Introduction to Linguistics (CL1.102)

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Taught by Prof. Aditi Mukherjee

Language as a Conceptual System

The relation between language and thought has been the subject of debate for centuries.
"Thinking" involves categorising, cognising and re-cognising one's surroundings, which is done through language. This is the essence of "being".
Therefore, language is (besides an instrument of communication) a means to classify and impose a structure on the world around us – a conceptual system.

It has been claimed that different languages conceptualise the world differently. One commonly studied topic is the semantics of colour terms – various languages cut the spectrum at different points. For example, Hindi *baiṅganī* corresponds to "purple", "violet", "mauve" and "lavender" in English; and *lāl* to "red", "crimson", and "scarlet". Similarly for kinship terms, actions, edibles, and so on.

None of these systems is more "logical" than the other.