

Title – Language and Cognition: Insights from Exceptional Cases

Program of Study – Linguistics

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Mentor(s) and Mentor Email - Dr. Jaeshil Kim (jkim12@liberty.edu)

Student name(s) and email(s) – Anna Snyder (ajsnyder5@liberty.edu)

Category – Experimental (Theoretical)

Abstract:

The understanding of the world in the human mind is accomplished through cognitive processing and articulated through linguistic processing. Undoubtedly, there is a significant connection between language and cognition because of how intricately they work together to create and express meaning. Researchers from a variety of fields have sought to discover the specifics of these domains to determine what kind of relationship exists between them. This analysis seeks to explore this relationship and consider how the involvement between language and cognition should be best represented. Though they obviously interact, the different characteristics of each domain provide evidence that linguistic processes and cognitive processes are distinct functions. Rather than considering language as a part of cognition or cognition as a part of language, I propose that the modular view is the best representation because it considers language and cognition as separate modules of the mind. The atypical development of individuals with cognitive or linguistic deficits such as Williams Syndrome (WS) and Specific Language Impairment (SLI) suggest a distinction between the two processes. Those with WS have a strong linguistic ability in spite of severe visual-spatial deficits. On the other hand, those with SLI have intact cognition but severe linguistic impairments. By analyzing the linguistic and cognitive competencies of both these types of disabilities, this paper seeks to investigate the impact of language on cognition and vice versa and thereby determine the best representation of the relationship between language and cognition. Areas for further research would include a

comprehensive analysis into the cognitive and linguistic skills of other disabilities or exceptional situations such as that of autism, aphasia, or feral children.

Christian worldview integration:

I believe that God is the Creator of all things and we as humans are made in His image and likeness. God created human beings with certain abilities that allow us to experience and understand the world. Even more importantly, God intended for us to use these capacities to seek Him and to know Him. Cognition and language are two very significant capacities that God gave humanity and they work together to create and express meaning in the world. By researching how the functions of language and the function of the mind interact, we can gain a better understanding of ourselves and our purpose as creations of God. As an expression of the human experience, language is something that sets us apart from animals and other living things. Much of what makes us human depends our ability to understand and communicate. The growth of knowledge, the ability to reason, and the capacity for relationship all rely on language and cognition for comprehension, expression, and connection. By using these to understand the world, we are able to know and praise our Creator at a deeper level for how he has made everything so beautifully and intricately. The brain that God gave us is vastly complex, but in studying its processes, we can gain a greater appreciation for how amazing the Creator is. I am deeply humbled by how God uniquely made humans with such fascinating abilities and I hope that my endeavors demonstrate God's magnificence to those who hear and see.