Words, concepts and cultures, Sedivy, 12.3 and 12.4 Moodle

1. Do words reflect culturally important concepts?!

Is the premise that the relationship btw concepts and the lexicon is not arbitrary correct?

       what's implied by absence of certain words, a lack of understanding or...?

concepts can be expressed even if no specific words for them (e.g. kinship terms);

spatial relations linguistically distinguished in E (*above* vs. *on*) vs. Korean

2. Kids make reasonable guesses about word meanings by relying on „natural“ ways to form categories - they expect what aspects of the world are most likely to be talked about;

Some conceptual distinctions are salient across languages > to a degree, structuring lexicons is predictable; some concepts draw attention „naturally“

And salient/natural concepts attract words more readily

3. Presence of a feature of meaning may be obvious and some (not all) ls grammaticalize it; The color of an object may be predictable from its inherent nature, so why name it?

            cultures where detailed color vocabulary seems unimportant;

>         What's obvious to get worded in one culture needn't be obvious in another:           "the taste of wild strawberries"

**4. Do words help organize thoughts?**

Whorf hypothesis

Does mother L warp perception?

Testing color perception:

words sensitize speakers to color differences

Experiment question: Which of the two colors matches the target color?

**Silencing the Whorfian effect** by extra memory tasks clogging thinking (e.g. mentally rehearsing a string of numbers) and then back to the color task

OUTCOME: Color words alter color perception only if speakers can activate the words while performing the task

factor: on what side of the visual field the color is presented matters because word representations are more active in the left hemisphere

* If memory is not clogged by another task and the information gets presented in the right visual field, words impose themselves easier upon cognitive processing (p. 504) - words mediate but don't determine

Conceptual categories (*cat* vs. *dog*) can operate independently of words – e.g. visual search

One can think of *week, democracy, contract* independently of the language.

Is grammar coding kinds of motion (by motion verbs) across languages related to how we perceive the motion?

Perceiving an event vs. talking about it/ observing vs. describing an event >

       language usage is affected by concepts coded linguistically (e.g. motion verbs)

**Our language helps by recruiting linguistic knowledge (grammar structures) to accomplish tasks of organizing thoughts!**