

# WHORF AND DECONSTRUCTION

## LANGUAGE, SCIENCE AND LOGIC

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The 'Sapir-Whorf' ('Whorfian') Hypothesis:

- 1 Linguistic relativity/relativism
- 2 Linguistic determinism (NB: direction of influence)

Weak versus strong versions of 2

Benjamin Lee Whorf (1897-1941)

Edward Sapir (1884-1939)

Franz Boas

Noam Chomsky

Richard Hudson

Dell Hymes

Geoffrey Sampson

Jack Vance (*The Languages Of Pao*)

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- 1 *impossible - indecent - inflammable --- possible - decent - flammable*
  - 2 *full - empty*
  - 3 *drystone*
  - 4 S(ubject) V(erb) O(bject), V S O (etc)
  - 5 isolating / inflected / agglutinating
  - 6 *girl - girls, I - we*
  - 7 *go - went*
  - 8 *(a/some) sheep, you (two)*
  - 9 *rogabam* (Latin: 'I was asking'/'I used to ask')
  - 10 *It rained this morning - If it rained this afternoon we'd stay at home*
  - 11 *My/her love but \*love* (Kwakiutl equivalents)
  - 12 *I see/surmise/hear THAT...* (Hopi equivalents)
  - 13 S(tandard) A(verage) E(uropean)
  - 14 *Do you know Manchester? - \*I live in it*
  - 15 Apache, Inuit, Bedouin Arabic
  - 16 *fauteuil - chaise* (French)
  - 17 *glas - gwyrdd - llwydd* (Welsh)
  - 18 *straw-/black-/blue-(etc)-berry; saw-/sword-/cat-(etc)-fish, sardine, shark; \* X-mammal*
  - 19 *sa din yu, sa yu* (Cantonese)
  - 20 *groceries, \*greengroceries*
  - 21 *demiourgos* (Ancient Greek)
  - 22 *If it happens... - If it were to happen... - If it had happened...*
  - 23 *deus - dei/di* (Latin)
  - 24 *le soleil - la lune* (French), *die Sonne - der Mond* (German), *sol - luna* (Latin)
  - 25 *seven books, ten people - \* seven hours, \* ten minutes* (Hopi equivalents)
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Carroll, J.B. ed. 1956 *Language, Thought and Reality: Selected Writings of Benjamin Lee Whorf*. MIT Press, Cambridge (Mass.)

Hudson, R.A. 1980 *Sociolinguistics*. C.U.P. (see Chapter 3)

Sampson, G. *Schools of Linguistics: Competition and Evolution*. Hutchinson, London (see Chapter 4)