Mindsets can cope with quantities of complex data, and simplify preconceptions of expectations, importance and relevance. In the essay, I will highlight some examples of mindsets in the field of linguistics.

In linguistics, there are two main approaches to discuss language use-- the prescriptive approach and descriptive approach. The prescriptive approach has a set of explicit rules/regulations on how people should/ought to use language. The descriptive approach is more of an analysis on how speakers use a language, and deducing underlying patterns/principles. The prescriptive approach can be a mindset that assigns “correctness” or “incorrectness” values to the use of language in the environment, with enforced rules that are more resistant to change. On the other hand, the descriptive approach is less of a mindset, as it is more open to the changing of language though time, and reports the language environment through observations to have a deeper understanding of language.

Another mindset that linguists may have on language and thought is the mould theory. The mould theory is the idea that to some extent, language influences the way we think, which is related to the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis. Although this has been largely disputed, it was a mindset that influenced many relativist studies in the 20th-century, i.e. the lack of concept of time in Hopi due to it having no temporal expressions in their language compared to the Standard Average European concept of time, overlooking some other aspects of their culture and lifestyle that might suggest otherwise.

Lastly, researchers may vary in transcriptions of the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) based on the phonological differences they want to describe, which can be dependent on the mindsets they are in, and what they want to observe. It could be the case that by paying attention to certain nuances, they are overlooking other nuances in a language, such that the information is not encoded within the IPA. The more detailed information there is in the IPA transcription, there more data the researcher has to sift through, and thus does not highlight the distinction between the main issue that they are observing, and the “noise” that may be irrelevant.

To conclude, mindsets are unavoidable and help one sift through massive amounts of information. The approaches and theories mentioned above demonstrate some of the mindsets that researchers can have, and how they affect the observations made in their studies.