles-first reasoning develops conclusions or facts from general principles or concepts and makes general conclusions, whereas applications-first reasoning takes factual information in the world and reaches conclusions based on them. Another feature which is common in this cultuling is passing value judgments quickly. Just by witnessing one or a few cases, a characteristic is attributed to a whole group or category. This entails not only exaggeration but also a holistic view as compared to an analytical one. Through this perspective, many details, aspects, and features are overlooked or taken for granted.

Returning to the metacultuling to which this cultuling belongs (i.e., collectivism), it can be inferred that because people in this type of culture are usually identified as members of groups and not regarded as individuals with their own ways of thinking, overgeneralizations abound. In other words, just as individuals see themselves as a part of a greater collection, they also mention their views as part of a collective perspective. Instead of saying "*I think this way*", they attribute the feature to what "*everyone*" says. This especially pertains to negative comments, which may have consequences for their speakers. For example, instead of saying *I think Mr./Ms. X does not teach well*, the speaker says *everyone says he or she is a bad teacher* or *male/female teachers are not knowledgeable enough*.

Accordingly, delving into the cultulings and metacultulings of a society can shed light on many aspects of its culture and give us new understandings of how people in a speech community go about to achieve what they want. In the next section, an alternative approach to the study of language and culture will be presented based on the abovementioned concepts.

### 2.3. Cultuling Analysis (CLA)

Language is formed by human activities, and the creation of a tool brings with it the creation of a new word, so one has to produce vocabulary in order to speak and think about this new tool quickly and more accurately. For example, with the advent of computers into the society for the first time, a huge number of words entered language. Likewise, when a social activity is formed, man has to produce word(s) to control the world around him. When agriculture turned into urbanization, a new language was required to speak about it. Words such as *traffic, light, or heavy traffic, noise pollution*, and thousands of other related words have arisen as a result of the emergence of urbanization. Gradually, a new culture was formed due to urbanization. Thereby, culture resides within the language and changes the way we see the world. However, people are usually unaware of what is embedded in language and do not pay much attention to it. That is why linguistic analysis is required.

Language can be analyzed at different levels. In phonology, the unit of analysis is the phoneme; in morphology, it is the word; in syntax, it is the sentence; in discourse analysis, it is the text, and finally in critical discourse analysis (CDA), it is the society. In cultuling analysis (CLA), however, the unit of analysis includes words, phrases, or sentences

that contain cultural information. Therefore, in this analysis, there is an interactive relationship between cultuling and the context of its occurrence. In other words, social conditions, context, type of communication, and relationships among individuals which influence the formation of cultulings are all important. In CLA, unlike traditional types of analyses, linguistic structures and expressions are not merely interpreted in terms of their lexical and syntactic roles in the text, but rather beyond the text, that is, cultural, situational, social, political contexts, and so on. Therefore, CLA examines how linguistic meanings are constituted in relation to culture, attitude, and thinking. Thus, the attitudes and thoughts of the people in a speech community can be analyzed through their language. This analysis is done on two layers: (1) At the outer layer, the frequency of words and expressions are analyzed; (2) the inner layer, on the other hand, reflects the cultural patterns and values of people in a society. Therefore, the meanings of words, structures, and phrases vary. That is, each has its own meaning, but it also has a different meaning in the minds of individuals in different speech communities.

The mixing of language and culture is well expressed in the concept of cultuling. Analyzing language enhances the cultural understanding of individuals. In other words, just as in CDA, we seek to find the relations of power and their influence on language, in CLA, we look for cultural memes in language. In CDA, we aim to raise awareness and change discourse; in CLA, too, we must seek cultural awareness and change. CLA seeks to identify the memes that are transmitted through language in the form of conversations, stories, poetry, and proverbs. It extracts defective genes and raises people's awareness of such genes. If needed, it makes suggestions for their modification. This can be a great help to language planning, which entails purposeful measures to influence the behavior of people through the acquisition, structure, and functions of language (Cooper, 1989). Also known as language engineering, language planning has become one of the most important fields of interdisciplinary research in recent years. Experts in sociocultural planning and policymakers in different contexts have paid a great deal of attention to this area (see Fishman, 2011).

#### **2.4. Studies on CLA**

In view of the importance of cultuling, there has been considerable research on the cultulings of the Persian language. Employing Hyme's (1967) SPEAKING model, which stands for (Setting, Participants, End, Act sequence, Key, Instrumentalities, Norms, and Genre), linguistic expressions used in different speech events by people from all walks of life in the Iranian society have been analyzed and their underlying cultural patterns have been extracted. In some cases, comparisons have been made with the English language. Below is an overview of the studies done.

Pishghadam, in his pioneering study in 2013, introduced some cultulings in the Persian language, such as power-centeredness, indirectness, and family orientation. In this study, he states that identifying defective cultulings and replacing them with healthy ones can be an effective step in improving cultural behavior. For example, "if we find that too much indirectness slows down our thinking and improvement or promotes hypocrisy in the society, alerting people as well as changing people's linguistic discourse will allow them to modify this cultural behavior" (p. 58). He also mentions that writing down culture and producing books about cultulings and metacultulings can play an important role in collecting examples of cultulings and informing the society about them.

In another study, Pishghadam and Attaran (2014) examined 100 Persian and English films to compare the cultuling of swearing in these two languages. The findings, first of all, indicated that swearing reflects an atmosphere of distrust in the society. The usage of this cultuling was more numbered and varied in Persian than in English. In other words, swearing to God and so on have become a part of everyday conversations in the Iranian culture and is used in most daily Iranian discourses from giving compliments to making confessions. Therefore, it has departed from its original meaning and has several implicit meanings now. In a number of cases, it also indicates a decline in Iranian religious beliefs and confirms the collectivization of the Iranian culture. Iranians tend to regard swearing as a good way to gain the trust of their audience and use it in different situations to strengthen their relations. Moreover, there might be a difference between the ways males and females swear, which can be examined in light of VP.

Praying is also among the cultulings that have been analyzed. In this regard, a study was conducted by Pishghadam and Vahidnia (2016) on 168 Persian and English films. The findings revealed that the number of prayers in Persian language films was twice as much as English language ones. It seems that praying in the Persian culture occurs in almost every context and Iranians use prayers to achieve what they want, which originates from their religious beliefs.



The differences could be attributed to what Risager (2006, 2012) refers to as a transnational perspective to linguaculture embedded in cultural flows and cultural complexity where there can be found some language and cultural varieties.

In a similar study, Pishghadam, Vahidnia, and Firoozian Pour Esfahani (2015) studied cursing in 200 films in English and Persian. The analysis of the findings of this study indicates that cursing when angry is common in the Iranian culture and that cursing has become a part of their everyday conversations. Furthermore, the results seem to suggest that English speakers in similar situations use profanity instead of cursing, which signifies the different worlds of Westerners and Easterners. Instead of relying on the law, Iranians rely on cursing, resurrection, doomsday, and other supernatural powers when in need of recovering their lost rights.

By investigating the functions of the title *Haji* and its related words in Persian discourse, Pishghadam and Noruz Kermanshahi (2016) studied the relationship between language, religion, and culture. The findings show that the title, which used to be valuable in the past, has undergone some form of metamorphosis and is, sometimes, misused nowadays. Thus, the religious dimension of the term has diminished, which seems to be due to the media and society influencing the mentality of the people toward the word *Haji*.

Moreover, Pishghadam and Attaran (2016) introduced the cultuling of fatalism and demonstrated that believing in fate is prevalent among Iranians and that it is directly related to age and reversely to the level of education. As such, the use of the term is less common among adolescents and youth than in middle-aged and older people. On the other hand, people with higher levels of education are less likely to believe in fatalism, which might be the effect of education on reasoning.

The phrase *I don't know*, as a linguistic expression, has been studied by Pishghadam and Firoozian Pour Esfahani (2017) in the Iranian culture. The results indicate that the underlying motivation for using *I don't know* in situations where the speaker has the information needed to provide the audience with, is often an attempt to consider social status, adhere to the principles of politeness, and preserve the audience's image. Accordingly, there are five main uses for this utterance in the Persian language: maintaining one's self-image, avoiding disagreement, indirectness, uncertainty, and avoiding commitment and reducing the load of responsibility.

In another study, Pishghadam, Firoozian Pour Esfahani, and Tabatabaee Farani (2018) examined the word *coquetry* (*nāz* in Persian) and its related expressions. The results indicate that the use of these terms endorses Iranian collectivism. In collectivistic societies, there is a lack of attention given to the issue of individuality and, thus, people are usually ignored. Therefore, they try to compensate for this inattention. This cultuling represents some kind of protest against the culture of collectivism and Iranians regard it as a cultural value. On the other hand, one of the hidden motives of this cultuling in the Persian language is to show respect, which reflects the indirectness of the Iranian culture.

And finally, in a most recent study, 673 natural contexts containing discourse about death were examined (Pishghadam, Firoozian Pour Esfahani, & Firoozian Pour Esfahani, 2020). The CLA revealed sadness-orientation and happiness-evasion in the Iranian culture. Iranians use many expressions, containing the word *death* or its related words, which reflect the significance they place on death and resurrection.

As can be seen, by examining the cultulings of a speech community, one can obtain significant information about its culture (Pishghadam & Ebrahimi, 2020; Pishghadam, Ebrahimi, & Derakhshan, in press). Cultulings contain many hidden aspects of a culture, either positive or negative. By knowing the cultural functions of linguistic expressions, we might exercise more caution in our own speaking and also in interpreting others' speech. CLA can also help to prevent many potential misunderstandings and even omit culturally defective linguistic expressions, culminating in *euclturing*.

### 3. Concluding Remarks

In general, by analyzing language, it is possible to gradually eradicate the cultural defects of a society because changing a society's culture requires time. A healthy culture promotes rational behavior and can promote the growth of its people (Pishghadam, 2013). Therefore, the analysis of language is one of the most fundamental strategies that can change and enhance the culture of any society. CLA is the analysis of cultural elements through vocabulary, linguistic structures/expressions, and evaluation of their sociological usages. It can be used as a powerful tool to describe cultural content and structures and identify culturally defective or healthy genes.

In CLA, researchers consider the actions and deeds of individuals in a society and, thereby, the specific uses of cultulings are analyzed and attempts are made to understand their social, cultural, political, and situational meanings. In other words, linguistic and situational contexts play an important role in the interpretation of cultulings and that is why cultulings are described as part of a social process. CLA illustrates how cultural elements are embedded in the discourse of individuals in a society, as well as how they are maintained or changed over time. What CLA can do is to detect the defective genes in a culture and replace them with effective ones. This paves the way for cultural reforms that can lead to linguistic excellence and euculturing. What is meant by euculturing is the promotion of culture and move toward human excellence by removing unacceptable cultural habits and replacing them with effective ones. As stated by Pishghadam (2013), “cultulings are transformative tools, which can be used to bring about cultural change and reflection” (Pishghadam, 2013, p. 58). Measures can be taken through language planning and policymaking and can be implemented in school curriculums, academic materials, TV series, movies, Websites, and so on to make individuals aware of the problems with some linguistic expressions and perhaps introduce new forms of expressions with a healthy culture implanted in them. Although the process may be long and challenging, it certainly is worthwhile.

As a fairly new realm of research, CLA opens the doors to many new studies to come. There is still a lot of room to investigate cultulings in the Persian language and in other languages, which could give us a more comprehensive picture of the healthy or defective cultural memes in a society which requires a comprehensive framework (Pishghadam et al., in press) to discover, analyze, and interpret cultulings. The misinterpretation of cultulings can lead to intercultural communication breakdown, so knowledge of cultulings can prevent misunderstanding which requires individuals to be familiar with intercultural pragmatics (Kecskes, 2014). Conducting CLA in other languages and cultures, especially English, enables us to make comparisons between Persian and other languages and cultures. Cultural awareness would help L2 teachers and learners to build a better understanding of intercultural differences. This awareness of diversity within a society and across societies can encourage positive attitudes and can build intercultural competence (Byram, 1997). Macrosocial factors such as age, gender, ethnicity, social status, level of education, religion, and socioeconomic status which make the cornerstones of VP (Barron, 2005, 2015, 2017, 2019; Schneider & Barron, 2008) could also be taken into account when conducting CLA, giving us a more detailed understanding of how language and culture are intermingled within different groups of individuals in the society.

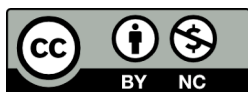
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