

Typology of spatial representations:

Questions to accompany the reading assignment for Lecture 6

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0. Instructions: Answers to these questions and the ones that will accompany the remaining reading assignments count toward the participation grade, which constitutes 50% of participants' overall grade. The questions are designed to assess your comprehension of the readings and to provide you with an incentive to engage with the material. Assume that a thoughtful answer to any one of these questions weighs approximately as much as a thoughtful contribution during class – whether or not either one is actually correct. It is up to you how many of the questions you choose to answer – the only guideline you might want to keep in mind is the potential of your answers to compensate for lack of in-class participation. Enter your answers in Canvas. There is no need to explain/discuss your answers unless a question explicitly requires it. Answers are due by the beginning of class on Thursday.

1. Linguistic relativity – strong vs. weak interpretations: Roger Brown (1976) distinguished two types of interpretations of the Linguistic Relativity Hypothesis (LRH). In your own words, how do these differ from one another?

2. The neo-Whorfians: strong or weak? In the Levinson-Li Debate, Haun et al (2011), Levinson et al (2002), Majid et al (2004), and Pederson et al (1998) have been major contributions by the neo-Whorfian camp. Which of the two types of interpretations of the LRH have these authors argued for? Is the answer to the previous question obvious? If so, why? If not, why not?

3. Li & Gleitman (2002): epiphenomenalism? Li & Gleitman (2002) appear to argue that the role of language in nonlinguistic spatial cognition is epiphenomenal – mere correlation rather than causation. Which type of interpretation of the LRH does this reject – the weak one or the strong one? (Put differently, with which type of interpretation is the epiphenomenal hypothesis compatible?)

4. Language vs. use: Bohnemeyer (2012b) and Bohnemeyer et al (2014, 2015, under review) argue that reference frame selection is not constrained by the grammars and lexicons of natural languages. Rather, a speech community's preferences for using particular frame types in particular discourse contexts form part of the community's practices of language use. What does this view entail regarding the implications of the findings of the Levinson-Li Debate for the LRH under weak vs. strong interpretations?

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