



Cultural Components:

Language

Questions

1 Do we have unique expressions or words that represent aspects of our culture?

2 Are there different cultural or linguistic groups in or near their community?

What is Language?

Language is a set of symbols that express ideas and enable people to think and communicate with one another; it may be either verbal (spoken) or nonverbal (written or gestured).

Who uses Language?



- Language is not solely a human characteristic; other animals use sounds, gestures, touch, and smell to communicate with each other, but they use signals with fixed meanings that are limited to the immediate situation (the present) and cannot encompass past or future situations.
- Humans are unique in their ability to manipulate symbols to express abstract concepts and rules and to create and transmit culture from one generation to the next.

Activity

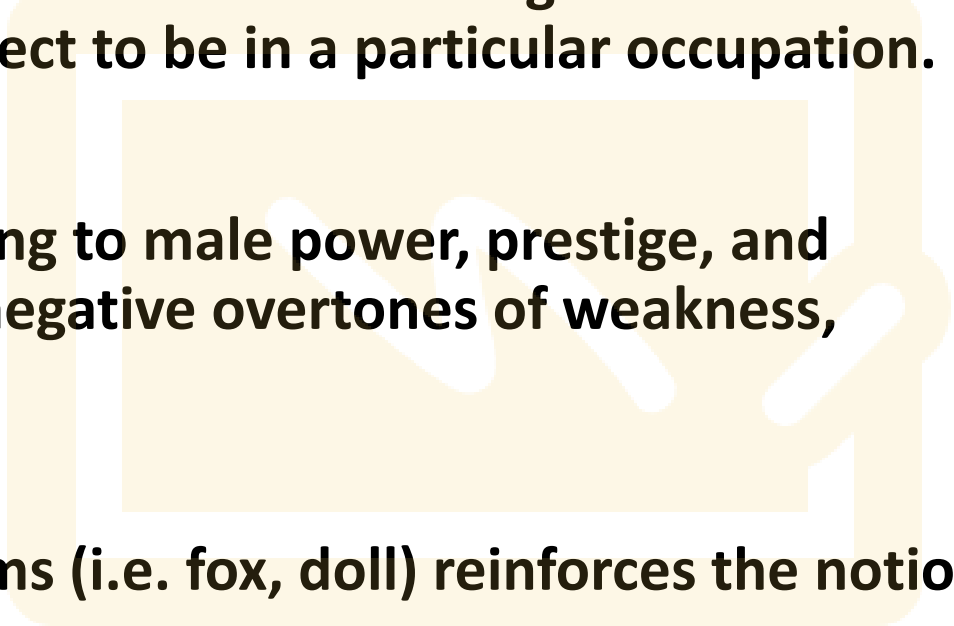
- Use your text book to create notes pg 73-78
- **not to be marked, when I review you should add to the notes you have created**

To extend upon your answers...



- Language and Social Reality
- a. According to the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis language shapes reality, however many social scientists feel that this hypothesis overstates the relationship between language and thought.
- b. Most sociologists contend language influences, not determines, behaviour and social reality. For example how a culture expresses time may influence an individual's perception of time as being either an indivisible abstract expanse (Hopi) or something that can not only be divided but also lost and saved (English speakers).

Language and Gender

- a. According to some scholars, the English language ignores women by using the masculine gender to refer to human beings in general. In addition English nouns and pronouns show the gender of the person we expect to be in a particular occupation.
 - b. Words have positive connotations when relating to male power, prestige, and leadership; when related to women, they carry negative overtones of weakness, inferiority, and immaturity.
 - c. Thinking and referring to women in sexual terms (i.e. fox, doll) reinforces the notion that women are sexual objects.
 - d. Attempts to introduce more inclusive language (i.e. use of genderless titles like firefighter instead of fireman for example) have been met with resistance.
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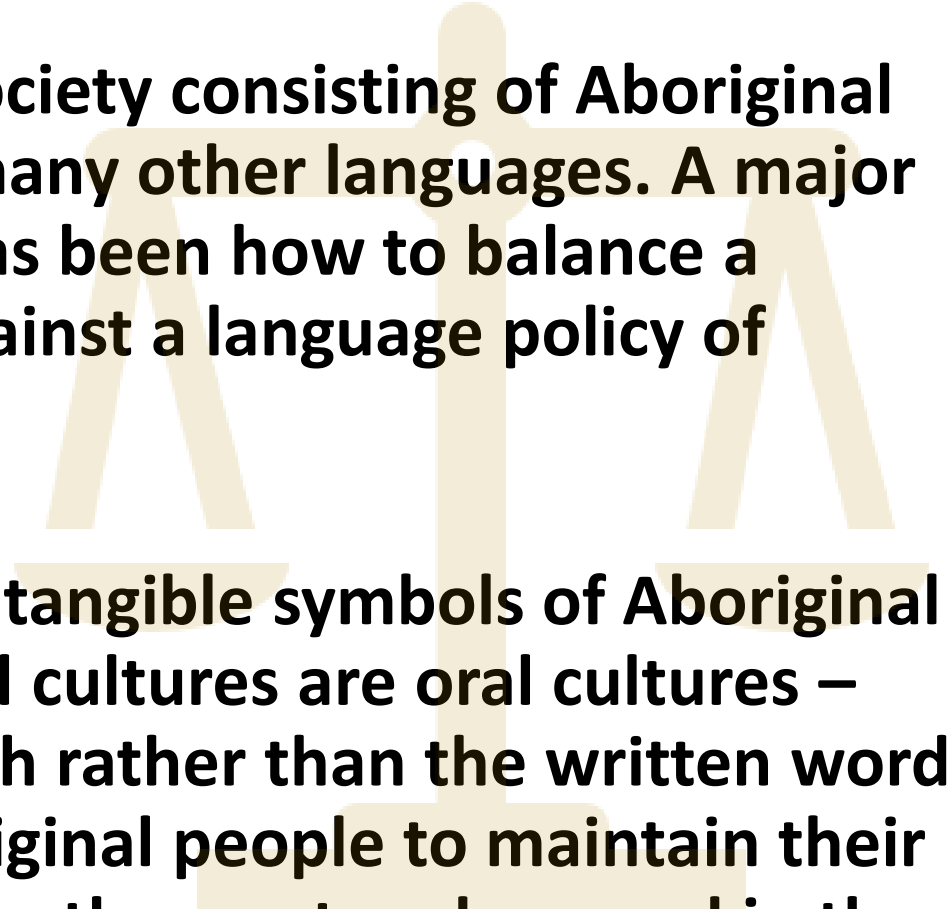
Language, Race, and Ethnicity

- **Consider:**
- **i. words that have more than one meaning (i.e. black as in blackhearted) which reinforce a negative image.**
- **ii. derogatory terms (especially those popularized in movies, music, or comedy routines)**
- **iii. the use of certain adjectives such as primitive, savage.**
- **iv. the voice of certain verbs, which minimizes a group's achievements, i.e. given the right to vote versus fought for the right.**



Language Diversity in Canada

- a. Canada is a linguistically diverse society consisting of Aboriginal languages, French and English, and many other languages. A major issue throughout Canadian history has been how to balance a cultural policy of multiculturalism against a language policy of bilingualism.
- b. Canada's Aboriginal languages are tangible symbols of Aboriginal culture and group identity. Aboriginal cultures are oral cultures – identity is transmitted through speech rather than the written word. Despite the efforts of Canadian Aboriginal people to maintain their languages, these languages are among the most endangered in the world.



Videos

- TedTalks [How language Shapes the way we think](#)
- [Language and meaning: Crash course psychology](#)
- [The connection between language and culture](#)