**Analyzing the relationship between language and thought in the philosophy of language involves delving into historical perspectives, examining contemporary theories, and proposing insights into how language shapes and reflects cognitive processes.**

Thinking is a mental act. (Bell D. 1987). It is cognitive process that allows an individual to make sense of the world around them. Language serves as the primary medium for human communication, and its influence extends far beyond mere words. It is not just a tool to convey our ideas or share information; it’s a fundamental aspect of how we perceive the world and construct our thoughts.The connection between language and thought is a complex and multifaceted one. Our mental processes are intrinsically linked to the language we use, making the relationship between language and thinking a subject of profound interest and study.

Historically, philosophers that delved in relationship between cognitive philosophy and language include Aristotle, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Lev Vygotsky, Jean piaget and Benjamin wolf together with his teacher Sapir.

Ludwig Wittgenstein explored the idea that language is a reflection of thought. Wittgenstein's early work in the "Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus" suggested a direct correspondence between language and the structure of reality. However, his later work, especially in "Philosophical Investigations," emphasized the complexity of language games and the diversity of ways in which language can be used.

Aristotle believed language to be a tool for expressing pre-existing thoughts. He saw a close connection between linguistic and cognitive processes, considering language as a reflection of the mind's structure age acquisition and vice versa.

According to Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of cognitive development, in early development speech and thought are independent. The two processes merge when speech is internalised. In Vygotsky's theory, language is considered to be a cultural tool that plays a key role in development. Firstly, verbal guidance from adults supports children's learning and development. Language allows adults to share their knowledge and communicate with the child. Secondly, when language becomes internalised and develops into inner speech, it allows children to guide themselves when making decisions, problem-solving or regulating their behaviour.

Different theories propose different relationships between language and thought, in this paper, we dwell much on Jean piaget's theory and Sapir-Whorf hypothesis.

Piaget's theory argues that it is the thought that determines language, while the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis proposes that language can determine how we think of the world around us. Jean Piaget focused on language development in the context of cognitive stages. He posited that thought and language development are intertwined, with cognitive abilities influencing language. According to Piaget's theory, language is preceded by and depends on thought. Before children can use words correctly they need to first develop an understanding of the concepts behind them. This occurs through the development of schemas, a process which precedes language development. In accordance with this notion, for a child to express a dislike in broccoli, they must first develop a schema of dislike to it before they can express the dislike. Piaglet also focuses on child's cognitive development stages which limit a child's ability to acquire thought hence meaningful communication. These stages include; sensorimotor stage, preparatory stage, concrete operatioal stage and formal operational stage.

While Jean piaglets theory seemed to be more valid one, it also faced some strong criticism based on the following reasons, first, the theory lacks empirical evidence since thought and cognitive development through schema can't be easily studied. Secondly, the concept of universal stages of cognitive development has also been widely criticised. Some studies have found that children can attain many of these developmental milestones earlier than proposed by Piaget. Differences in cognitive development have also been found across cultures, suggesting that Piaget's idea of cognitive development was culturally biased (Mangan, 1978).

In the mid-20th century, the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis gained attention, suggesting that language influences and constrains thought. Benjamin Lee Whorf argued that language shapes our perception of the world, influencing the way we think about and categorize experiences. This hypothesis based it's argument on major two principles namely linguistic determinism and linguistic relatively.

Linguistic determinism is the idea that the language we use determines and constrains how we think about the world. The weaker version of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis has been termed linguistic relativity, this idea proposes that while language may not completely determine our thoughts it can influence them to some extent. Contemporary linguists, however, often critique the strong version of this hypothesis, emphasizing the bidirectional relationship between language and thought. Whorf supported his claims with research on native American cultures. He proposed that differences in language can change how a culture understands the concept of time or how it perceives natural phenomena. Whorf argued that the Native American Hopi culture lacks an understanding of the concept of time. He attributed this to the lack of terminology that places events in time in their language. According to his theory, the lack of linguistic expression of time changed the way this culture thought of and perceived time. He also argued that the Inuit language has more words for snow than the English language, suggesting that the Inuit culture perceives snow differently from Europeans and is able to distinguish between different types of snow. However, the Sapir wholf hypothesis has been criticised strongly moreso from the examples he used. First, it was found that the Hopi language do have a term to refer to time and that the Inuit language has only four words not as exaggerated by Wholf.

However, later psycholinguistics research has found some evidence of differences in memory and perception across speakers of different languages, supporting linguistic relativism. Studies have found that our native language can influence how we remember past events as well as how good we are at recognising differences between colours. Fausey and Boroditsky (2011) investigated the memory of intentional and accidental events in English and Spanish speakers. Both groups remembered the person responsible for intentional actions equally well. However, English speakers had a much better memory of the agent behind the accidental action compared to Spanish speakers. The difference in memory found in the study of Fausey and Boroditsky (2011) was attributed to linguistic differences between English and Spanish. In Spanish accidents are typically described with non-agentive language. For example, Spanish speakers would use the expression "A pen broke" instead of "A man broke the pen" to describe a pen accidentally breaking.

From a critique point of view, language and cognition share a complex relationship, with each influencing and shaping the other. Language not only reflects existing cognitive processes but also actively molds thought patterns. In language philosophy, the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis suggests that the structure of a language can shape or constrain the way its speakers perceive and think about the world. This highlights the intimate connection between language and cognition, illustrating how linguistic categories influence our understanding and conceptualization of reality. Additionally, the role of metaphor in language reveals how abstract concepts are often articulated through metaphorical expressions, providing insights into the cognitive frameworks we use to make sense of the world.

In conclusion, the relationship between language and thought is intricate and multifaceted. Historical perspectives, from Wittgenstein to the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, have paved the way for contemporary theories emphasizing embodiment and enactivism. Understanding the ways in which language shapes and reflects cognitive processes provides a nuanced view of human cognition, recognizing the dynamic interplay between language and thought.

References

Chomsky, Noam. Aspects of the Theory of Syntax. MIT Press, 1965.

Pinker, Steven. The Stuff of Thought: Language as a Window into Human Nature. Viking, 2007.

Vygotsky, Lev. Social Formation of Mind. Harvard University Press, 1978.

Piaget, Jean. The Language and Thought of a Child. Psychology Press, 1959.

Whorf, Benjamin. Selected Writings. MIT Press, 1964.