
LINGUISTIC AND CONCEPTUAL PICTURE OF THE WORLD:
DIFFERENTIATING TWO PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract:

This article explores the distinction between the linguistic and conceptual pictures of the world, emphasizing their roles in shaping human cognition and perception. The linguistic picture is influenced by language structures and categories, reflecting the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis that language shapes thought. It varies across cultures and languages, affecting how individuals perceive reality. In contrast, the conceptual picture of the world encompasses broader cognitive structures and mental models formed by sensory experiences, cultural background, and social interactions. These two perspectives, while distinct, are interrelated, with language both shaping and reflecting conceptual frameworks.

Keywords: linguistic picture of the world, conceptual picture of the world, Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis, cognitive structures, language and perception, mental models, cultural relativity, lexical categories, embodied cognition, universal concepts.

Language is not merely a tool for communication; it shapes the very way we perceive and interpret reality. The linguistic and conceptual picture of the world are two distinct yet interconnected ways of understanding human cognition, perception, and interaction with reality. They both offer different insights into how individuals and cultures perceive the world, influenced by language and thought. In this article, we will explore the differences between these two perspectives and examine how they contribute to the formation of human worldviews.

The linguistic picture of the world refers to the way language influences and reflects an individual's or a culture's perception of reality. Language provides the categories, structures, and meanings that shape how we experience and think about the world. This idea is deeply rooted in the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis, which posits that the structure of a language affects its speakers' cognition and world perception.

Language is not just a passive medium; it actively shapes thought. For example, speakers of different languages often categorize and experience the world differently. A classic example is how some languages have multiple words for

specific concepts. In Inuit languages, there are several words for "snow," reflecting the importance of distinguishing different types of snow in their environment. Similarly, in Russian, there are different terms for light and dark blue, whereas English uses a single word "blue" for both. This illustrates how the linguistic picture of the world influences our sensory experiences and categorization of reality.

The linguistic picture of the world varies from culture to culture, depending on the linguistic structures, vocabulary, and metaphors embedded in a particular language. It is the lens through which we make sense of the world, and it is dynamic—it evolves as languages change, reflecting shifts in societal norms, technology, and worldviews.

Key Aspects of the Linguistic Picture:

Cultural Relativity: Different cultures have different linguistic systems that shape their experiences of the world.

Lexical Categories: Vocabulary differences between languages highlight the variety of ways humans can categorize reality.

Syntax and Structure: The grammatical structure of a language, including tense, gender, and word order, can shape how speakers perceive time, space, and other fundamental concepts.

Speaking of linguistic picture of the world, linguists usually involve the lexical level. Understanding the picture of the world as «a specific means of representation of the value of the language», A.B. Mikhalev highlights several layers of linguistic picture of the world, namely: 1) phonetic; 2) paremic (proverbs, sayings, phraseological expressions); 3) grammatical, or categorical; 4) discourse, or situational. That consideration of linguistic picture of the world as a multilayer formation adequately reflects the different aspects of language consciousness and stages of its development.¹

While the linguistic picture of the world is rooted in language, the conceptual picture of the world encompasses a broader cognitive framework that goes beyond linguistic boundaries. It refers to the mental models and cognitive structures that people use to understand and navigate their experiences of the world, regardless of language. This conceptual framework is built from our sensory experiences, cultural background, education, and social interactions, forming a more universal layer of cognition.

¹ Shusharina Galina Alexeyevna THE LANGUAGE PICTURE OF THE WORLD IN MODERN LINGUISTICS, ФИЛОЛОГИЧЕСКИЕ НАУКИ: №1/2016,- p78

Unlike the linguistic picture, which may vary significantly across languages, the conceptual picture of the world deals with cognitive structures that are often shared across cultures, though expressed differently through language. For example, people across the world recognize basic physical properties like time, space, and causality, even though the expression and interpretation of these concepts may differ linguistically.

The conceptual picture of the world is not as directly shaped by language as the linguistic picture but is still influenced by it. However, cognitive scientists and philosophers argue that certain mental models and categories may be innate or universal, existing independently of language. The notion of "conceptual metaphors," for example, as introduced by cognitive linguists George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, suggests that many of the ways we think about abstract concepts are grounded in our physical and bodily experiences, not language itself. For instance, across many cultures, the concept of "time" is often metaphorically related to physical space (e.g., "looking forward to the future," "the past is behind us").

The term "conceptual system" was used by R.I. Pavilyonis to refer to the conceptual representation of the world. An individual's mastery of the world shapes the conceptual framework, which reflects the spiritual activity of the nation's citizens. Language, which fixes the particular knowledge and characteristics for the given society, is a means of detecting the contents of the conceptual system.²

Key Aspects of the Conceptual Picture:

Mental Models: People build mental representations of the world based on their experiences, interactions, and cultural background. Culture is something that a person has introduced, manufactured, or constructed on their own rather than receiving from the natural environment.³

Embodied Cognition: Some concepts are grounded in sensory and bodily experiences, which shape our understanding of abstract ideas.

Universal Concepts: Certain cognitive structures, like space, time, and causality, may be universally understood but expressed differently across languages.

In conclusion, The linguistic picture of the world is shaped by the specific language we speak, influencing how we categorize and perceive reality. In contrast, the conceptual picture of the world is a broader cognitive framework

² Pavilyonis R.I. Ponimanie rechi i filosofiya yazyka // Novoe v zarubezhnoj lingvistike. Vyp. HYII .: M.: Progress, 1986. – S. 380-388

³ Lado R. Lingvistika poverh granic kultur // Novoe v zarubezhnoj lingvistike. – Vyp. XXV: Kontrastivnaya lingvistika. – M., 1989. – S. 34-51.

that may transcend linguistic boundaries, encompassing universal human experiences and cognitive structures. While these two perspectives are distinct, they are deeply interconnected, influencing and reinforcing each other in complex ways.

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