

# LANGUAGE AND CULTURE:

## *Glossary of Terms*

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### • - B -

#### • Black English

- the social dialect spoken by many African Americans. It also known as Ebonics .

#### • body language

- see [kinesics](#).

#### • bound morpheme

- a [morpheme](#) that has meaning but can not stand alone. The prefix **dis** in the English word **dislike** is an example.

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### • - C -

#### • creole

- a [pidgin](#) language that has become the mother tongue of a population. In Haiti, for example, a French-African pidgin became the creole language that is spoken in that nation today by the majority of the population as their principle or only language.

#### • cultural relativity

- suspending one's [ethnocentric judgments](#) in order to understand and appreciate another culture. Anthropologists try to learn about and interpret the various aspects of the culture they are studying in reference to that culture rather than to their own. This provides a better understanding of how such practices as polygamy and cannibalism can function and even support other cultural traditions.

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• - D -

• dialect 🗣️

- a variant of a [language](#). If it is associated with a geographically isolated speech community, it is referred to as a regional dialect. However, if it is spoken by a speech community that is merely socially isolated, it is called a social dialect.

• diglossia 🗣️

- the phenomenon in which different dialects of a language or different languages are spoken by a person in different social situations. Diglossic 🗣️ people may quickly switch back and forth between dialects or languages, depending on the person they are talking to at the time. This is the case with the educated elite of Haiti. They usually speak standard French among themselves but use the Haitian French creole language on the street dealing with poor uneducated Haitians. Diglossia is also referred to as "code switching."

• dyslexia 🗣️

- a brain irregularity that makes it difficult for a reader to connect verbal sounds with the combination of letters that make up a word. Dyslexics often reverse letters and are slow, inefficient readers. Dyslexia can be the result of genetic inheritance or a brain injury to the left temporal lobe. Approximately, 5-15% of Americans are dyslexic to some degree.

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• - E -

• Ebonics 🗣️

- see [Black English](#).

• electromagnetic radiation

- radiation varying in wavelength and frequency from extremely short gamma and x-rays through the progressively larger and less frequent ultraviolet, visible light,

infrared, short wave, TV and radio waves.

- **emic** 🗣️ categories

- referring to the categorization of things according to the way in which members of a society classify their own world. In other words, this is the way their culture and language divide up reality. Such emic categories generally differ from culture to culture and provide valuable insights into the perceptions and world view of other peoples. Discovering, recording, and analyzing emic categories is the task of [ethnoscience](#). See [etic categories](#).

- **ethnocentrism** 🗣️

- the deep felt belief that your culture is superior to all others. Being fond of your own way of life and condescending or even hostile toward other cultures is normal for all people. Alien culture traits are often viewed as being not just different but less sensible and even "unnatural." Ethnocentrism is normal for all people in the world. See [cultural relativity](#).

- **ethnoscience** 🗣️

- the field of anthropology that tries to learn about how people in different cultures categorize things in their environment. The focus is on [emic categories](#). This data provides important insights into the interests, concerns, and values of cultures.

- **etic** 🗣️ categories

- referring to the classification of things according to some external system of analysis brought in by a visitor to another society. This is the approach of biology in using the Linnaean classification system to define new species. It assumes that ultimately, there is an objective reality and that is more important than cultural perceptions of it. See [emic categories](#).

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- - G -

- **gender** 🗣️

- sexual identity as male or female.

- **grammar** 🗣️

- the part of language analysis that is concerned with how the sounds are used to make sense. Grammar consists of [morphology](#) and [syntax](#).

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- - I -

- interaction distance

- the distance our bodies are physically apart while talking with each other. If two speakers have different comfortable interaction distances, a ballet of shifting positions usually occurs until one of the individuals is backed into a corner and feels threatened by what may be perceived as hostile or sexual overtures. As a result, the verbal message may not be listened to or understood as it was intended. Interaction distance is an aspect of [proxemics](#).

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- - K -

- kinesics 🗣️

- the part of non-verbal communication consisting of gestures, expressions, and postures. This part of [paralanguage](#) is also known as body language.

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- - L -

- language

- a specific set of rules for generating [speech](#).

- linguistics 🗣️

- the comparative study of the function, structure, and history of languages and the communication process in general. Linguistics is also referred to as linguistic anthropology.

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- morpheme 🗣️

- the smallest combination of sounds (i.e., [phonemes](#)) that have meaning and cannot be broken into smaller meaningful units. Words can be one or more morphemes. For example, **hot** is one morpheme while **hotdog** is composed of two (**hot** and **dog**).

- morphology 🗣️

- the study of how sounds (i.e., [phonemes](#)) are combined by language into larger units called [morphemes](#).

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- non-verbal communication

- see [paralanguage](#).

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- - P -

- paralanguage 🗣️

- auxiliary communication devices that generally assure clarity by transmitting the same message in different ways at the same time. These include variations in tone

and character of voice along with such non-verbal forms of communication as [kinesics](#), [proxemics](#), clothing, and makeup.

- phoneme 🗣️

- the smallest unit of sound that can be altered to change the meaning of a word. In English, for example, the words **pan** and **can** have different meaning due to the fact that the initial sound, or phoneme, is different. Phonemes do not have meaning by themselves. The sounds represented by the **p** and **c** in the words above are meaningless alone but they can change the meaning of words.

- phonology 🗣️

- the study of [phonemes](#), or sounds, of language.

- pidgin 🗣️

- a simplified, makeshift language that develops to fulfill the communication needs of people who have no language in common but who need to occasionally interact for commercial and other reasons. Pidgins combine a limited amount of the vocabulary and grammar of the different languages. People who use pidgin languages also speak their own native language. Over the last several centuries, dozens of pidgin languages developed as Europeans expanded out into the rest of the world for colonization and trade. There have been pidgins developed by non-European cultures as well.

- proxemics 🗣️

- the study of [interaction distances](#) and other culturally defined uses of space that affect communication. Most people are unaware of the importance of space in communication until they are confronted with someone who uses it differently. Proxemics is a form of [paralanguage](#).

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- - R -


- regional dialect

- a [dialect](#) associated with a geographically isolated speech community. An example is the Texas in contrast to the Midwestern American dialect.

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- - S -

- Sapir-Whorf hypothesis 

- the early 20th century idea of Edward Sapir and Benjamin Whorf that language predetermines what we see in the world around us. In other words, language acts like a polarizing lens on a camera in filtering reality--we see the real world only in the terms and categories of our language. This hypothesis was objectively tested in the 1960's by anthropologists. That research indicated that Sapir and Whorf went too far. It is now clear that the terminology used by a culture primarily reflects that culture's interests and concerns. All normal humans share similar sense perceptions due to the fact that their sense organs are essentially the same. Therefore, they can understand and perceive the categories of reality of another culture, if they are explained.

- social dialect

- a [dialect](#) spoken by a speech community that is socially isolated from others. Social dialects are mostly based on class, ethnicity, gender, age, or particular social situations. The upper class English "public school" way of talking is an example of a social dialect.

- speech

- a broad term referring to patterned verbal behavior. See [language](#).

- symbol 

- a sound or thing which has meaning given to it by the user. Human languages are systems of symbols.

- syntax 

- the standardized set of rules that determine how words should be combined to make sense to speakers of a language. Along with [morphology](#), syntax makes up grammar.