

TIV LANGUAGE AND PHILOSOPHY

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Abstract

This paper evaluated “Tiv language and philosophy. Tiv as a people has their culture, customs and philosophy imbedded in their language, but was undermined by some missionaries who came to Africa and Tiv land that, “The Tiv, as far as we can judge, are wilder and less intelligent than the other African tribes with whom we came in contact”. As such, it appears that the Tiv are without a philosophy, which is not true. This paper sought to elucidate the reality of the Tiv language as a vehicle of the Tiv’s philosophy. The study adopted a qualitative research design and made use of secondary methods of data collection. expository, descriptive, and evaluative methods were used to analyze the data collected. The study anchored on “Sociocultural theory by Lev Vygotsky, (Russian Psychologist, 1896-1934) which highlights the role of culture, language and social interaction in shaping human development. The findings revealed: The conceptual framework of both the Tiv and philosophy. Furthermore, the relationship between Tiv language and philosophy were concisely discussed. The study also delved into critical analysis of Tiv language and philosophy. The study benefits student of the Tiv

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language and researchers for further studies. The study recommended that; promoting the study and documentation of Tiv language within philosophical contexts is important. There is every need to develop philosophical literature in Tiv language. Integration of Tiv philosophical concepts into broader philosophical discourses is necessary. Encouraging critical analysis of Tiv language and philosophy: facilitating critical studies that examine the relationship between Tiv language and philosophical thought. Exploring how the structure, idioms, and expressions of the language influence Tiv philosophical ideas. Implementation of educational programs focused on Tiv language and philosophy can enhance recognition of Tiv language better than it is today. The study concludes that the exploration of Tiv language and philosophy reveals a profound connection between language and the cultural worldview of the Tiv.

Key words: Tiv, Language, Philosophy, Critical, Analysis

Introduction

The interplay between language and philosophy forms a fundamental aspect of human thought and cultural identity. Philosophy, traditionally defined as the study of the fundamental nature of knowledge, reality, and existence, delves into the concepts that govern human understanding and the way individuals interpret the world around them. Language, on the other hand, serves as a vehicle for expressing these philosophical ideas, shaping thought, communication, and culture. Among various ethnic groups, the relationship between language and philosophy is deeply rooted, providing insights into the community's worldview, beliefs, and values.

The Tiv of central Nigeria possess a rich linguistic and cultural heritage embodied in the Tiv language. The Tiv language is not merely a means of communication but also a repository of the Tiv collective wisdom, customs, and philosophical outlook. Through proverbs, folktales, and

traditional narratives, the Tiv language encapsulates the community's understanding of life, morality, and the cosmos. The Tiv worldview is characterized by a unique blend of pragmatism, communalism, and a deep connection to the natural environment, all of which are articulated through their language.

Exploring the philosophy embedded within the Tiv language involves examining the ways in which the Tiv conceptualize existence, knowledge, and ethics. Tiv philosophy is largely oral, transmitted through spoken language and cultural practices rather than written texts. This oral tradition is rich with metaphors, symbols, and allegories that offer critical insights into the Tiv's perception of life and their responses to existential questions. Tiv philosophy also emphasizes the interconnectedness of all beings and the importance of harmony within the community and the natural world.

A critical analysis of Tiv language and philosophy reveals the intricate ways in which language shapes and reflects philosophical thought. The Tiv language, with its unique structure and vocabulary, not only conveys everyday communication but also frames the community's philosophical discourse. By examining the linguistic nuances, idiomatic expressions, and semantic structures of the Tiv language, one can gain a deeper understanding of the Tiv's philosophical orientations. Furthermore, this analysis highlights the dynamic relationship between language and thought, illustrating how the Tiv language both influences and is influenced by the community's philosophical perspectives.

The study of Tiv language and philosophy provides a window into the soul of the Tiv, revealing the profound connections between their language, thought, and cultural identity. It underscores the importance of preserving indigenous languages as vehicles of philosophical expression and cultural continuity. This exploration not only enriches our understanding of Tiv culture but also contributes to the broader discourse on the role of language in shaping human philosophy.

Theoretical Framework

Sociocultural Theory was developed by Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934). He was a Russian psychologist who propounded the Sociocultural Theory, also known as the Cultural-Historical Theory. Vygotsky was born in Orsha, Belarus, and studied law, philosophy, and psychology. He worked at the Moscow State University's Institute of Experimental Psychology and later at the Ukrainian Psychoneurological Academy. Vygotsky's theory emphasizes the role of culture, language, and social interactions in shaping cognitive development with the following assumptions:

1. Social interaction precedes cognitive development.
2. Language plays a central role in cognitive development.
3. Culture influences cognitive processes.
4. Learning is a collaborative process.
5. Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD): children learn best when guided by more knowledgeable others. (10-15)

Lev Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory emphasizes the role of social interaction and cultural context in cognitive development. His theory holds that the mental processes and higher-order thinking abilities of individuals are shaped by their interactions with others within their cultural environment. This perspective has profound implications for understanding language and the philosophy of a people within society.

Vygotsky posits that language is a primary means of transmitting culture, facilitating thought, and shaping perception. Language not only reflects the cultural values and beliefs of a society but also actively contributes to the development of an individual's cognitive processes. Through dialogue, storytelling, and other linguistic exchanges, individuals internalize the collective knowledge of their community. This underscores how the philosophy and worldview of a people are encoded in their language. For example, proverbs and idioms often encapsulate a society's moral principles and philosophical ideals, illustrating the interconnectedness of language and thought.

Sociocultural theory suggests that a society's philosophy – its understanding of existence, knowledge, and ethics – is deeply rooted in its cultural practices and historical context. Philosophy is not created in isolation but emerges through shared experiences and interactions. Vygotsky's emphasis on the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) highlights the importance of mentorship and collaboration in acquiring philosophical and intellectual insights. This collaborative process ensures that philosophical ideas are passed down, adapted, and refined within a cultural framework.

In diverse societies, Vygotsky's theory provides a framework for appreciating the interplay between different languages and philosophies. It helps explain how individuals from various cultural backgrounds negotiate meaning and contribute to a shared societal philosophy. By acknowledging that cognitive and philosophical development is rooted in sociocultural experiences, the theory promotes a deeper understanding of cultural diversity and the value of intercultural dialogue. This is evident in the following:

- Education: Teachers can use Vygotsky's insights to foster learning environments where students draw upon their linguistic and cultural backgrounds. This enriches philosophical discussions and cognitive development.

- Social Integration: Understanding that language and philosophy evolve through social interaction can aid in fostering unity in multicultural communities by emphasizing common cultural narratives and values.

Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory highlights the profound interdependence between language, philosophy, and the sociocultural context of a people. It underscores the idea that human cognition is not only a personal but also a collective endeavor, deeply rooted in the cultural and philosophical milieu of society.

This theory is relevant to this study, since its assumptions explained the role of language and culture in the development of cognitive ability and expression of a people's intent or culture.

Tiv Language and Philosophy

The Tiv language is a member of the Benue-Congo branch of the Niger-Congo language family and is primarily spoken by the Tiv in Nigeria. The language is prevalent in Benue, Taraba, Nasarawa, and Plateau states and plays a crucial role in the socio-cultural and identity preservation of the Tiv community. With over four million speakers, Tiv is one of the major indigenous languages in Nigeria, reflecting the rich cultural heritage and traditions of its speakers (Abraham 12).

Linguistic Structure

Tiv language is characterized by its distinct phonological, morphological, and syntactic features. It has a rich vowel system, tonal variations, and a noun-class system that is indicative of the Niger-Congo languages. The language employs a subject-verb-object (SVO) sentence structure and uses tones to distinguish meanings, which is a common feature in many African languages (Ikpa 45). The tonal aspect of Tiv is particularly important as it affects not only the pronunciation but also the meaning of words. For instance, the word "kwase" can mean "woman" or "death," depending on the tonal variation used (Tseror 78).

Cultural Significance

The Tiv language is not just a medium of communication; it is a repository of the Tiv's culture, beliefs, and worldview. Proverbs, folktales, and songs are integral components of Tiv oral literature and are predominantly conveyed in the Tiv language. These oral traditions serve as a means of educating the younger generation about societal norms, values, and historical events (Ornguga 102). The language encapsulates the Tiv's connection to their environment, especially through agricultural terminologies that reflect their agrarian lifestyle.

Challenges and Preservation Efforts

Despite its cultural significance, the Tiv language faces challenges, including the influence of English and Pidgin

English, which are often preferred in formal and urban settings. This shift is gradually leading to a decline in the number of young speakers who are fluent in Tiv, posing a threat to the language's sustainability (Usar 67). Efforts to preserve and promote the Tiv language include the incorporation of Tiv into educational curricula, translation of religious texts, and the use of Tiv in media such as radio and television broadcasts. Additionally, linguistic scholars and cultural organizations are working on developing Tiv dictionaries, grammar books, and digital resources to facilitate language learning and preservation (Iorwuese 34).

The Tiv language is a vital component of the Tiv's identity, embodying their cultural heritage and linguistic uniqueness. While it faces modern challenges, ongoing efforts to revitalize and promote the language are crucial in ensuring that it continues to thrive for future generations. The language's rich linguistic structure and cultural depth make it an important subject of study within African linguistic and cultural studies.

Philosophy, derived from the Greek words "philos" (love) and "sophia" (wisdom), literally means the love of wisdom. It is the study of fundamental questions concerning existence, knowledge, values, reason, mind, and language. Philosophy is often seen as a discipline that seeks to understand the underlying principles of reality and human experience. It addresses some of the most profound and abstract aspects of human life, aiming to provide a deeper understanding of the world and our place within it (Russell 13).

Branches of Philosophy

Philosophy can be broadly categorized into several branches, each focusing on different aspects of inquiry. The major branches include:

1. **Metaphysics:** This branch explores the nature of reality, asking questions about existence, objects, and their properties. It deals with topics such as being, causality, time, and space. Metaphysicians like Aristotle have explored the

concept of substance and the nature of change, proposing that everything that exists has a specific essence or form (Aristotle 78).

2. Epistemology: Epistemology is the study of knowledge—its nature, origin, and limits. It addresses questions like “What is knowledge?” and “How do we know what we know?” Philosophers such as Descartes and Kant have significantly contributed to this field, examining the relationship between the mind and reality, and the distinction between belief and truth (Descartes 101; Kant 45).
3. Ethics: Ethics, or moral philosophy, involves the study of moral values and principles. It examines what is right and wrong, and how individuals should act. Ethical theories include consequentialism, deontology, and virtue ethics, each proposing different criteria for evaluating moral actions (Singer 22).
4. Logic: Logic is concerned with the principles of valid reasoning and argumentation. It provides tools for distinguishing good arguments from bad ones, which is fundamental in all areas of philosophy and critical thinking. Logical frameworks, such as syllogisms introduced by Aristotle, are essential in the development of rational arguments (Copi 56).
5. Aesthetics: Aesthetics deals with questions of beauty, art, and taste. It explores what constitutes art, the nature of aesthetic experience, and the standards of artistic value. Philosophers like Plato and Hegel have debated the role of art in society and its relation to truth and reality (Hegel 67).
6. Political Philosophy: This branch addresses questions about government, justice, rights, and the role of individuals in society. It examines the justification of political authority and the ethical implications of political actions. Key figures in this area include Plato, who advocated for a philosopher-king, and John Locke, who emphasized individual rights and the social contract (Locke 88).

The Role of Philosophy in Human Life

Philosophy plays a crucial role in human life by encouraging critical thinking, fostering a deeper understanding of oneself and the world, and providing frameworks for making ethical decisions. It challenges individuals to question assumptions, think logically, and explore different perspectives. According to Bertrand Russell, "Philosophy is to be studied, not for the sake of any definite answers to its questions since no definite answers can, as a rule, be known to be true, but rather for the sake of the questions themselves" (Russell 91). This reflective nature of philosophy helps cultivate a sense of wonder and curiosity, driving the pursuit of knowledge and wisdom.

In summary, philosophy is an expansive field that encompasses various branches, each addressing fundamental aspects of human existence and thought. Its study encourages critical inquiry and provides tools for understanding complex issues, both personal and societal. By engaging with philosophical concepts, individuals can develop a more thoughtful and examined approach to life, contributing to personal growth and the broader discourse on human experience.

The Tiv Language

The Tiv language is a Central Nigerian language belonging to the Benue-Congo family within the larger Niger-Congo linguistic group. It is primarily spoken by the Tiv in Benue State, Nigeria, and parts of Taraba and Nasarawa States. Tiv is characterized by its tonal nature, meaning that pitch is used to distinguish words that are otherwise identical in phonetic structure. This language plays a critical role in preserving the cultural identity and traditional knowledge of the Tiv (Blench 23).

The Tiv language is not only a means of communication but also a repository of the people's cultural heritage, including their folklore, proverbs, and oral literature. According to Blench, the language has evolved over time, adapting to various

influences, including English and Hausa, which are commonly spoken in Nigeria (23-24). Despite these influences, Tiv remains a vital part of daily life and serves as a means of transmitting values, customs, and social norms across generations.

Philosophy in Tiv Culture

The study of Tiv language and philosophy clears the wrong notion about the intelligibility, wisdom and logical nature of the Tiv as was wrongly captured by one Mr. Baiki, a missionary in Africa, "The mistjis, as far as we can judge, are wilder and less intelligent than the other African tribes with whom we came in contact, [on the Niger and Benue Rivers] except the Baibai Jukuns" even though this assertion was refuted by Edgar H. Smith, " After the briefest of contact explorers record snap judgement. This was one. A stocky, strong Tiv, whose facial markings had been enlarged by keloids might look wild if he didn't smile. But for him or a Jukun, to be described as "less intelligent than the other African tribes" is grossly wrong. Both Tiv and Jukun are intelligent people and once granted the advantage of education are equal to any others (Edgar H. Smith 30-31). The Tiv are highly philosophical and their philosophy is express via their language too.

The philosophy of the Tiv, like their language, is deeply rooted in their worldview and traditional beliefs. Tiv philosophy is centered around communal living, respect for elders, and reverence for ancestors. It emphasizes harmony with nature, communal responsibility, and the importance of collective decision-making. This communalistic philosophy can be seen in their political system, which traditionally revolves around the council of elders, known as the "Ijir Tamen," and the role of family heads (Akaahan 75).

One of the core concepts in Tiv philosophy is the idea of "tar," which refers to a sense of community and togetherness. The Tiv believe that individual identity is inextricably linked to the community, and personal success is often viewed in the context of its contribution to the welfare of the group. This

philosophical outlook underscores the communal orientation of Tiv society, where decisions are made not for individual gain but for the collective good (Akaahan 78).

Another significant aspect of Tiv philosophy is the respect for and connection to the spiritual realm. The Tiv have a pantheon of deities and spirits that are believed to influence the physical world. Rituals and sacrifices are performed to appease these spiritual entities and seek their favor, reflecting the Tiv belief in a world that is interconnected between the seen and unseen forces (Moti 112).

Furthermore, Tiv philosophy includes a profound understanding of justice and morality. Moral conduct among the Tiv is guided by societal norms that are enforced through traditional laws and customs. Violations of these norms are met with communal sanctions, emphasizing the importance of living in accordance with established ethical standards (Moti 115).

Integration of Tiv Language and Philosophy

The integration of Tiv language and philosophy is evident in the way proverbs and oral traditions are used to impart wisdom and cultural values. Proverbs, in particular, are a key element of Tiv communication, encapsulating philosophical ideas and guiding principles in concise, metaphorical language. For instance, a common Tiv proverb states, "He who has people is richer than he who has money," highlighting the value placed on human relationships over material wealth (Blench 27).

Additionally, the Tiv use storytelling as a medium for preserving and transmitting philosophical teachings. These stories often involve moral lessons, reflections on human nature, and the importance of social cohesion, reinforcing the community-centered ethos of Tiv society (Akaahan 81).

The Tiv language and philosophy are deeply intertwined aspects of the Tiv's identity, reflecting their worldview, social structures, and cultural values. The language serves as a vehicle for the expression of Tiv philosophy, which is centered on

community, respect for tradition, and a holistic view of existence. Understanding these elements is crucial for appreciating the rich cultural heritage of the Tiv.

Critical Analysis on Tiv Language and Philosophy

The Tiv, primarily located in central Nigeria, have a rich cultural heritage that includes a distinct language and philosophy. The Tiv language, a part of the Benue-Congo branch of the Niger-Congo family, is not just a means of communication but also a repository of the Tiv worldview and values. Tiv philosophy, on the other hand, reflects their understanding of existence, morality, and community life, emphasizing harmony, respect, and the interconnectedness of life.

Tiv Language: A Medium of Cultural Expression

The Tiv language, characterized by its tonal nature and unique linguistic features, serves as a crucial medium for expressing Tiv cultural values and traditions. It is through the Tiv language that proverbs, folktales, songs, and oral histories are conveyed, playing a pivotal role in the transmission of cultural norms and moral lessons from one generation to the next (Agbede 76). Language is not merely a tool for communication among the Tiv; it is an embodiment of their identity and a vehicle for perpetuating their cultural legacy.

The Tiv language's structure and usage reflect the communal lifestyle of the Tiv. For example, the language includes specific terms that express communal relationships and kinship ties, which are essential elements of Tiv social organization (Orkar 122). The communal nature of the Tiv is deeply embedded in their language, influencing how individuals perceive themselves and their roles within the community.

Tiv Philosophy: The Emphasis on Communalism and Harmony

Tiv philosophy is deeply rooted in the principles of communalism and harmony, which are evident in their social and moral frameworks. The Tiv believe in the concept of "ya

na angbian,” which translates to “eat and let your brother eat” (Gbor 34). This principle emphasizes the importance of sharing resources and caring for one’s neighbor, reflecting a philosophy that prioritizes communal welfare over individual gain.

Additionally, Tiv philosophy places a strong emphasis on the interconnectedness of all life forms. The Tiv worldview acknowledges a spiritual dimension that interlinks humans, nature, and the divine, promoting a sense of respect and responsibility toward the environment (Akiga 58). This holistic view encourages sustainable practices and reverence for nature, which are integral aspects of Tiv culture.

The Role of Oral Tradition in Tiv Philosophy

Oral tradition is a vital aspect of Tiv philosophy, serving as the primary means through which philosophical ideas and moral teachings are disseminated. Proverbs, which are abundant in Tiv oral tradition, encapsulate the wisdom and philosophical insights of the Tiv. For instance, the proverb “Or u wan kwagh , van a kyôr,” meaning “A person is the remedy for another’s problems,” underscores the Tiv belief in mutual support and interdependence (Torkula 89). Many of these oral tradition in Tiv philosophy is found in Aondohemba Demekaa works; “kwase ka nan tunan mkurem a wuhwe u nan yo, ka nan tese nan gber” meaning, when you are handicap in helping someone, you should show such a person some evidence of your lack. Another one says, “Uagh sen tswen hule” meaning, you can’t be perfect in your ideas alone. Another says. “Can kwase cir iyongur ve” meanin, even the poor can achieve great things. And “mngerem ma gbiliningh ma ze zwa ga” meaning, when you are helping someone, you should do it in such a way that would be beneficial to him or here. And “chombu gba sha ave a ngo ve” meaning, you are the cause of your problem. And “or venda kpev ya mtemam” meaning what you refuse to do, you are doing it the other Way round, among others (4-47)

These oral expressions not only convey philosophical ideas but also reinforce social norms and ethical behavior within the Tiv community. The reliance on oral tradition highlights the

dynamic nature of Tiv philosophy, which evolves and adapts through continuous dialogue and interaction within the community.

Challenges and Preservation Efforts

Despite its rich linguistic and philosophical heritage, the Tiv language and its associated philosophy face challenges in the modern era, including the influence of globalization, urbanization, and the dominance of English as the official language of Nigeria. These factors contribute to a gradual decline in the use of Tiv language among younger generations, posing a threat to the preservation of Tiv cultural identity (Shija 102).

Efforts to preserve Tiv language and philosophy include initiatives to document and promote the use of Tiv in educational settings and media. Scholars and cultural advocates emphasize the need for revitalizing the language through formal education and encouraging its use in digital platforms, which can help ensure its survival for future generations (Terna 115).

The Tiv language and philosophy offer profound insights into the values and worldview of the Tiv. Through their language, the Tiv express a deeply communal and harmonious way of life, underpinned by a philosophy that emphasizes interconnectedness and mutual respect. Preserving the Tiv language and philosophy is crucial for maintaining the cultural heritage and identity of the Tiv in the face of modern challenges.

Recommendations

Having investigated the topic “Tiv Language and Philosophy,” incorporating the concepts of philosophy, Tiv language, and a critical analysis of Tiv language and philosophy”, the study recommends the following:

1. Promote the Study and Documentation of Tiv Language within Philosophical Contexts: Encourage academic institutions and scholars to incorporate Tiv language in the study of philosophy, highlighting its unique perspectives,

terminologies, and worldview. This will not only preserve the language but also enrich the understanding of philosophy from an indigenous African perspective.

2. **Develop Philosophical Literature in Tiv Language:** Support the creation and publication of philosophical works written in Tiv language. This can include translating classical philosophical texts into Tiv, as well as original works by Tiv-speaking philosophers. Such efforts would strengthen the integration of Tiv language and philosophy, making philosophical discourse accessible to Tiv speakers.
3. **Integrate Tiv Philosophical Concepts into Broader Philosophical Discourses:** Identify and analyze distinct philosophical concepts inherent in the Tiv language and culture, such as their views on ethics, metaphysics, and epistemology. Integrating these concepts into broader philosophical discourses can provide alternative perspectives and contribute to a more inclusive global philosophy.
4. **Encourage Critical Analysis of Tiv Language and Philosophy:** Facilitate critical studies that examine the relationship between Tiv language and philosophical thought, exploring how the structure, idioms, and expressions of the language influence Tiv philosophical ideas. This includes analyzing how language shapes thought and the implications for understanding concepts like morality, existence, and knowledge.
5. **Implement Educational Programs Focused on Tiv Language and Philosophy:** Develop and implement educational programs that teach both Tiv language and philosophy in tandem. These programs could be introduced in schools, universities, and community learning centers to promote an understanding of how Tiv language informs philosophical thought, thereby fostering a deeper appreciation of Tiv cultural and intellectual heritage.

These recommendations aim to strengthen the synergy between Tiv language and philosophy, highlighting the importance of preserving linguistic diversity in philosophical discourse.

Conclusion

The exploration of Tiv language and philosophy reveals a profound connection between language and the cultural worldview of the Tiv. Philosophy, as the study of fundamental questions about existence, knowledge, values, and reason, intersects deeply with language, which serves as a vessel for expressing and shaping these philosophical ideas. Tiv language, with its unique linguistic structures, idioms, and expressions, is not merely a tool for communication but a reflection of the Tiv's collective identity, beliefs, and values.

Tiv language embodies the community's philosophical perspectives on life, encapsulating their understanding of human nature, relationships, and the cosmos. The proverbs, folktales, and everyday expressions within the Tiv language serve as a medium through which philosophical concepts are passed down, interpreted, and reinterpreted across generations. These linguistic elements highlight the Tiv worldview, emphasizing communal living, respect for elders, the importance of kinship, and the interconnectedness of all life.

A critical analysis of Tiv language and philosophy demonstrates the inseparable nature of language and thought. Tiv philosophy cannot be fully appreciated without understanding the nuances of the language that articulates it. The language provides a framework for philosophical discourse, influencing how the Tiv perceive and engage with the world around them. Moreover, the analysis underscores the significance of preserving the Tiv language as a means of safeguarding the community's philosophical heritage.

In conclusion, the study of Tiv language and philosophy underscores the essential role that language plays in shaping and conveying philosophical ideas. By examining the philosophical dimensions embedded within the Tiv language, we gain deeper insights into the Tiv worldview and the values that guide their way of life. This underscores the importance of preserving the Tiv language, not only as a cultural artifact but as a living expression of the Tiv's enduring philosophy.

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