

TOEFL Listening Practice Test 20

The Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis

The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis is based on the idea that people experience their world through their language, and that they therefore understand their world through the culture embedded in their language. The hypothesis, which has also been called linguistic relativity, states that language shapes thought. Studies have shown, for instance, that unless people have access to the word 'ambivalent' they don't recognize an experience of uncertainty due to conflicting positive and negative feelings about one issue which is the definition of ambivalent. Essentially, the hypothesis argues, if a person can't describe the experience, the person is not having the experience.

1. What is the topic of the lecture?
 - a. If certain words don't exist in your language, there's a reason
 - b. The idea that language affects our experiences
 - c. How linguistic relativity shapes the way we think
 - d. You can predict what someone is thinking based on their language

2. Why does the professor talk about the word 'ambivalent'?
 - a. To prove that linguistic relativity is a viable hypothesis
 - b. To provide an example of linguistic relativity
 - c. To argue that linguistic relativity is not an accurate hypothesis
 - d. To further explain the concept of linguistic relativity