

# How different native languages shape writing and rhetoric

## The Remediation



Ian Szwako

Professor Hensley

ENC 1102

12 June 2025



August 22nd, 2019 | 5 min read

Arts & Humanities

## The power of language: How words shape people, culture

At Stanford, linguistics scholars seek to determine what is unique and universal about the language we use, how it is acquired and the ways it changes over time.

# Article Overview

- ▶ The article titled 'The Power of Language: How Words Shape People, Culture' was written by Clifton B. Parker and published by Stanford News. It introduces readers to the research of cognitive scientist Dr. Lera Boroditsky.
- ▶ The main focus of the article is on linguistic relativity—the theory that language not only reflects our thoughts but actively shapes the way we think, perceive, and interact with the world.
- ▶ Boroditsky's research offers compelling evidence from various cultures to show how language structures influence cognition. One example is the Kuuk Thaayorre people of Australia, who use cardinal directions instead of left/right, which strengthens their navigational skills.
- ▶ Another example explores how grammatical gender affects perception: speakers of German and Spanish describe the word 'bridge' differently based on its gender in their respective languages.
- ▶ The article aims to make complex academic research accessible to a general audience, using everyday language and relatable examples to illustrate key ideas in cognitive science and linguistics.

# Article's Strengths and Weaknesses

## Strengths

- Clear structure, simple language
- Real-life examples make abstract ideas relatable
- Makes academic research accessible to general readers

## Weaknesses

- Lacks critical analysis and opposing viewpoints
- Fails to explore practical applications deeply (e.g., education, AI)
- Not suitable as a scholarly source due to lack of peer-reviewed support

# Persuasive or informative

- The article is mostly informative, aiming to explain how language shapes thought using examples like the Kuuk Thaayorre's sense of direction and gendered terms like "bridge." While it presents the research clearly, it avoids counterarguments, focusing more on sharing ideas than persuading the reader.

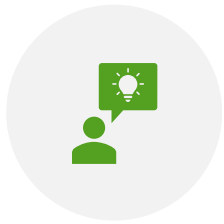


# Importance of the Topic

- This topic matters because it shows how language shapes how we think, feel, and see the world. It highlights the value of linguistic and cultural diversity and helps us better understand others. For people who speak more than one language, like me, it explains why we may think differently depending on the language we use.



# Improvements



**INCLUDE COUNTERARGUMENTS:** PRESENT OPPOSING THEORIES LIKE NATIVISM TO GIVE A MORE BALANCED VIEW OF THE DEBATE ON LANGUAGE AND THOUGHT.



**ADD SCHOLARLY DEPTH:** INCLUDE CITATIONS FROM PEER-REVIEWED STUDIES, METHODOLOGICAL DETAILS, AND DISCUSSION OF STUDY LIMITATIONS TO MEET ACADEMIC STANDARDS.



**COMPARE WITH OTHER RESEARCHERS:** POSITION BORODITSKY'S WORK WITHIN THE BROADER FIELD BY COMPARING HER FINDINGS WITH THOSE OF OTHER COGNITIVE SCIENTISTS.



**EXPLORE PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS:** DISCUSS REAL-WORLD IMPLICATIONS—SUCH AS EFFECTS ON EDUCATION, AI, OR TRANSLATION—TO MAKE THE ARTICLE MORE IMPACTFUL.



**CLARIFY AUTHOR'S ROLE:** EXPLAIN MORE ABOUT BORODITSKY'S ACADEMIC STANDING AND CLEARLY DISTINGUISH PARKER'S ROLE AS A COMMUNICATOR VERSUS A RESEARCHER.





# Personal connection

► As a native Portuguese speaker who learned English later in life, I found a personal connection to this essay's discussion of how language shapes thought. I have experienced firsthand how thinking patterns and expressions shift depending on the language I use. For example, certain ideas feel more natural or emotional in Portuguese, while others feel more analytical or structured in English. Boroditsky's research resonates with my own experience, highlighting how language influences not just how we communicate, but how we understand and interpret the world around us.

# Conclusion

- ▶ While Clifton B. Parker's article effectively introduces Lera Boroditsky's research to a general audience, it falls short of academic rigor. Its simplified explanations and lack of critical analysis make it accessible but not sufficient for scholarly exploration. For a deeper understanding of linguistic relativity, readers should turn to Boroditsky's original research and peer-reviewed sources that offer a more balanced and analytical perspective.



# Works cited

- ▶ Parker, Clifton B. “The Power of Language: How Words Shape People, Culture.” *Stanford News*, 22 Aug. 2019, <https://news.stanford.edu/stories/2019/08/the-power-of-language-how-words-shape-people-culture>.