

- introduction
- mainpart:
 - language linking to thought (translation)
 - difference in rhetorical patterns /style (culturally -> examples from Oshima and Hogue)
 - difference in logic (culturally -> examples)
 - vice versa
- conclusion (explain how that links to a different theory)

"As Peirce said, if Aristotle had been Mexican, his logic would have been different; and perhaps, by the same token, the whole philosophy and our science would have been different." This quote is taken from Dufrenne (1963). It states that language and culture can influence thought or a whole philosophical theory and vice versa. This essay shall discuss the validity of this claim.

Most abstract thoughts with which philosophy is concerned are bound to language. They cannot be thought without it. In this way Dufrenne's quote proves true: Ancient Greek is a highly inflexible language in which very complex sentences - and with that thoughts - can be expressed. Had Aristotle not lectured in this language, but in Spanish, which is less inflexible, or the language of indigenous people living in North America at that time, about whose language little is known, Aristotle's theory would certainly have been structured very differently. Some thoughts can only be expressed precisely in certain languages, which is a problem many translators of philosophical or other academic texts encounter. A translation is always a slightly different text than its original and can never exactly reproduce the author's theory. That is why it is so important to be able to have a look at the original text when dealing with a vague passage in a philosophical text. Often these problems arise because of ambiguous or unclear translations.

Oshima and Hogue (1983) support this argument: according to them, different cultures with different languages use different rhetorical patterns. They give the example that an English writer will use a higher degree of subordination in his text while an Arabic writer rather tends toward coordination. In this way, the structure of a thought is influenced. And this influence is also reflected in the thought's logic.

Oshima and Hogue (1983) show that the cultural difference extends toward logic, as well. While in English academic writing linearity and coherence are expected without any unnecessary information, Spanish writing even encourages slight digresses within a paragraph and Asian writing differs even further in that it approaches a topic indirectly instead of the English directness. All these logical patterns influence the line of thinking - both, for the one who makes a theory as he or she is bound to his or her language, and for the reader, who will only learn about the theory through the medium language. This way his or her thoughts will be prestructured by the text.

But of course, the influence from language on thought also works the other way around, as Dufrenne states as possible. Had Aristotle's theory - especially his theory on logic in the two analytics - been different, maybe the European academic writing of today would be completely changed, as well. We are all influenced by Aristotle's guidelines of argumentation to which he himself never actually kept. And by these guidelines our thoughts are structured and thus also the theories we produce now.

It is therefore clear that not only was Aristotle clearly influenced by his cultural background, but we today are influenced by him. So Dufrenne is certainly right in claiming that if Aristotle had been Mexican his theory and our culture would have been different. However, the extent of the difference is debatable. With a different cultural background Aristotle may not have been as influential on our culture as he is now and someone else may have taken his place. So Dufrenne's "perhaps" is vital in understanding his quote.¹