

A Linguistic Relativity Appraisal of an African Drama: The Lion and The Jewel

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Abstract : This research was designed to assess the validity of the Sapir Whorf hypothesis in relation to the linguistic and cultural notions of the Yoruba and Zulu language speakers' via the evaluation of the culture enriched dramatic text The Lion and The Jewel by Wole Soyinka. The study queried both the hypothesis' strong version, (language governs thought: linguistic classifications restrain and influence mental classifications); and its weak version, (linguistic classifications and their use influence thought as well as some other classes of non-linguistic activities) and their possible reliability. Participants were purposively selected and their ages ranged from 16-46 years old. The participants amounted to 38 (18 Yoruba and 20 Zulu) students of DUT who all speak both English and Zulu (Zulu participants) and English and Yoruba (Yoruba participants) and the mixed methods approach was used. Thus with the use of questionnaire and interviews the research questions were answered and the findings provided support for validity of the linguistic relativity hypothesis, languages indeed influence thought. The findings also revealed that linguistic influence on cognition is not limited to different language users alone, but also same language speakers per level of exposure to other languages and concepts.

Keywords : culture, cognition, DUT, language, linguistic relativity hypothesis, Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, The Lion and The Jewel, thought, Wole Soyinka, Yoruba, Zulu

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