

LANGUAGE AND THOUGHT: MAJOR THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

Zuxra Ergasheva

First-Year Student, Navoi State University

Scientific Supervisor:

Mokhira Sadullaeva, PhD in Philology

Abstract. *This thesis presents a comparative analysis of the complex dialectical relationship between language and thought from philosophical, linguistic, and cognitive perspectives. The aim of the study is to reveal the mechanisms of interaction between language and thought by synthesizing the major theoretical approaches developed from classical antiquity to contemporary cognitive linguistics. The research employs comparative-historical, analytical-descriptive, and inductive methods. The findings demonstrate that the relationship between language and thought should be interpreted not as a process of one-sided determination but rather as a dialectical unity. The author argues that such an interpretation provides the most methodologically sound framework for understanding the interaction between linguistic and cognitive processes.*

Keywords: *language, thought, linguistic relativity, cognitive linguistics, the Sapir–Whorf hypothesis, dialectical unity, linguistic worldview, conceptual analysis.*

The earliest philosophical interpretations of the relationship between language and thought can be found in the works of ancient Greek philosophers. In his dialogue *Cratylus*, Plato raised the question of whether names are natural or conventional, thereby becoming one of the first thinkers to address the relationship between language and reality at a philosophical level [Plato, 2015: 412]. Aristotle, in his treatise *On Interpretation*, argued that spoken sounds are symbols of mental

states, while written signs represent spoken sounds, thus laying the foundation for the view that thought is primary and language is secondary [Aristotle, 1978: 93].

Among Eastern scholars, Abu Nasr al-Farabi, in his work *Ihsa al-'Ulum (Enumeration of the Sciences)*, distinguished logic and linguistics as separate disciplines. He defined logic as the science of the universal laws of human thought, whereas linguistics was understood as the study of the vocabulary and linguistic resources of a particular people [al-Farabi, 1975: 67]. This approach was among the first to substantiate the universality of thought while recognizing the national and cultural specificity of language.

Alisher Navoi, in his renowned work *Muhokamat al-Lug'atayn (The Comparison of Two Languages)*, provided a profound analysis of the expressive power of language and articulated the well-known idea that “A person’s heart is an ocean, words are pearls, and the speaker is a diver” [Navoi, 2011: 24]. Through this metaphor, the poet figuratively portrayed thought (the heart or inner world) as the source of language, while words were presented as valuable treasures drawn from that source.

In nineteenth-century linguistics, Wilhelm von Humboldt examined the relationship between language and thought from a new methodological perspective. According to Humboldt, language is not a finished product (*ergon*), but an ongoing activity (*energeia*), through which each language, by means of its unique “inner form” (*innere Sprachform*), shapes a particular way of perceiving the world [Humboldt, 1984: 70]. This idea later became one of the foundations for the development of the theory of linguistic relativity.

August Schleicher explained the inseparability of language and thought through a biological analogy. According to his naturalistic theory, language develops in a manner similar to a living organism and serves as the phonetic manifestation of thought [Schleicher, 1863: 21]. Although this approach was later criticized, its central proposition regarding the intrinsic connection between language and thought has retained its theoretical significance.

Johann Leo Weisgerber introduced the concept of the *linguistic worldview* (*sprachliches Weltbild*) into linguistic scholarship. According to Weisgerber, each language classifies and interprets reality through its unique lexical and grammatical resources, thereby shaping the conceptual system of its speakers [Weisgerber, 1962: 34]. From this perspective, the absence of a linguistic designation for a particular concept may limit the extent to which that concept is represented and conceptualized in the speaker's consciousness.

One of the most significant achievements in the study of language and thought during the twentieth century was the development of the hypothesis of linguistic relativity by Edward Sapir and his student Benjamin Lee Whorf. Although the term *Sapir-Whorf hypothesis* is widely used in the literature, it should be noted that this theoretical framework emerged from the independent yet complementary studies of the two scholars. As one of the founders of linguistic anthropology, Sapir focused on the social and cultural functions of language, whereas Whorf, drawing on his research on the Hopi language, investigated the influence of linguistic structure on human worldview and patterns of cognition [Sapir, 1949: 162; Whorf, 1956: 213].

B. L. Uorfning fikricha, *“har qanday til — bu shunchaki fikr ifodalash quroli emas, balki shaxsning fikrlash faoliyati uchun*

grammatik dasturdir” [Whorf, 1956: 212]. Demak, insonlar voqelikni o‘z ona tillarining grammatik va leksik kategoriyalari doirasida idrok etadilar. Bu nazariya kuchli (til tafakkurni to‘liq belgilaydi) va kuchsiz (til tafakkurga ta’sir ko‘rsatadi) variantlarda talqin qilinadi; zamonaviy fanda asosan ikkinchi variant qabul qilingan.

Lyudvig Vitgenshteyn (Ludwig Wittgenstein) o‘zining “Mantiqiy-falsafiy traktat”ida tilning chegaralari tafakkurning chegaralari ekanligini ta’kidlagan: “Mening tilimning chegaralari mening dunyomning chegaralarini bildiradi” [Wittgenstein, 1963: 5.6]. Bu fikr til va tafakkur masalasiga falsafiy yondashuvning yangi bosqichini ochib berdi.

Anna Wierzbicka, in her theory of the *Natural Semantic Metalanguage* (NSM), argues that every language possesses its own unique expressive potential. According to Wierzbicka, certain concepts may be expressed more readily in some languages than in others; however, this does not imply that any language is inherently limited in its capacity for expression [Wierzbicka, 1996: 21]. Her approach challenges deterministic interpretations of linguistic relativity and highlights the richness and flexibility of all human languages.

The rapid development of cognitive linguistics and neurolinguistics in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries has enabled scholars to investigate the relationship between language and thought on the basis of empirical evidence. In this context, George Lakoff and Mark Johnson developed the theory of conceptual metaphor, demonstrating that abstract thought is largely structured through metaphorical categories grounded in embodied sensory and motor experience [Lakoff & Johnson, 1980: 14]. This theory has provided

important insights into the cognitive mechanisms underlying human conceptualization and linguistic expression.

Contemporary neurolinguistic research confirms that certain forms of cognition, particularly visual-spatial and affective-imagistic thinking, can occur independently of language. However, conceptual and abstract thinking is largely mediated through linguistic structures. These findings suggest that language and thought should not be viewed as mutually dependent in a deterministic sense; rather, their interaction should be understood as a complex and multilayered process characterized by reciprocal influence.

In recent years, the relationship between language and thought has also become an important area of inquiry in Uzbek linguistics, particularly within the framework of cognitive approaches. The works of scholars such as Z. S. Nurullayeva, Sh. Safarov, and N. Mahmudov have explored issues related to the conceptual system of the Uzbek language, the linguistic representation of the national worldview, and the nature of cognitive metaphors [Mahmudov, 2012: 45; Safarov, 2018: 78]. These studies have contributed significantly to the development of cognitive linguistic research in Uzbekistan and have broadened our understanding of the interaction between language, culture, and cognition.

Based on the theoretical perspectives discussed above, three principal approaches to the relationship between language and thought can be identified:

1. **The Primacy of Thought Theory** (Aristotle, al-Farabi) — According to this approach, thought is primary, while language functions as its external means of expression.

2. **The Primacy of Language Theory** (Sapir, Whorf, Weisgerber) — This perspective maintains that language shapes thought and influences an individual's worldview.

3. **The Theory of Dialectical Unity** (Humboldt, contemporary cognitive linguistics) — This approach views language and thought as interrelated yet relatively autonomous components that interact dynamically and mutually influence one another.

In the author's view, the most methodologically sound approach at present is the theory of dialectical unity. Language does not create thought; rather, it organizes, structures, and facilitates its expression within social communication. Although thought may emerge in its initial forms without language—such as through visual images or emotional experiences—its fully developed expression and cultural transmission are achieved primarily through linguistic means. From this perspective, language and thought should not be regarded as opposing phenomena but rather as complementary components of a unified system. Language provides the form through which thought is expressed, while thought constitutes the content conveyed by language. The principles governing language are examined by grammar, whereas the principles governing thought are studied by logic. Nevertheless, these two systems function in close interaction and manifest themselves harmoniously in actual speech and communication.

The relationship between language and thought is a complex, multifaceted, and dynamic phenomenon that cannot be adequately explained through the principle of one-sided determination. Although various theories concerning this relationship have emerged from

antiquity to contemporary cognitive science, none of them is capable of fully accounting for all its dimensions and complexities.

The comparative analysis conducted in this study demonstrates that the theory of the dialectical unity of language and thought provides the most methodologically convincing framework. Language gives form to thought, while thought provides content for language. The development of human consciousness and the formation of culture are the result of the continuous interaction and interdependence of these two processes.

Within Uzbek linguistics, investigating the relationship between language and thought from a cognitive perspective is of particular importance for revealing the linguistic representation of the national worldview and for providing a scientific account of the conceptual richness of the Uzbek language. Further development of research in this field remains one of the priority tasks of contemporary Uzbek linguistics.

References

1. Al-Farabi, A. N. (1975). *Ihsa al-'Ulum (The Enumeration of the Sciences)*. Tashkent: Fan.
2. Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1980). *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
3. Mahmudov, N. (2012). Cognitive research of language: Problems and prospects. *Uzbek Language and Literature*, 3, 43–48.
4. Navoi, A. (2011). *Muhokamat al-Lug'atayn (The Comparison of Two Languages)*. In *Complete Works* (Vol. 16). Tashkent: Fan.
5. Nurullayeva, Z. S. (2020). Does thought lead language or does language lead thought? A socio-philosophical analysis. *Philosophy and Law*, 2, 34–39.

6. Safarov, Sh. (2018). *Cognitive Linguistics*. Samarkand: Sangzor.
7. Sapir, E. (1949). *Selected Writings in Language, Culture and Personality* (D. G. Mandelbaum, Ed.). Berkeley: University of California Press.
8. Zulfia, D. Analysis of concepts of developing the creative ability of students in higher educational institutions.(2025). EduVision: Journal of Innovations in Pedagogy and Educational Advancements, 1(2), 292-296.
9. Alikulova, M. M., & Dekhkambaeva, Z. A. (2018). Improving Educational Work among Minors as Important Factor of Preventing Spiritual Threats. Eastern European Scientific Journal, 8, 220-232.
10. Sadikova, B. Italyan tilida antonimlarning lingvosemantik tahlili. Filologiya va pedagogika, 56.
11. Maxmurovna, S. B. (2025, November). The manifestation of gender relations in italian proverbs. In conference of modern science & pedagogy (Vol. 1, No. 7, pp. 786-788).
12. Bahora, S., & Parvina, N. (2024). Samarali muloqot qoida va tamoyillari. Zamonaviy ta'lim tizimini rivojlantirish va unga qaratilgan kreativ g'oyalar, takliflar va yechimlar, 7(73), 107-109.
13. Sadykova, B. (2016). Emotional words and tropes in the roman of italian author N. Ammaniti" I don't fear". In science and practice: a new level of integration in the modern world (pp. 123-125).