

## How Language Shapes the Way We Think

### COMPARING, DESCRIBING DIFFERENCES

whereas	worse	distinction	differ
tell	differentiate	than	in (2) at
instead	across	distinguishing	different
as	discriminate	opposite	in (1)

There are also really big **differences** \_\_\_\_\_ how people think about time. So here I have pictures of my grandfather \_\_\_\_\_ **different ages**. And if I ask an English speaker to organize time, they might lay it out this way, from left to right. This has to do with writing direction. If you were a speaker of Hebrew or Arabic, you might do it going **in the** \_\_\_\_\_ **direction**, from right to left.

[It's] very egocentric of me to have the direction of time chase me around every time I turn my body. For the Kuuk Thaayorre, time is locked on the landscape. It's a **dramatically** \_\_\_\_\_ way of thinking about time.

\*\*\*

Lots of languages have grammatical gender; every noun gets assigned a gender. And these genders **differ** \_\_\_\_\_ languages.

\*\*\*

So, two people witness the same crime, but end up remembering different things about that crime. This has implications, of course, for eyewitness testimony. It also has implications for blame and punishment. So if you take English speakers and I just show you someone breaking a vase, and I say, "He broke the vase,"

\_\_\_\_\_ **opposed to** "The vase broke," you will punish someone more, you will blame someone more.

\*\*\*

Languages also \_\_\_\_\_ **in how** they divide up the color spectrum -- the visual world. Some languages have lots of words for colors, some have only a couple words, "light" and "dark." And languages **differ** \_\_\_\_\_ **where** they put boundaries between colors. So, for example, in English, there's a word for blue that covers all of the colors that you can see on the screen, but in Russian, there isn't a single word. \_\_\_\_\_, Russian speakers have to \_\_\_\_\_ **between** light blue, "goluboy," and dark blue, "siniy." So Russians have this lifetime of experience of, in language, \_\_\_\_\_ these two colors. When we test people's ability to perceptually \_\_\_\_\_ these colors, what we find is that Russian speakers are faster across this linguistic boundary. They're faster to be able to \_\_\_\_\_ **the difference between** a light and dark blue. And when you look at people's brains as they're looking at colors -- say you have colors shifting slowly from light to dark blue -- the brains of people who use different words for light and dark blue will give a surprised reaction as the colors shift from light to dark, as if, "Ooh, something has categorically changed," \_\_\_\_\_ the brains of English speakers, for example, that don't make this categorical \_\_\_\_\_, don't give that surprise, because nothing is categorically changing.

\*\*\*

They stay oriented **better** \_\_\_\_\_ we used to think humans could. We used to think that humans were \_\_\_\_\_ **than** other creatures because of some biological excuse.