

## Reciprocity between Mind and Language: A Psycholinguistic Reasoning

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### ABSTRACT

An ever-existing reciprocity exists betwixt the psychological stature one retains and the linguistic exposure one gives vent to. This correspondence remains active in both producing as well as receiving language. The intended message of the produced language and the perceived meaning of the received language depend on the health of the mind. The temperament of one's mental physique decides on the kind of significance the language is designed to mean as well as be taken for granted. The correspondence between mind and language both inherently and explicitly displays an intricate reciprocity which is in one sense straightforward, and enigmatic in other senses. By default, the semantic motto that gets offered to through language has its logical background in the platform of the mind. But mind and language many a time act inimically which is also reciprocal, albeit in a very opposite and mysterious manner. As a matter of fact, the functioning between mind and language takes multifarious shapes and forms that are quite hard to determine sometimes, and that stand necessary to decode the psycholinguistic communication more understandably. For such purpose, this article intends to strive and bring to discourse a critical analysis of the ways mind and language act. This study aims at exploring the myriad sorts of intended and perceived issues that propel the mind to produce certain type of linguistic delivery. Both in psycholinguistic research and academic ambience of psyche and language, this cognition seeks to hold some desired substance.

**Keywords:** Mind, Language, Reciprocity, Psycholinguistic Reasoning.

### INTRODUCTION

The source of language endowment once understood precisely will lead us to the clarification of the biological foundation of language which will ultimately pave the way to the origin and evolution of natural language (Fingelkurts, Fingelkurts and Marchetti, 2010), for which it is imperative to investigate and illustrate the mind-to-language fact of human linguistic characteristic.

Mind holds a multilayered relationship with language, which takes as well as displays disparate strata of meaning and significance. In fact, language is the embodiment of human mind as it is impalpable and invisible. Through language mind comes out of human body and gets introduced to and understood by the outer world. If we consider language as a device and mind as a person, that device necessarily signifies the language of that person. Language expresses the mind and the process of expressing the mind takes place in many ways manipulated by language itself. Language can directly divulge

the form and order of the mind, at the same time it can represent mind in an indirect manner.

Similarly, mind exploits a perennial influence on the language, as a result of which people get to know one's mental condition through scrutinizing his language. The multitudinous phenomena that work behind one's mind to engender a certain kind of mental semblance only also get exposed via language. Simultaneously, if sometimes someone attempts to hide his psychological happenings and display an unaffected language pattern, it too can be discerned through the language itself. Thereby, mind produces language and gets exposed through language.

Again, the innumerable factors hailing from personal life, family, society, job, business, education, hope, dream and the like, and affecting one's mind are basically some sort of voiced and non-voiced language which exercises impacts on the mind only to propel it to assemble certain kind of language. So, it appears that language provokes mind to be produced in

one shape or another retaining a convoluted language-mind and mind-language coil.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Kurcz (2001) defines language and specifies its function in relation with cognition which is the meaning-making as well as understanding procedure of the mind, where the researcher points out to language as a system of signs and rules to be combined to form more complex meaningful entities. Kurcz (2001) also clarifies that the general approach to language establishes its inevitable connection with thought and cognition that stand to be the necessary media of communication. Understandably language performs a couple of functions – one to represent the mechanism and exposure of the mind, another to construct communication through which mind connects to minds (Kurcz, 2001). As such, Carroll (2008) provides comprehensive idea regarding psycholinguistics and how and on what fields it works in the book, *Psychology of Language* where the researcher states that psycholinguistics is the investigation into how a person comprehends, produces and acquires language that is an essential part of cognitive science which deals elaborately with the functions of brain and mind.

Psycholinguistics emphasizes the meaning and knowledge of language and its cognitive procedure for which psycholinguists too engage themselves in elaborating the psychological mechanism that works in association with the language (Carroll, 2008). Thus the explications of psycholinguistics essentially provide the critical psychological and linguistic connotations that explain the kind of relation between mind and language. With regard to whether one's language and thought are inseparable and dependent on each other, Gleitman & Papafragou (2012) surmise and attempt to prove that language cannot be considered the vehicle of thought. Nevertheless they conclude that language acts as the online system that represents notions and functions which ultimately signify cognition and conceptual representation. Clark and Clark (1977) investigate into the psychology of language and conclude that human mind activates language in two ways – one turning words into ideas and conveying perceptions, feelings and intentions; the other obtaining words and constructing perceptions, feelings and intentions that language means to transport.

The production and reception of language not only reveal the facts regarding the status of the mind but also manifest truths, social phenomena

and cultural activities (Clark & Clark, 1977). Malle (2002) states that language and mind have, in fact, co-evolved due to their close affiliation in development and strong bond in social behavior. Indeed, language is not confined in phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics or lexicon only, rather it means more of cognition, perspective, distinctions and above all representations (Malle, 2002). Malle (2002) furthermore emphasizes that the principal function of language is that it provides choices and messages in its representational repertoire, and these choices and meanings have to have distinctions which will vary in formats and semantics. However, the fact that language-mind is not a one-way relationship, rather it is a both language-to-mind and mind-to-language phenomenon has not been highlighted and interpreted in many of the researches. This study intends to maintain as well as explain the reciprocal connection and exchange between mind and language. It also seeks to pin point the proceedings and outcomes in terms of psychological and linguistic mechanism due to the mind-language reciprocity.

### LANGUAGE-MIND RECIPROCITY

And what does language have to represent to be uniquely called a language? It must represent the internal thought, understanding and message of humans, which refer to mind, signifying the total procedure of the mind-language highway that originates from as well as leads to both. From one mind to connect the other minds works language which is the pathway to establish a mind-to-mind communication. Vaas (2000, cited in Malle, 2002) concludes that language happens for adaptive advantages that work as generative formats for thinking and planning which represent the function of mind. Language acts as a regulatory agent of the processes of brain and mind, a governor of human behavior and last but not the least an organizational factor of the evolution of the mental and behavioral procedures (Fingelkurts, Fingelkurts, Marchetti, 2010). Therefore, language and mind both get shaped by as well as give shape to each other. In accordance with the mental states, language and its related demonstrations through behavior take place, and simultaneously as per the received language, mental states are molded.

Sinha (2009) presents that language and mind serve as a kind of thread that fastens humans together with a view to letting them construe one another and nurture their own cognitive manifestations. To attain the answer to whether

language and mind are isolated or interwoven phenomena, Sinha (2009) conducts a comprehensive study titling “Language, Culture and Mind: Independence or Interdependence?” and explains that though they seem to be separated entities, they are interdependent and each cannot effectuate itself without the other. Development of language is seriously connected with the development of the theory of mind which signifies the belief that people possess minds having faith, knowledge, desire and emotions, which makes sense through the language people express (de Villiers de Villiers, 2014). There is intricate semblance between the pattern of language and that of the actions individuals perform, which unfolds the ever-existing link among action, verbal commands, speech comprehension and the exposure of mental structure (Greenfield and Westerman, 1978).

### HOW LANGUAGE DETERMINES THE MIND

There is the existence and function of ‘mentalese’ or ‘a language of thought’ in every soul, even before it learns to speak and understand any audible human language, to conduct the mental functions, which are nothing but thinking and conceptualizing (Fodor, 1975 cited in Bloom and Keil, 2001). Birner (n. d.) opines that language and thought grow up together and affect each other in a continuous process. To argue on whether by default people have to think in language, Birner (n. d.) reasons that people can think about certain symphony or a certain sort of strange feeling without any word or term for it.

Nevertheless, it is quite obvious that every thought has a language in it even if it cannot be translated into audible and visible words. There are at least hidden and abstract words or terms for all kinds of thoughts and feelings. Another crucial aspect Birner (n. d.) brings to forth is that language is always associated with cultural issues which essentially have the sinew to influence the way the language users think, which directly or indirectly refers to the fact that language moulds mental mechanism in many inevitable respects. With respect to the language-thought relationship, Boroditsky (2011) explains that different languages impart different cognitive efficiencies, which leads to the understanding that speakers of disparate tongues think disparately. People across the world speak an exorbitant number of languages – around 7000 (Boroditsky, 2011) each of which demands its speakers to mean and think different things for different words and expressions.

In congruence with this fact, I would like to present example from my language, Bangla, in Bangladesh. It has quite a number of versions with distinct pronunciation as well as vocabulary patterns based on divergent geographical locations. There prevails one standard form of the language which is called, “Cholito Bangla” in which if someone says, “Ami puri khabo”, it means “I will take a piece of a kind of cake”. But in Sylhet, a southern district of the country, if someone says such a sentence, it will mean “I will take a girl.” as “puri” means girl, in that part of the country. Among thousands of such dissimilarities, one is the word “Sona” which in the standard Bangla means gold, but in many areas of the southern part like Khulna and Jessore it signifies “vagina” or “penis” which is very objectionable to pronounce in the mentioned regions. There are many such instances which help to clarify that even in the varieties of a single language, meaning acts differently tempting people to think in an incompatible formula.

Bloom and Keil (2001) explain that language development and cognitive improvement are strongly correlated, which is why it is obvious that a one-year-old baby knows fewer words and understands less, and a two-year-old baby knows and understands more because he knows more words. Thought without language cannot be existing and for this it is often emphasized that the cognitive capabilities of humans are the by-products of the practiced communicative initiatives (Bloom & Keil, 2001). Blomm and Keil (2001) cite Whorf (1956) and Sapir (1921) to discuss the language-affects-thought issue that brings forth two types of differences in psychological mechanism because of language – one is different languages cause to happen different kinds of thoughts, the other is that the common properties shared by all languages shape an identical sort of cognition.

### HOW MIND INFLUENCES LANGUAGE

Although quite a big number of linguists and researchers (Birner, n. d.; Boroditsky, 2011; Gleitman & Papafragou, 2012; Bloom & Keil, 2001) have established and analyzed the influences of language on people’s mind, and thereby have discussed the language-to-mind aspect of the relation between mind and language, a few linguists (Scovel, 2004; Slobin, 1939) have shed light on the fact that language gets initiated in one’s mind in the first place. Consequently it stands definite that mental health wields a considerable influence on the

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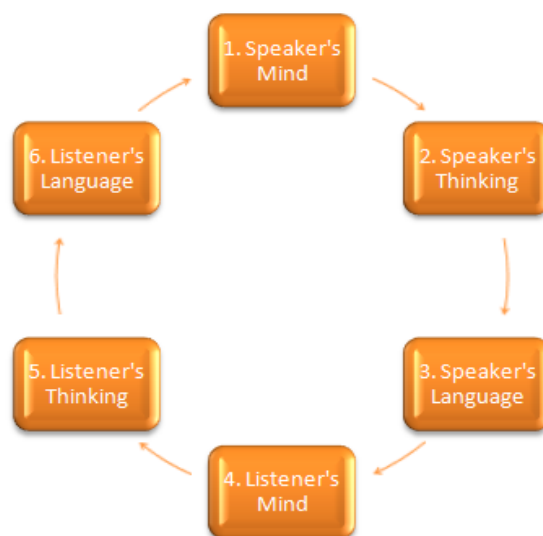
shape and pattern of linguistic delivery. Additionally, it is proved that language is first conceptualized in the human mind (Scovel, 2004). Initiation of the language takes place in the mind with conceptualization followed by formulation, articulation and self-monitoring one after another (Scovel, 2004).

Language serves “mental representation” that is the process of thought to be accomplished – reasoning, planning, problem solving and the like (Slobin, 1939). The mental aspects of the speaker receive representation through the language he produces and language itself gets decoded and understood as per the mental state of the listener (Azabdaftari, 2012). More convincingly, Azabdaftari (2012) highlights that language-mind relationship is basically a cause-effect one that signifies that each yields substantial impacts on the other and each gets modified substantially by the other.

However, I have my own understanding with regard to mind’s influences on language and would feel happy to elaborate as I have found little scholastic discourse on the influence of mind on one’s language. To me, mind affects language in a couple of ways, one while producing and another while receiving language, which means the manner of language delivery and intended meaning, and its way of reception and understood meaning depend on the status of the mind of both the speaker and the listener respectively. As for the speaker, if his psychic condition is happy and at ease, his language production emerges smoothly and circulates the aura of happiness. On the other hand, if the mental condition of who is delivering the language is blurry and upset, the manner of language production as well as its focus will look troubling and objectionable. In the same formula, the psychological health of the listener modifies language efficacy to a great extent. If the listener is in sound mental hold, he decodes the received language in a comfortable as well as amiable manner. In contrast, the listener may not welcome language as it is if he goes through mental strains.

In addition, there are multifaceted psychological issues and mechanism that regulate language and its meaning in multifarious angles. Sometimes, the speaker does not mean what he may sound in his language, and sometimes he may mean different messages for different listeners with the same language expression. As a result, it happens on many occasions when a linguistic *yes* does not mean a psychological

*yes*, and a linguistic *no* does not signify a psychological *no*. With one and identical language delivery a speaker may signify positive significance to one listener and negative sense to another. Sometimes, the speaker holds a hidden purpose on the language he produces, for which he may intentionally manipulate language in both usual and unusual manners. This whole shaping and re-shaping of language depends on the curricula of the speaker’s mind. Similarly, all these phenomena may occur in the mind of the listener too, with a view to serving his purposes, in congruence with the whims of his mind. Therefore, language as it looks and sounds cannot deliver its message single handedly, rather it depends on what the mind of the speaker intends to. Accordingly, at times, the minds of both the speaker and listener get connected and engender as well as decode language the way they will.



**Figure3:** Mind’s effect on language, and language’s effect on mind

The communication from mind to language and language to mind does not act straightly always. It is sometimes direct and stiff, but most of the times curly, crooked and in fact multi-layered. Sometimes, a normal and good sentence does not refer to the meaning as it sounds and should mean. Again, on many occasions, a sheer bad and unusual expression may not mean something offensive as it sounds and should connote. Moreover, the language delivery, its nature, magnitude, softness, loudness, symphony and the like depend on myriad emotional affairs, like anger, fear, sympathy, compassion, compromise, sacrifice, suffering, sorrow, complaint, adoration etc. Therefore, the delivered language may not necessarily signify the way it sounds, or it may take a different meaning after



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the heat of the moment passes. Based on mutual understanding and relationship between the speaker and the listener, language forms its meaning. Identically, it may construct its messages based on the contexts. Hence, mind and language exercise their influence on each other in versatile systems both straight and mysterious ones. Nevertheless, the functioning of meaning making gets effectuated in accordance with the resolution of the mind mostly.

### CONCLUSION

*Mind-to-language* and *language-to-mind* are fundamentally a disc-shaped relationship that acts in a circular manner to design a corresponding mechanism in human communication. It is a complex fact and works in accordance with both mental health and language connotations. In addition, there are some affiliated phenomena which are both mind-related and language-oriented which mould the meaning making process. These related issues can be both the speaker's and listener's past experiences, present circumstances, upcoming plans, anything and everything. Based on the manifold aspects of human life, the psychological and linguistic understanding can be either right or wrong. But, in fact, in meaning making, there is nothing wrong given the fact that every kind of denotation takes place due to some reasons either psychological or linguistic. Nevertheless, no matter what the psychological aspects are and how the language may sound, elucidation should be manufactured on the basis of human welfare for which the communication must be kept healthy for the speaker and the listener.

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