

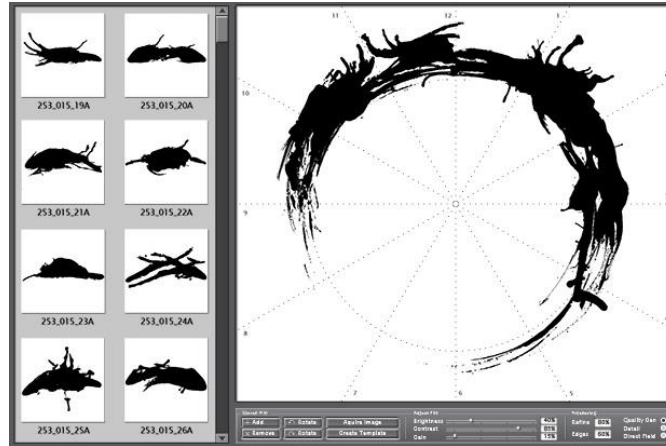
# Linguistic Relativity

## How language shape thoughts?

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24M51979

# Introduction



**HEPTAPOD LOGOGRAMS WITH TRANSLATION**  
(source : <http://bit.ly/2114vj0>)


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Linguistic Relativity

# Introduction

- Linguistic Relativity:
  - Languages – structure & vocab – influence speakers – perception & thoughts.
- Sapir-Whorf hypothesis:
  - ~~Strong: “Language **determines** thought” (deterministic)~~
  - Weak: “Language **influences** thought” (relative)



Edward Sapir



Benjamin Lee Whorf

# Theoretical foundation

- Franz Boas (1858-1942)
  - **Language shapes** cultural and cognitive patterns.
  - Languages reflect worldviews & cultural importances.
- Edward Sapir (1884-1939)
  - **Language structure influences** habitual thoughts.
  - Indirectly, rather than deterministically.
- Benjamin Lee Whorf (1897-1941)
  - Linguistic difference **influences** perception of the world.
  - Bro worked with Native Americans, particularly Hopi.



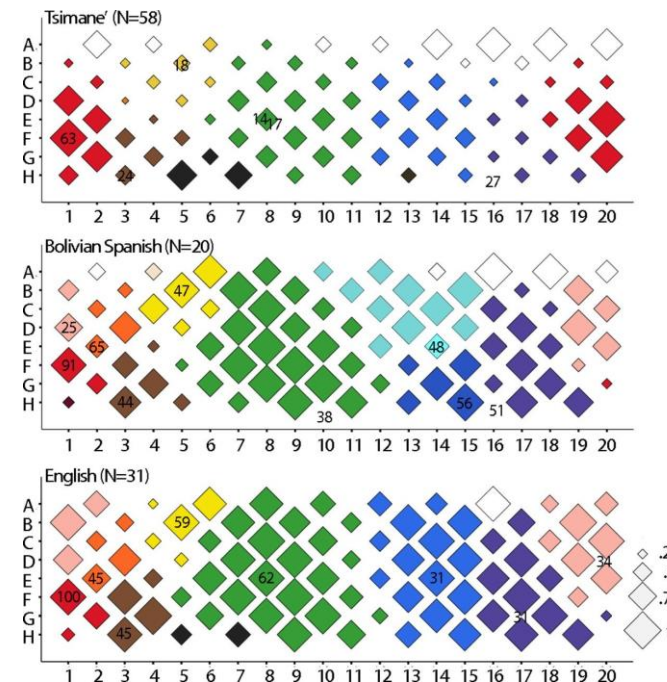
# Example 1 – Color perception

“Do speakers of languages with different color terms perceive colors differently?”

- Winawer et al., 2007:
  - English uses “**blue**” for all shades.
  - Russian distinguishes between “**goluboy**” (light blue) and “**siniy**” (dark blue).
  - Russians are faster at distinguishing between shades of blue than English speakers.
- Language-specific categories enhance perception in those domains.



More Than the Eye Can See: A Computational Model of Color Term Acquisition and Color Discrimination (Batend et al., 2018)

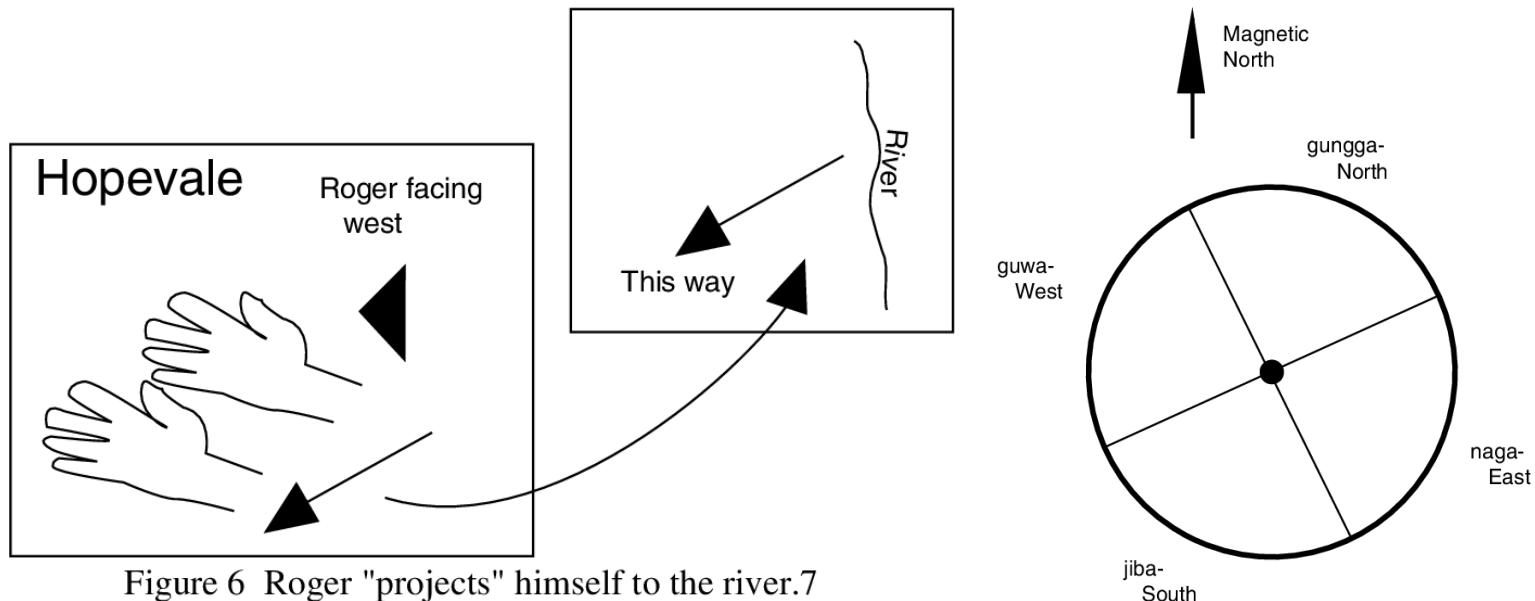


Color naming across languages reflects color use (Edward et al., 2017)

# Example 2 – Spatial orientation

“How do languages influence spatial reasoning?”

- John B Haviland, 1998:
  - Guugu Yimithirr (Australia) uses **cardinal directions (north, south)** instead of normal **relative terms (left, right)**.
    - They develop exceptional spatial awareness & can navigate in unfamiliar conditions.
- Language guides how people conceptualize space and navigation.



# Criticisms & limitations

- Criticism:
  - Linguistic relativity doesn't imply linguistic determinism.
  - Cognition isn't solely shaped by language.
  - Cross-cultural influences & shared experiences reduce the effect of linguistic differences.
- Counterargument:
  - Evidence supports the weak hypothesis; while language isn't a "prison," it nudges thought patterns.
- Anyway:
  - Linguistic relativity shows that language shapes how we perceive and process the world, **but it's one factor among many.**

“How might your language influence your worldview without you realizing it?”

That's it.  
Thanks.

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