

The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology: Division of Humanities/Center for Language Education

HUMA 1000: Cultures and Values: **Cover sheet for final essay**

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| Full name | |
| Student ID | |
| Writing workshop section number | |
| Writing workshop instructor | |
| Title of essay (please copy and paste from the document on Canvas) | 1. It is common to hear people claim that language is merely a tool for communication, and nothing more. Do you believe this to be true? Why or why not? |

Declaration: The attached essay represents my own work. I have read and understood the University's policies on academic honesty and I confirm that the attached work conforms to these policies.

Please type your name:

Response to feedback: note here the comments from your instructor you have responded to (you can copy these from your feedback sheet).

- Introduction: Your thesis statement does not prepare the reader for further argument
- Counterargument: You refute the counterargument without materials
- Conclusion: Your conclusion does not clearly restate the main ideas in your essay with key concepts
- The first body paragraph does not seem too relevant. It seems to be describing language as opposed to arguing its function
- Ineffective conclusion
- A paragraph that is not fully developed
- No scope/outline in the introduction where it would benefit the essay's coherence

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1. It is common to hear people claim that language is merely a tool for communication, and nothing more. Do you believe this to be true? Why or why not?

Language plays an important role in our daily lives, it is fundamental to everything we do. Humans have been communicating by using different languages throughout the years. It is a way of communicating with the society by the use of sounds or symbols while communication is the exchange of messages, opinions and information. Language is not simply a means for verbal communication, it involves interpersonal communication, language within the individuals and the language with society. Majority believes that language is only a tool for communication and without any other functions. However, languages are used for different purposes. Language is not merely a reproducing instrument for voicing ideas but rather is itself the shaper of ideas (Carroll,1965). This essay will argue that language is required for different alternatives because there is no typical language is entirely implemented for communication. This will be claimed by arguing on how language is applied by conveying novels or poetics aesthetically in literature aspect. Languages can also be used for expressing one's identity culturally, as well as influencing one's thought.

Language can act aesthetically which serve as a secondary function of languages, that it is not a means of communication. Writers and authors express their thoughts and opinions by using languages in different forms artistically. They would use alliterations, rhymes or even metaphors in their poets or novels in order to interpret their initial feelings and behaviors. Their achievements indicated that one of the key features of language is that the ability to create novel language expressions (Napoli & Lee-Schoenfeld, 2010). It is being said that language makes metaphor the center of gravity. Metaphor is a way of showing how patterns of world intersect and a species of understanding similarities and dissimilarities simultaneously (Zwicky & Houle, 2004). This illustrates that language and metaphor are complement with each other which languages provide the basic terms such as prepositions and conjunctions to express metaphors. The aesthetic function of language can be seen in works of poetry, publications, fiction or even art correspondence, which can create an artistic effect to attract different readers. Language allows producing literature which serves to spread the languages used and as a reference for language. Literature develops the beauty and interest of languages, which allows artistic use of languages. Language is fundamental for literature, which literature is produced by the creation of works in particular languages by different authors and the thoughts expressed in different

languages. This shows that the relationship between languages and literature cannot be separated.

Language may purpose for communication primarily, but in deeply, it is also important that language can express our identity. Language allows people to communicate ideas in a methodical way and pass different ideas and opinions to different people. Furthermore, it enables people to express who they perceive who they are and how they are associated with all kinds of people. When people use language, they can represent an identity as well as that they establish it (Salzmann, Stanlaw & Adachi, 2015). A language is a dominant part of culture. The culture in where people are born to, forms their cultural identity, which accompanies with the language they are exposed to. Sense of belonging is valuable to every human's daily life, language is important in order that to feel a sense of connection and belonging to oneself. For example, people in Korea heard Korean constantly since birth, so they would choose to use Korean when communicating with others instead of other languages. This shows that they are identified by their cultural context, with the support of language. On the other hand, in western culture, questions are raised about ages and marriage status are considered as impolite. This noted that identity is reflected in the language which people used, due to the word choices in identifying people themselves and the words they choose not to use because of inappropriateness. Therefore, it can be proved that language is fundamental to cultural identity, not merely for communication.

Linguistically, there is a positive relationship between language and the way one's think. The theory, Sapir-Whorf hypothesis proves that language influences thoughts. A research notes that unless people's linguistic backgrounds are similar, they are not led by the same physical evidence (Carroll, 1965). This shows that different speakers use different languages will result differently from one another. Besides, language can influence on how one think which basically alter one's perception on time dimension. For example, the Hopi, who are native Americans tribe, do not use past tenses for their verbs when using languages. This would change their perception on time in the way that they would not be able to think about the past so often. They mainly focus on the present moment as it is the only existing moment for them. The altered time perception not only the way how language influences on how one thinks, but also that of one's state of being. Take bilingual people as an example, they react differently depending on which languages they are using. A bilingual report proved that the influence of languages on how one's think demonstrated deeply with Asian immigrants to North America (Eap, DeGarmo, Kawakami, Hara, Hall & Teten, 2008). When they introduce themselves in English, their usually self-descriptions are Canadian, while they are responding in Chinese, they are typically in root with Chinese. They are

literally more admitted to the Chinese value and attitudes. This evidence that language actually shaped on how one's thoughts and how ones think of themselves.

However, some scholars believe that language is essentially a means of communication among members of the community. Language has its important part of all, is to form the basis of information exchange in the world, which is the most persistent method of communication. Languages can be used to influence behaviours of others with perceptions, thoughts or cultures by means of communication. It has been pointed out that languages serve communication by allowing speakers to express to others the theoretical ideas of their hidden thoughts (Gauker, 2002). On the other hand, languages can be used for communication among individuals, interpersonal and social respectively. People can exchange messages and opinions with others, or act as a listener or receiver individually as well. Additionally, the media act as an important role in the society by means of communication with languages. Reporters communicate with readers in form of magazines or newspapers, which involve the use of languages. Thus, these can be demonstrated that the overall purpose of language is for communication. Yet, language touches and influences one's heart and soul as language is used to express one's deep emotions and community. Language is an expression of the society because language habits of our community which lead to certain choices of interpretation (Sapir, 1929). Although it is true that language is critical for communication, it is just an external expression of language which expression of society is the main and focus purpose of language. Therefore, this can be refuted that language is not only a tool for communication.

To conclude, it is true that language is not mainly used for communication, which is argued by three means: literacy, culturally and psychologically. In the form of literature, language is used to express author's attitude and feeling in terms of different word forms, such as metaphors and similes. This allows readers to draw attention to the readings and further explore the author's underlying expressions. Culturally, languages are able to express one' identity by enhancing one's sense of belonging. People are exposed to particular language for a period of time and will naturally get adopted by specific identity and culture. Mentally, languages can indicate how people think and influence how others think according to Sapir-Whorf hypothesis. Languages alter one's perception on time dimension and their sense of self. Therefore, it is evident that language is not merely a tool for communication. It is important that explore different means of languages as it is not only limited to communication, there are a lot of functions of languages waiting for talents to investigate and spread languages to others.

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