



INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

HYDERABAD

Language Glass

LYONSGATE



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Language and Culture



"There are four tongues worthy of the world's use," says the Talmud: "Greek for song, Latin for war, Syriac for lamentation, and Hebrew for ordinary speech."



A Man Of A Culture

The Babylonians would have been hard-pressed to understand Crime and Punishment, because their language used one and the same word to describe both of these concepts.



Case Studies



Dante Alighieri surveyed the dialects of Italy in his *De vulgari eloquentia* and declared that "what the Romans speak is not so much a vernacular as a vile jargon ... and this should come as no surprise, for they also stand out among all Italians for the ugliness of their manners and their outward appearance."

Logic and Clarity

As the later thinker Antoine de Rivarol put it: "What is not clear may be English, Italian, Greek, or Latin" but "ce qui n'est pas clair n'est pas français."



"Seems I miss ordered again.
I think the only tense I learned in
French was the imperfect tense."

Language : Reflects or Influences?



Culture: cultivation, the state of being cultivated, refinement, the result of cultivation, a type of civilization.

Chambers English dictionary

Kultur: Gesamtheit der geistigen und künstlerischen Errungenschaften einer Gesellschaft.

(The totality of intellectual and artistic achievements of a society.)

Störig German dictionary

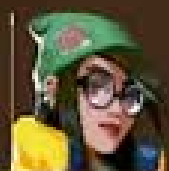
Culture: Ensemble des moyens mis en œuvre par l'homme pour augmenter ses connaissances, développer et améliorer les facultés de son esprit, notamment le jugement et le goût.

(The collection of means employed by man to increase his knowledge, develop and improve his mental faculties, notably judgment and taste.)

ATILF French dictionary



A Tower



CINSTANTINE6

< > SWITCH PLAYER



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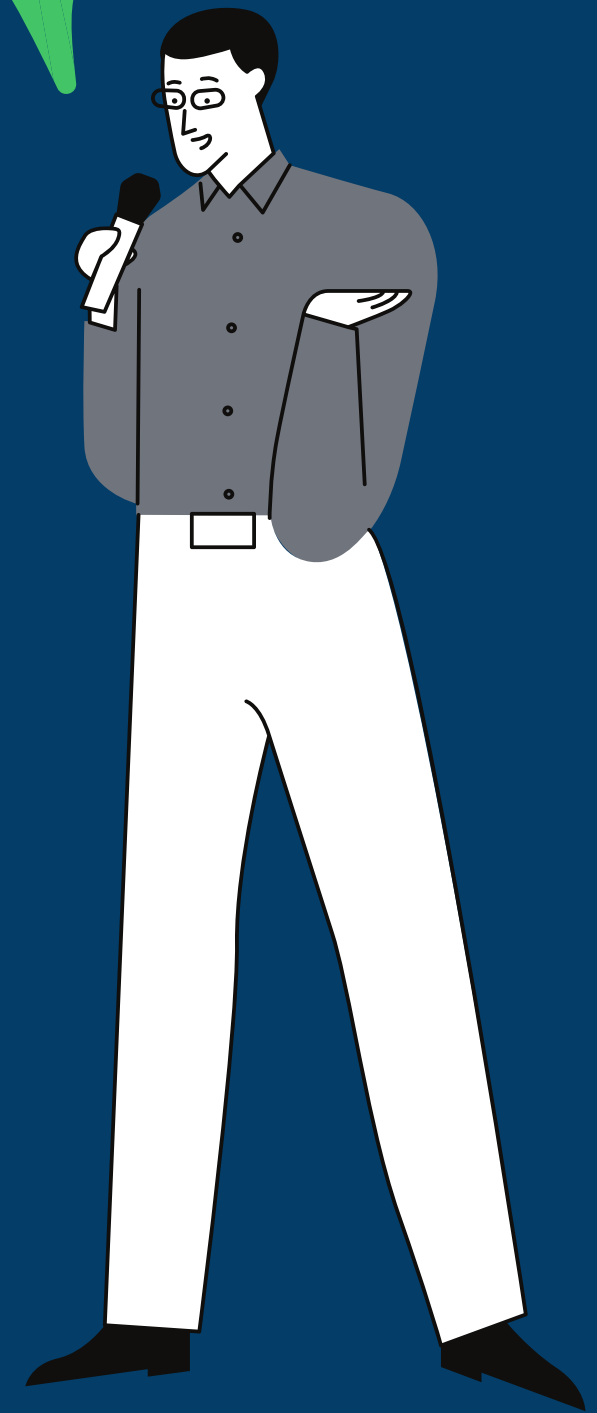
Nihilism

Philosopher Fredrich Niechze popularised the concept of nihilism, in his article "Critique of Epistemology" he discusses the relation between language and nihilism..



"LANGUAGE AS A MIRROR"

Oxen and Sea
both have the appearance
of WINE



Labels



The difference between languages is that they choose different labels, for different concepts.

These labels lay no claims to being anything other than just cultural conventions.

So the question is, where do these labels come from?
Are they Arbitrary?





**Acceptance of
a label**

CONCEPTS

A child must always be taught that this animal is a cat but once he/she gets the idea of recognizing a cat. He'll be able to recognize it even if it is an furry cat or a slim one, black one or a white one, that ability is the concept of language.

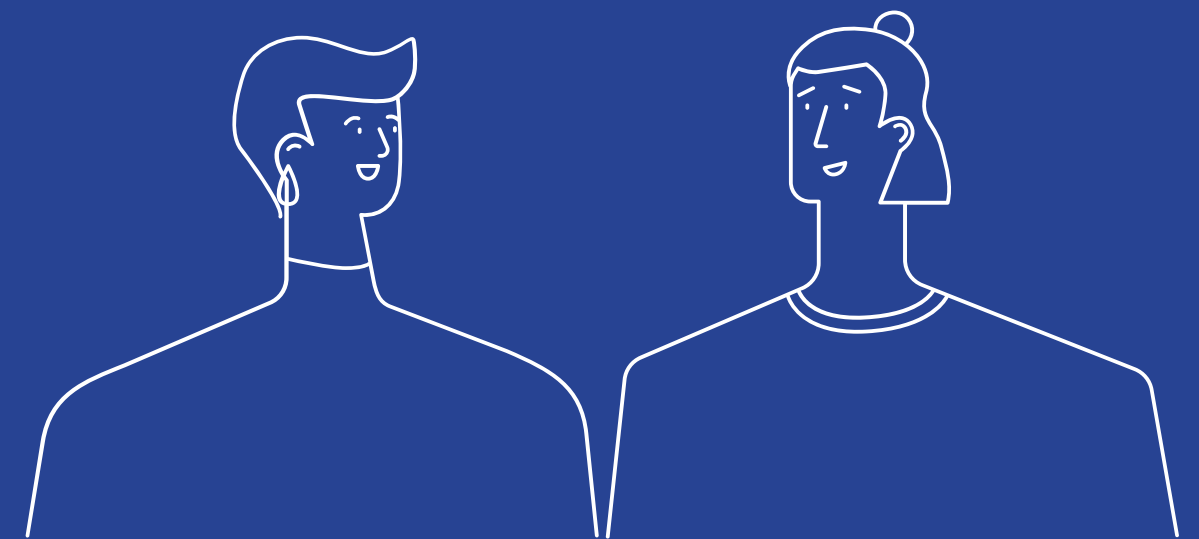


THE DEBATE

"Artifact of Culture" v/s "Bequest of Nature"

The language was divided into two distinct linguistic territories that are the 'domain of labels' and the 'land of concepts'.

The labels reflects cultural background whereas the concepts reflect our nature



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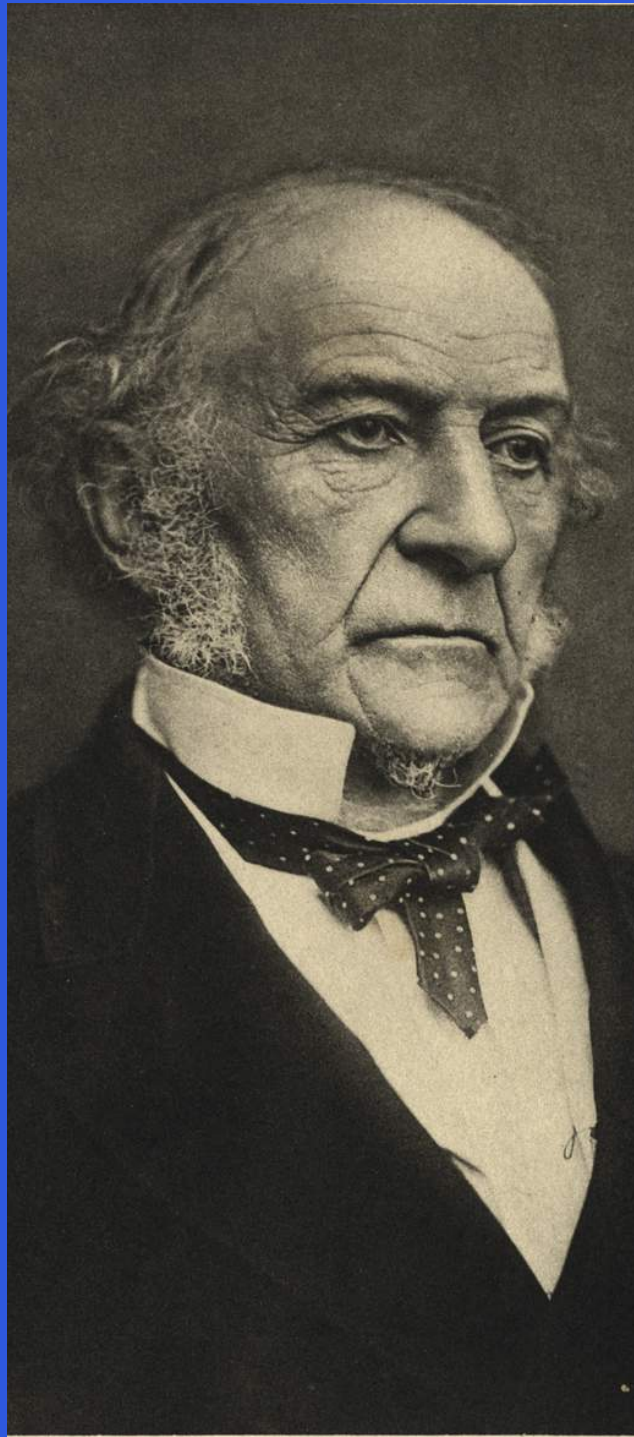
Aristotle said that we all have the same impression of our soul.

Some concepts like Mind and Language are not the same in language whereas some concepts like cat and bird are the same in all languages.

French and German don't have a word for 'mind' but they have words meaning 'peace of mind' & 'state of mind'.

Lg

Experiments & Case Studies



ונה המוקרנת על הרישתית מועברת ד
יר יחידות רגישות לאור — קולטי הראי
ם קנים ומדוכים. הקליטה של פו
צבע מעולה ביותר באותו חלק של הרי
דוע ככתם הצהוב. בשטח זה אין קו
ומדוכים ערוכים בו בצפיפות. לכל מ
צפי משלו ובעובדה זו ערובה לבהיר
ה של הראיה באיזור זה. בחלקים הה

- We can also see that English lumps together certain body parts that speakers of other languages treat as distinct concepts.
- For example *tsavar* and *oref* in Hebrew.



Need of Grammar

Q. What is grammar?

A. grammar is a sophisticated system of rules for organizing concepts into coherent sentences.





Able as as be coherent communicate concepts even example for for grammar in likes many not of one one ordering rules rules sentence the the the thoughts to with without without words would.

(I mean: without the rules of grammar, for example without the rules for ordering words in the sentence, one would not be able to communicate coherent thoughts, even with as many concepts as one likes.)

Now, the question arises: Are the rules of grammar-word order, syntactic structures, word structure, sound structure-encoded in our genes, or do they reflect cultural conventions?

This question has been the cause of debates between the advocates of nature and of nurture, between nativists and culturalists, universalists and relativists which have raged just as fiercely over grammar as over the concepts of language.



Q: Are all languages equally complex?

For decades, linguists of all persuasions, both nativists and culturalists, have been trotting out the same party line: all languages are equally complex.

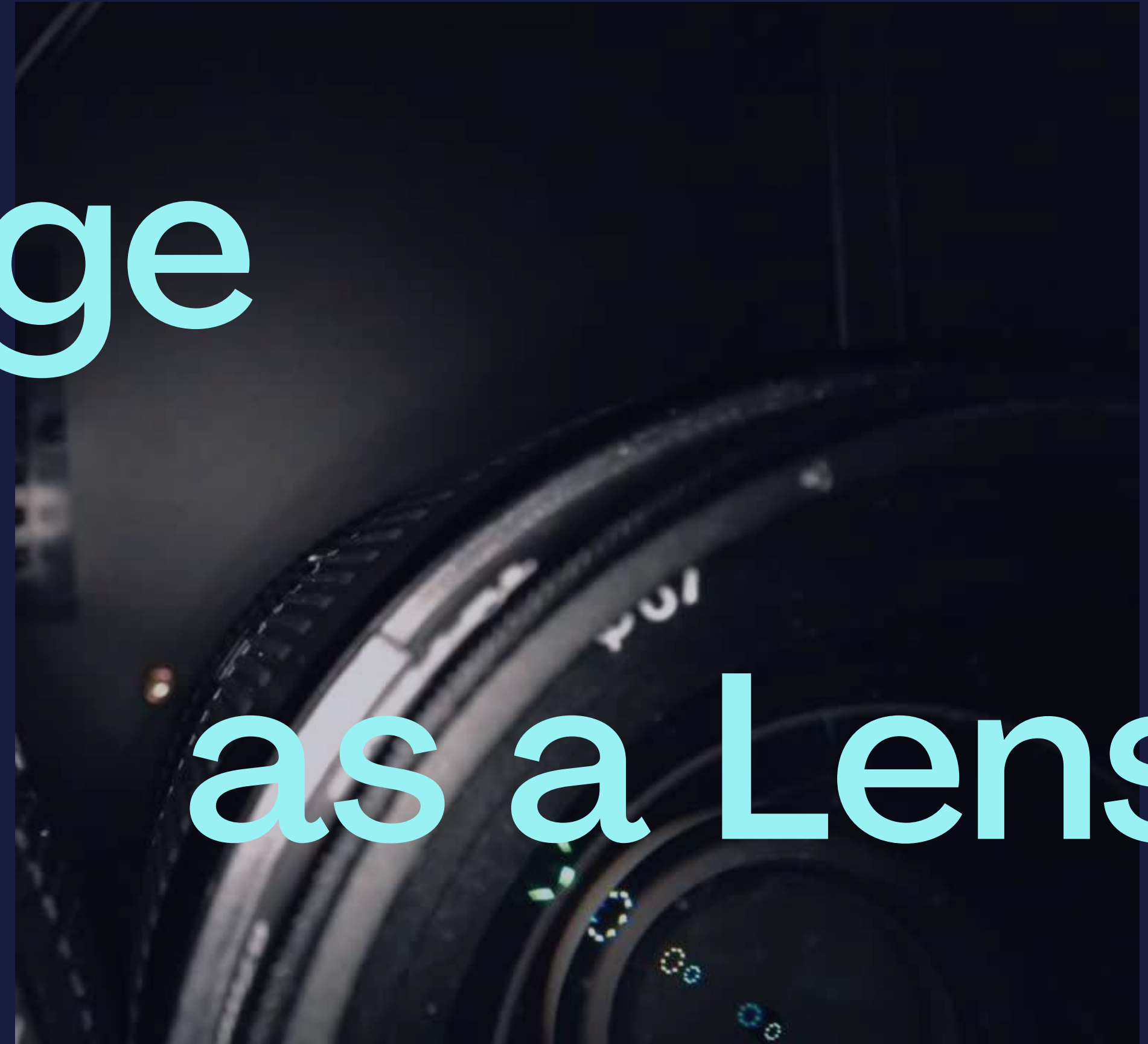
This appears nothing more than an empty slogan as the evidence suggests that the complexity of some areas of grammar reflects the culture of the speakers, often in unexpected ways.





Language

Does language affect our thoughts?



as a Lens

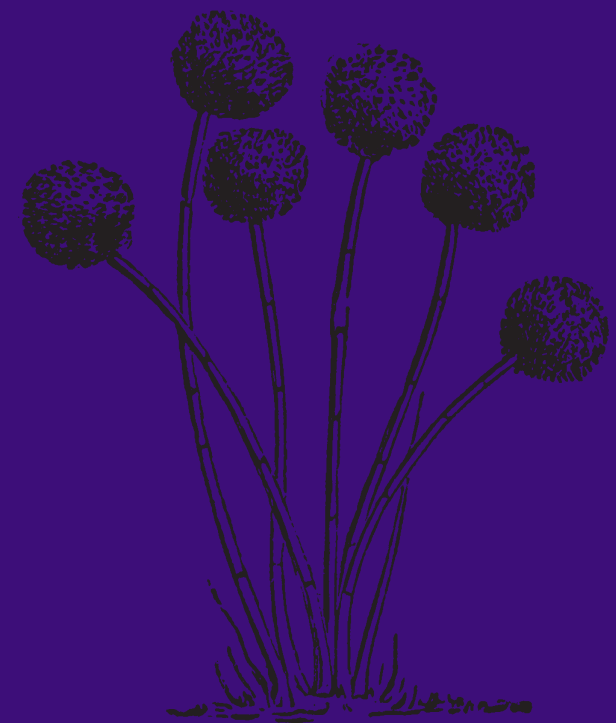


Questions

- Could language have more than a passive role as a reflection of cultural differences and be an active instrument of coercion through which culture imposes its conventions on our mind?
- Do different languages lead their speakers to different perceptions?
- Is our particular language a lens through which we view the world?



Non-Linguists Perspective



People think that since culture has a great deal of leeway in defining our concepts, it is perfectly reasonable to think whether our culture could affect our thoughts through the linguistic concepts it imposes. However.....



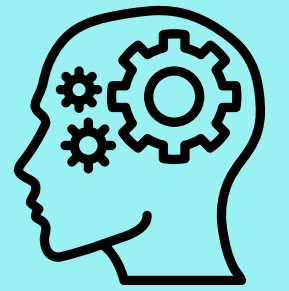


Linguists' approach

Linguists, psychologists, and anthropologists stay as far away from this topic as possible. This is because anyone having any sort of relation with this subject can easily be labeled as fraud as it is very difficult to prove or disprove that language has any influence on our thoughts.

Remember the story of Benjamin Lee Whorf ?





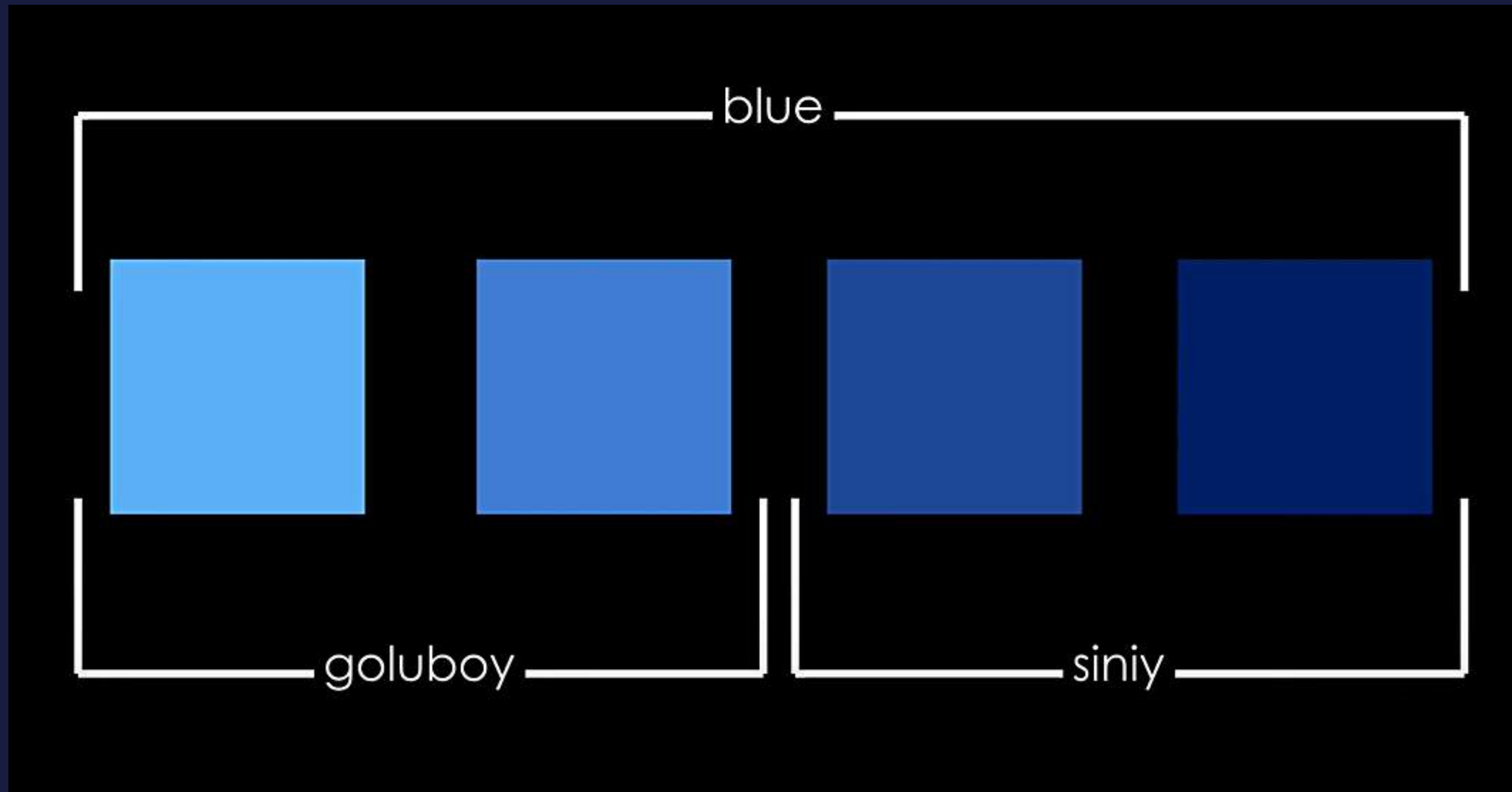
Recent Scientific studies

In recent years, some scientists have applied some sound scientific methods to this question, and the findings that have emerged from their research have already revealed surprising ways in which the idiosyncrasies of the mother tongue do after all affect the mind.

They are to do with the habits of mind that language can instill on the ground level of thought: on memory, attention, perception, and associations.



For Example:



REFERENCES

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- Interaction of Language and Culture in the Process of International Education (researchgate.net)
- Seeing Objects through the Language Glass - MIT Journal for Cognitive Neuroscience
- Google Scholarly articles on Language Relativity
- How language shapes the way we think | Lera Boroditsky

Thank
you