

How Does Our Language Affect Our Thoughts?

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Abstract

As a linguistic student, have you ever asked yourself whether all individuals think similarly irrespective of the language they utilize to convey perceptions and messages or if language impacts the thinking process? Since this question has amused neuroscientists, linguistics, psychologists, and philosophers for decades, every person has robust sentiments about it. Language focuses the attention or thought of an individual on specific aspects of the world. This paper denotes that people use languages to effectively communicate ideas, besides pinpointing that language profoundly impacts the way people perceive objects within their surroundings, thereby influencing their perception sense.

First, the Sapir-Whorf theory notes that people experience their world based on language structure. The theory argues that people's language structure and grammatical structure impact how people perceive their surroundings (Frothingham). The hypothesis, which primarily embodies linguistic determinism ideology, asserts that linguistic differences immensely influence individuals' behavior and mental cognition, limiting their capacity to perceive knowledge. The most apparent linguistic determination instance emanates from research studies about Arctic region inhabitants or the Inuits. According to Frothingham, whereas native English speakers have a single term for "snow," Inuits contain more than 80 terms for a similar word, permitting them to perceive it in various ways, significantly expanding their knowledge degree. From this example, through linguistic determinism, people can broaden their vocabulary range to enable them to enrich their thinking.

Additionally, language plays an integral part in how individuals perceive colors within their surroundings. Lupyan et al.'s study pinpointed that in linguistic structures, color words shape how people perceive colors (938). In particular, native English-speaking children who prescribe words for numerous shades can tell a distinction between the shades. At the same time, those raised speaking languages with few color names cannot distinguish shades and ultimately lump the hues together. Color categorization hypothesis is the relativist hypothesis, experimented on the Himba tribe in Namibia and English-speaking children. Whereas the English language contains eleven basic terms of colors, the Himba language contains five color terms that categorize numerous colors together. An example of a term from Himba tribes' group of colors is "zoozu," employed for multiple dark colors such as dark green and dark blue. Extensive experimentation revealed that Himba children learned terms of colors that are comparable to their language, thus showing that color cognition and perception are majorly influenced by language.

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