



The perception of motion by Polish and English monolinguals. The case of linguistic relativity.

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The present study investigates the linguistic relativity hypothesis which assumes that language has an impact on thought. More specifically, it has been examined whether linguistic patterns influence perception of Polish and English monolinguals in a nonlinguistic context.

The assumption was made that although both Polish and English fall into one group of satellite-framed languages (Talmy 2007) that encode manner of motion more saliently than path, English speakers will pay additional attention to the path of motion. The reason behind this is that English, unlike Polish, has a variety of path verbs, similarly to verb-framed languages. Moreover, English motion events are conveyed by verb phrases in which a preposition (satellite) expresses path. Thus, because the change of a preposition results in the change of meaning, English speakers will attend to this aspect of motion more than Poles. The participants in the study were two groups of monolingual speakers of Polish ($n = 30$), and English ($n = 22$) who performed two nonlinguistic tasks: a similarity judgment and similarity rating task.

The results of the similarity judgment task proved Talmy's classification of languages correct, showing that manner is a more salient domain of motion than path for both Polish and English speakers. However, the similarity rating task has shown that Polish monolinguals rated manner of motion higher than English monolinguals ($t = 3.27$, $p < .005$) while English monolinguals rated path of motion higher than Polish monolinguals ($t = 3.39$, $p < .005$).

These findings indicate that nonlinguistic behaviour of Polish and English speakers reflected linguistic forms of each language. Hence, the results of the study provide evidence that language patterns can affect perception at a more permanent level when language is not a mediator in a task.

References:

Talmy, Leonard. 1985. *Lexicalization patterns: Semantic structure in lexical forms*. In: Shopen, T. (ed.). *Language typology and syntactic description*. Vol. 3: Grammatical categories and the lexicon, 56-149. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.