

Sapir-whorf hypothesis (1954)

- Language relativism: weaker version of the hypothesis, stating that language use influences thought
 - (Lucy, 2005) describes it as “habitual cognition” not that language completely or permanently blinds speakers to other aspects of reality. Rather they provide speakers with a systematic default bias in their habitual response tendencies
 - Military trained: tend to have different cardinal references “north, south, east west” instead of “up, down, right, left”; “Watch your six” meaning watch your back referencing the position of digits on an analogue clock
- Language determinism: absolute version of the hypothesis language use determines thought
 - Implies that people cannot comprehend ideas and concepts not represented in the language (“Hygge” a Dutch word that does not have a direct translation in English but means a pleasant togetherness, rooted in Dutch culture)

Relations between language and thought can be seen in:

- Conceptual metaphors: demonstrates that ideas can be recoverable from language use
 - “Argument is war” where people describe arguments using the language of war such as “attack”, “defend”, “won”, and “lost”
 - “Anger is fire” where the emotion anger is associated with characteristics of a fire “fuming mad”, “fiery temper”
- Fixed expressions / idiomatic phrases
- Lexical choice
 - Process verbs: cognitive, material...
 - Transitive and intransitive verbs
 - Agent deletion
 - Passivisation
 - Thematic choices (foregrounding, backgrounding)

(Chomsky) Universal grammar: language and thought have little relationship because all languages share the same underlying structure

- Argues that people are born with a number of highly specific grammatical rules built into their heads
 - English adjectives are ordered according to: opinion, size, age, shape, colour, origin, material, and purpose. Native speakers intuitively know that “a big brown bag” is correct instead of “a brown big bag” although the meaning of the phrases are the same.