

## ‘Russian blues’: How language shapes the way our brains perceive the world

Does the language you speak influence how you think? This is the question behind the famous [linguistic relativity hypothesis](#), that the grammar or vocabulary of a language imposes on its speakers a particular way of thinking about the world.

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Consider the case of the “Russian blues.” While English has a single word for blue, Russian has two words, goluboy for light blue and siniy for dark blue. These are considered “basic level” terms, like green and purple.



Image credit: Jonathan Winawer et al

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The authors tested whether colored triangles could be detected more easily when the triangles were made visually salient by being positioned against a contrasting color. For example, a dark green color against a light green background is harder to see than a dark green color against a dark blue background. Green against blue is easier to see because of the strong color contrast between dark blue and dark green provided by linguistic categorization. What if the colors were goluboy and siniy?

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[T]he contrast between goluboy (light blue) and siniy (dark blue) was a stimulus that grabbed the brain's attention centers more than the light green / dark green contrast.

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[This indicates] that the brain processes the light blue / dark blue differently, for speakers whose language makes a lexical distinction.

**Read full, original post:** [Our Language Affects What We See](#)