

GRAMMATICAL GENDER AND ATTRIBUTES EVALUATION

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‘‘The individual’s whole experience is built upon the plan of his language’’ –

Henri Delacroix (1937, as cited by Flesch, 1951, p. 46).

ABSTRACT

The above saying of Delacroix is true at least to some extent, as it appears in light of the *Linguistic Relativity Hypothesis* (LRH). The basic idea of LHR, in the works of the anthropologist Edward Sapir and his student Benjamin L. Whorf, is ‘‘...the proposal that diverse languages influence the thought of those who speak them’’ (Lucy, 1992, p. 1), meaning, different languages offer different points of view of the world. The corpus of studies examining this hypothesis in dozens of languages relates to a wide variety of notions such as the concept of time flow, the ways of perceiving color or space, and more recently – the phenomenon of grammatical gender. This paper describes an experiment conducted with Hebrew and Arabic speaking participants, with a view to examine the manifestation of linguistic relativity effects in evaluating synonymous nouns which do not share the same grammatical gender category. The experiment showed that nouns whose grammatical gender is 'male' were seen as stronger, heavier and more masculine than their 'female' synonyms by Hebrew speakers, and as heavier and more masculine in the eyes of Arabic speakers.

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