

Is there any
relationship between
the language we
speak and the way
we view the w...

[Linguistics](#), [Language](#)



There is a very intimate relationship between the language we speak and how we view our world. The language we speak imbues in us thoughts about how the world is. Language is a collection of words which is used to communicate our thoughts and messages. The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis tells us about the relation between language and the way we view the world. The hypothesis states that "a particular language's nature influences the habitual thought of its speakers. Different languages develop different patterns of thought. It acknowledges that the mechanisms of any language condition the thoughts of its speaker community". We perceive our surroundings according to the native language we speak. All observers are not led by the same physical evidence to the same picture of the universe, unless their linguistic backgrounds are similar, or can in some way be calibrated. The way we think structures our understanding of how we think about our surroundings which in turn constructs our view about the world. Without a common language we can't possibly converse with those people who don't speak our native language. I have my own way of doing things and I have learnt from my native language about my ways, my culture and my society. Now these people who don't speak my language have their own ways of doing things. The language they learn teaches them their ways, their religion, their perception. Language also teaches us diversities present in the world. We may perceive a word differently from another person. A French coming to live in china will be tortured if he doesn't know Mandarin. He won't be able to contact, converse and communicate with people who don't know his native language. He will have problems as he doesn't know Chinese culture. He may offend a Chinese by saying something which is offensive for

Chinese people but a normal word for him. The French guy will consider Chinese people are weird and vice versa. Therefore language affects. A word may have different meanings in different languages and so may be interpreted differently. 'Or' when pronounced has a different meaning in Hindi where it means 'and' which is the complete opposite of the word in English. Even same words can be used as metaphorical devices. There are also some words which have different meanings in different circumstances. These words have positive or negative attributes. For example forward literally means ahead. But 'looking forward to' means that you are eagerly waiting for something to happen. Similarly "Down" means below. But down-to-earth means that the person being referred to is humble. So you see that language affects our views. As language has developed and new words have been added to the vocabulary, our way of perceiving things has changed. 'Large', 'Huge' and 'Gigantic' all belong to the same category of big. But the intensity of these words is different. These words when used to describe the same thing create different images in our mind. Personally I find gigantic the most intense of all. We use these words to describe things and make a comparison. Using only the word 'big' for two different things doesn't make the comparison. So intensity of words being used is very important as it determines how we visualize and perceive a thing. Another way in which language can be said to frame our thinking is in the issue of race, where "white" is assumed to have positive connotations and "black" to have negative connotations. When we call a person black we imply that he or she is bad. We can call a person black minded or black hearted which means he is corrupt and cunning. "Black sheep" is used metaphorically to describe

someone who does no good. In many languages black is associated with evil. Similarly, white is the symbol of chastity and purity. When we call a person white we don't mean he is an alibi. We mean he is a good person. Therefore, colours also have positive and negative attributes associated with them. Describing things using colours tells us about how we perceive people. In conclusion, using language is an important way of letting people know about the world and our experiences of it. In other words, the language we have learnt to speak determines the way in which we view the world. Without language, it's quite an illusion to imagine what the world will be.