

Culture as Meaning-Making

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Abstract. The present paper analyses the role of social and cultural background knowledge in the cognition of meaning. Language and culture integrated studies have long been in the focus of attention. In order to study the language of a target culture, one should understand how human beings construct meanings, understand processes of meaning-making, account for different meanings, and examine their effects in social life. The language cannot be interpreted in the right way without taking the target culture into account. In the knowledge-based society people of all professions have realized that they will be more successful if they take “cultural“ factors into consideration.

Our analysis of meaning-making process follows Lyn Spillman’s (2002) theoretical perspectives. To analyze the data, qualitative analysis is used.

Our findings suggest that miscommunication occurs as a result of the lack of knowledge about the target culture. A foreign language could act as an obstacle to express one’s thoughts and ideas. While communicating, people use lots of value-loaded words. Through the language the whole set of values, attitudes and beliefs could be expressed. Language cannot exist apart from social and cultural context. Moreover, meaning-making and cognition are heavily dependent on such social factors as gender, age, education, social class, and ethnicity.