How Language Shapes the Way We Think

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1. Introduction: The Power of Language

Human language is a unique ability that allows individuals to transmit (1) _____ directly into another person's mind using vocal sounds.

Worldwide, there are approximately (2) _____ spoken languages, each featuring different vocabularies, structures, and sounds.

Cognitive scientists investigate whether these differences influence our mental (3) _____ and how we perceive reality.

2. Spatial Orientation & Cardinal Directions

English speakers typically describe locations using relative terms like "left" and "right".

Members of the Kuuk Thaayorre Aboriginal community in Australia do not use relative terms; instead, they rely on (4) _____ (North, South, East, West) for all spatial relations.

Because of this linguistic requirement, Kuuk Thaayorre speakers maintain an exceptional sense of (5) _____ compared to average English speakers.

3. Mental Representations of Time

How people visually organize time is often linked to their language's (6) _____.

For instance, English speakers usually lay out chronological events from (7) _____.

Kuuk Thaayorre speakers arrange time based on the landscape, moving from (8) _____ regardless of which direction their body is facing.

4. Grammatical Gender

Many languages assign a (9) _____ (masculine or feminine) to every noun.

For example, the sun is feminine in German but masculine in Spanish, while the moon is the opposite.

Research shows that these categories lead speakers to (10) _____ inanimate objects using gendered adjectives (e.g., describing a bridge as "elegant" versus "strong").

5. Memory and Eyewitness Testimony

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Languages differ in how they describe accidental events.

English tends to specify (11) _____ even in accidents (e.g., "He broke the vase").

Speakers of languages like Spanish or Japanese are more likely to focus on the outcome rather than assigning (12) _____.

As a result, English speakers tend to remember who caused an accident, whereas speakers of other languages recall the (13) _____ of the event better.

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