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Edited by John J. Gumperz and Stephen C. Levinson  
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**Studies in the Social and  
Cultural Foundations of Language No. 17**

**Rethinking linguistic relativity**

**Linguistic relativity is the claim, associated especially with the names of Humboldt, Sapir, and Whorf, that culture, through language, affects the way in which we think, and especially our classification of the experienced world. This book re-examines ideas about linguistic relativity in the light of new evidence and changes in theoretical climate. Parts I and II address the classical issues in the relation between thought and language, and the extent of linguistic and cultural universals. Parts III and IV show how changes in our understanding of meaning require that we look at how context enters into interpretation, and how context is constituted in social interaction, reflecting properties of larger social wholes. The editors have provided a substantial introduction which summarizes changes in thinking about the Sapir–Whorf hypothesis in the light of developments in anthropology, linguistics, and cognitive science; and also introductions to each section which will be of especial use to students.**

### Studies in the Social and Cultural Foundations of Language

The aim of this series is to develop theoretical perspectives on the essential social and cultural character of language by methodological and empirical emphasis on the occurrence of language in its communicative and interactional settings, on the socioculturally grounded "meanings" and "functions" of linguistic forms, and on the social scientific study of language use across cultures. It will thus explicate the essentially ethnographic nature of linguistic data, whether spontaneously occurring or experimentally induced, whether normative or variational, whether synchronic or diachronic. Works appearing in the series will make substantive and theoretical contributions to the debate over the sociocultural-functional and structural-formal nature of language, and will represent the concerns of scholars in the sociology and anthropology of language, anthropological linguistics, sociolinguistics, and socio-culturally informed psycholinguistics.

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RETHINKING  
LINGUISTIC RELATIVITY

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### Reference

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