

THE POWER OF WORDS: HOW LANGUAGE SHAPES OUR PERCEPTION

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ABSTRACT: The purpose of this article is to find out how language affects cognitive activity and a person's perception of the world. According to the theory of linguistic relativity, research is influenced by such processes as memory, attention and perception of time and space, structural features of language (grammar, vocabulary, and phonetics). The paper examines empirical evidence that supports the idea that language differences influence decision-making, orientation strategy, and daily interaction with the outside world. The results of the study show that language not only reflects, but also actively shapes cognitive experiences, which is important for creating effective teaching methods and intercultural communication. A new perspective on the study of the influence of language on cognitive development is being opened using an integrative approach that combines practical data with theoretical models. In addition, it is the basis for further research in the field of cognitive neurolinguistics.

Keywords: language perception, linguistic relativity, cognitive science, psycholinguistics, bilingualism, metaphors, emotional impact, language and thought, grammatical structures, cognitive flexibility, neural connections, cross-linguistic influence.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of linguistic determinism says that the features of language affect our perception of the world. Sapir (1929) and Whorf (1956) assert that a language's structure influences cognitive functions like memory, perception, and spatial orientation. To date, numerous studies have been conducted that have shown that language structure such as vocabulary, grammar, and grammar affect our mental abilities, namely concentration, memory, temporal perception, and space. The main objective of this scientific work is the concept of how language influences our thinking and perception of the world, and how we can apply this knowledge in practice to improve the effectiveness of language learning.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Linguistic relativity: language and thinking

Scientists Sapir and Whorf hypothesized that a person does not just use words, but literally sees the world through the prism of language. Moreover, they argued that language influences how we perceive time, colors, space, and events around us.

How does language shape color perception? Let us assume you are looking at two different colors of green. In Russian, a color is described in two ways: green and pale green. However, there is only one word in English: Green. According to research, English speakers are much slower to distinguish the shade than Russian speakers. One might inquire: why? The fact is that when a language has a rich vocabulary on any topic, it facilitates the process of describing and recognizing something or someone.

How does grammar affect thinking? In German and Russian, it is obvious that they have gender: the moon is feminine, the bridge is masculine. There is no such thing in English. Research shows that people who speak the same language often associate things with their "linguistic" gender. For instance, Germans speak of bridges as strong and reliable, while Spaniards speak of them as beautiful and graceful (in Spanish, the

bridge is feminine). Thus, language not only helps us communicate, but also shapes how we see the world.

The influence of metaphors on behavior and decision-making

Expressing your thoughts more simply, it should be noted that metaphors are not just a construction of beautiful expressions. They determine how we think. In their book *Metaphors We Live By*, George Lakoff and Mark Johnson proved that people perceive the world through metaphors without even realizing it. For instance, crime can be metaphorically presented as a "virus" or a "predator" in media narratives; the public policy reaction to each metaphor varies (Boroditsky, 2001).

How do metaphors control our opinion? In today's world, social media plays an important role in our perception of surrounding events, as well as in our reactions to them. Let us say a major TV channel tells us about a high crime rate, and describes its growth as an epidemic, a virus. In this case, we will assume to treat the problem, that is, to improve education, to create assistance programs. However, if you add more colorful descriptions of crime and describe it as a predator that violently torments the city, then most will be inclined to more violent measures to combat crime. That is how the power of words works on the masses.

Financial metaphors and market panic: Any average person is well acquainted with the events of 2008. It would not be a mistake to say that this is the worst year on the market in the history of humanity. In addition, if the events of this year were repeated, it would be reported on the news that the market had collapsed and the stock market had collapsed, in which case most people would have a violent reaction to this. Nevertheless, if the same idea is interpreted in a different way: the economy is adapting, then consequently the reaction of the masses will be calmer.

How do metaphors affect your health? Speaking about the fight against various diseases and comparing it with something frightening, such as war, the body's reaction will be appropriate and the patient will experience a high level of stress, which will

significantly slow down recovery. At the same time, if you change the war to a journey ("I'm on the road to recovery"), people can recover faster.

Thus, it can be understood that metaphors are a powerful tool capable of manipulating the perception of reality, which is used by politicians and the media.

METHODS

This work is based on an analysis of modern scientific research in the field of psycholinguistics, cognitive science and sociolinguistics. The main sources include:

- Works in the field of ethno linguistics, studying the relationship between language and culture.
- Experimental studies of the influence of metaphors, grammatical constructions and bilingualism on cognitive processes.

The research methodology includes a literature review, comparative data analysis and interpretation of the results of experiments conducted in this field.

Spatial orientation through language. Have you ever wondered how we determine the direction? It is natural for us to say "left" or "right." Nevertheless, there are languages in which such words are simply missing!

How do native speakers of different languages navigate in space? In Australia, there is a language in which instead of the usual left and right sides of the world are used: north, south, west and east. For a better understanding, substitute: You are sitting in a bar and you ask your friend where my drink is, and he's likely to answer, "It's in the northeast."

Language determines movement: There are many verbs in English that denote movement, such as running, yoga, sprinting (running, jogging, sprinting). In Spanish and French, the common verb (ir — to go) and details (for example, fast or slow) are

more often used. Because of this, the French and Spaniards pay more attention to the end point, and English speakers are better able to remember exactly how the movement occurred.

The influence of bilingualism on cognitive functions: The ability to speak two languages is not just a skill in the arsenal, but a real talent.

How does bilingualism affect the ability to think? Bilinguals often change languages. It is like your brain is constantly working on which language you speak. Because of this, they are better able to multitask and adapt quickly to new circumstances.

Bilingualism slows down brain aging: I agree with research conducted by scientists that people who speak two or more languages are less likely to be susceptible to Alzheimer's disease, even if they get sick 4-5 years later than monolinguals. The fact is that people who speak two languages have a lot more neural connections that help the brain work longer and more efficiently.

Emotions in native and foreign languages: An interesting fact is that a person who is able to speak two languages reacts to words in different ways depending on the language. For example: if you declare your love in your native language (I love you), the emotional reaction will be much stronger than if the same words were spoken in a foreign language. In a non-native language, emotions seem less "alive", which makes decisions more rational.

It turns out that knowing several languages does not just expand horizons – it really changes the way the brain works!

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Language and emotions: The influence of grammatical constructions the linguistic structure affects people's emotions. For example, Spaniards say "se rompió el vaso" — "the glass broke", while the British often say, "he broke the glass" — "he

broke the glass". In the experiment, people who spoke English remembered the culprit of the incident more often than people who spoke Spanish, which shows how grammar affects cognitive processes, did.

Language and social affiliation: Social identity and thought processes are influenced by language. Depending on the language they speak, people who speak more than one language frequently exhibit different behaviors. When speaking multiple languages, bilinguals may have distinct personality features, demonstrating the influence of language on social roles.

The English language as Lingua Franca and its influence on the ability to think: English has become an international language of communication in a world where there is no place that has not been globalized, and many people for whom it is not native think about it in certain situations. As a result of decreased emotional engagement, research shows that decision-making in a non-native language may be less rational and less emotional.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it would not be a mistake to assert that language imperceptibly but deeply affects our thinking and perception of reality on a deep level. We see the world through the lens of the words we use: they shape our picture of reality, help us highlight some details and leave others in the shadows. As discussed in this scientific paper, we realized that language can change the perception of color, time, and space, control our decisions through metaphors, and even affect our cognitive abilities. Bilingualism trains the brain, improves concentration and helps to maintain clarity of thought for longer.

Nevertheless, language is not something unchangeable. He develops with society, adapts to new conditions, borrows words, creates new meanings. The ability to understand how words shape our reality gives us the opportunity to consciously approach language and how we use it. After all, the way we speak determines the way

we think—and therefore the way we live.

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