

Scheme of Learning: Language, thought and communication

Topic Sequence:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Piaget's theory of language and thought	Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis	Human and animal communication	Von Frisch's bee study	Darwin's evolution theory	Nature vs. Nurture	Yuki's study of emoticons

Topic Overview:

This topic develops the students understanding of nature and nurture further by looking at how genetics and experience effect the way we think about the world and communicate. In this topic we will not only look at human behaviour but the behaviour of animals and our ancestors. The scientific theory of evolution is drawn upon to allow students to determine why certain behaviour propagate through time whether serve an obvious, modern, purpose or not.

Lesson Sequence:

This topic starts by recapping Piaget's theory of schemas, the mental framework we use to explain everything. We will look at how young children develop language and schemas and how observations of this behaviour indicate whether the child has developed the schema (or thought) or whether they are repeating the words, much like a parrot.

The next theory contrasts Piaget's theory in that it states that language comes before thought. The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis uses studies from many different cultures, focusing on the differences in how language affects memory and our perception of the world around us. In its strongest form it states that we cannot truly think of something unless we have a word for it.

Next, we begin to focus on the differences between human and animal communication as a precursor to introducing Von Frisch's bee study. Von Frisch's bee study focuses on the elaborate body language of bee as they communicate with the hive about the location of food. Study animal communication in this way leads us to the introduction of verbal and non-verbal human behaviour and the use of body language, eye contact, personal space and facial expression.

Though the theme of nature nurture is peppered throughout this topic it is more concisely reflected in the last 4 lessons. Non-verbal behaviour of humans can be innate or learnt through experience. Darwin's theory explains that some behaviours can be innate. Behaviours that are adaptive are ones that serve a purpose, whether that be survival or reproduction. We contrast again, this times looking at the role of nurture in developing non-verbal communication, by looking at different cultures and how they both express and perceive different ideas through non-verbal communication.

This is rounded off by looking at Yuki's study of emoticons. A study on how culture (Japanese and American) affected the perception of emoticons depending on whether they had happy, neutral or sad mouths or happy, neutral or sad eyes.

Sequence of Lessons:

1	Topic intro – Knowledge map and study guide
2	Piaget's theory
3	The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis
4	View of the world
5	Human and Animal communication
6	Von Frisch's Bee study
7	Eye contact
8	Personal space
9	Darwin's evolution theory
10	Innate or learned
11	Yuki's study of emoticons
12	Evaluating Yuki's study emotion

Topic Resources:

Knowledge Map:	Language, thought and communication	Any other Resources:	Study guide
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Assessment:

Knowledge:	Mid topic test – 20Marks End of topic – 20Marks Assessment – 5Marks
Application of Knowledge:	Longer written apply questions as part of end of topic assessment – 26Marks

Supportive Reading:

Piaget's theory of language and thought	A theory that states thought determines language. Changes in a small child's use of words indicate development of understanding.
The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis	A theory that states that language determines thought. It's strongest form it states that we cannot think of something if we don't have the words to describe it.
Darwin's evolution theory of behaviour	A theory that explains how adaptive behaviour aids survival or reproduction of an organism and therefore a is more likely to be passed on (nature).
Von Frisch's bee study	A field study looking at the observable behaviour of bees in response to the location of a food source.
Yuki's study of emoticons	A study that investigates how nurture affects the interpretation of body language in different cultures.