Teaching Resources for Chapter 8

**Links**

• [*intermediate*] This site provides an overview of Dennis Preston’s work looking at social attitudes based on the dialect people speak. It includes a set of links and activities allowing you to explore your own language attitudes and to learn more about the dialects of English. http://www.pbs.org/speak/speech/prejudice/attitudes/#

• [*intermediate*] This chapter briefly discusses the development of children’s “Theory of Mind”. This topic has received a lot of attention in the developmental psychology literature. To read more about it, try these sites: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theory\_of\_mind

http://www.child-encyclopedia.com/documents/Astington-EdwardANGxp.pdf

http://www.holah.co.uk/study/baroncohen/

http://www.newscientist.com/article/dn17352-language-may-be-key-to-theory-of-mind.html

• [*intermediate*] This chapter discusses the Whorfian hypothesis, also called Linguistic Relativity. This topic has received a lot of debate in the literature on both sides, which you can read about here.

http://cogling.wikia.com/wiki/Sapir-Whorf\_Hypothesis

http://c2.com/cgi/wiki?WhorfianHypothesis

And at this site (be sure to read to the bottom!) there is a humorous piece about a common (and untrue!) myth about Eskimo’s having many words for snow: http://www.mendosa.com/snow.html

**Activities for Students**

*Influence of Language on Thought:*

One domain where language may have an influence on cognition is the domain of numbers. You can observe this by asking people to calculate basic mathematical functions in a different language (e.g., ask people to calculate the tip on a bill). For the different languages, ask people to make the calculation in their native language, in a language they learned late in life, and if the person is multi-lingual, in other languages they are fluent in.

For your observation, record how long it takes people to make the calculation, and ask them about their subjective experience when doing it. Do they mentally translate the numbers into their native language? Do they find it more or less difficult? As a comparison case, ask people to describe a recent movie that they saw in the different languages.

*Frog Story Narratives:*

On the CHILDES site, there are many transcripts of children learning different languages telling the Frog story. Start here: http://childes.psy.cmu.edu/browser/index.php?url=Frogs/

On the left side of the page you will see the names of several researchers who have donated their transcripts of children’s frog narratives, organized by language. Choose any of the researchers and then keep clicking on choices from the left-hand menus until transcripts appear in the large box on the right.

Read through the stories of children speaking two different languages. If you only know a little bit of another language, look at a story told by a younger child (the numbers in the file names refer to ages). Identify one element of the story that children in learning both languages describe similarly. Identify one element that they describe differently. Can you account for these differences in terms of difference between the two languages?

**Online Movies**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Movie Name | Access | Description | Time |
| Barbara Landau’s address to the Cognitive Science Society on the relationship between Language and Space in Cognition | http://mind.cog.jhu.edu/faculty/landau/lang-cog-lab/Landau\_Lab/Media/Media.html  (This video is the 4th one down on this site. It is labled like this: “Watch Dr. Landau’s keynote address at he Cognitive Science Society Conference. | This professional talk provides an excellent overview of Landau’s work on language and space. Note, it begins with a brief introduction to Dr. Landau herself | ~ 60 minutes |
| Lera Boroditsky: How Language Shapes Thought | http://fora.tv/2010/10/26/Lera\_Boroditsky\_How\_Language\_Shapes\_Thought | A lecture by Lera Boroditsy about her work on the neo-Whorfian hypothesis (she’s in favor of it). The presentation begins with a terrific short video with no words that is about words. The talk proper runs from 5:04 – 69:30 and is followed by a question period. | 101:10 |
| National Language: What’s that? | http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wrr2CRiq9tQ | Segment from a talk show in India about whether Hindi should be the national language in India. All participants talk in English (all are bilingual, themselves!) and discuss the main issues of a national language an bilingualism in a very different context from the U.S. | 4:35 |
| Robert Seyfarth: Theory of Mind | http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XDtjLSa50uk | An interview of Robert Seyfarth discussing the development of theory of mind. Includes extended description of the Sally-Anne task | 3:37 |
| Sally Anne Test..mpg | http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QjkTQtggLH4 | Demonstration of child doing the classic Sally-Anne task. | 1:30 |
| The “False Belief” Test: Theory of Mind | http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8hLubgpY2\_w | Brief overview of theory of mind and the false belief task. Includes a short interview with Alison Gopnik and footage of a child in the unexpected contents task. | 3:54 |

**Movies on CD**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 5.3  Frog story by a 6 year old | On Existing Student CD | Lucy is 6;7 and a monolingual speaker of English. She is telling the frog story. | 1:15 |
| 9.1  Frog story by a 5 year old | On Existing Student CD | Avelina at 5;6. Avelina is a monolingual English-learning child. She is telling the frog story. | 2:57 |

**Quicktime Movies**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| The Frog Story as told by an 8-year-old girl and a 9-year-old boy | Quicktime movie file | The full Frog story told in alternation between an older gild and an older boy. | 2:49 |

**Sample Test Questions**

1. The course of language development is universal in regards to:
   1. how and when children babble and gesture.
   2. the emergence of first words.
   3. grammatical learning milestones.
   4. all of the above are aspects of language development that are universal.
2. Which of the following differences among languages has been show to influence children’s linguistic development?
   1. the phonological inventory of a language’s sound system
   2. the frequency of occurrence of a language’s grammatical markers
   3. the structure of the lexicon and the grammar of the language
   4. all of the above have been shown to influence children’s language development

1. Children acquiring Mandarin learn verb earlier than children acquiring English because:
   1. most verbs in Mandarin are only a single syllable long, making it easy for children to remember the verbs.
   2. Mandarin uses a character based writing system that makes it easier for verbs to be identified.
   3. the structure of Mandarin grammar means that children are more likely to hear verbs in a prominent position, namely the end of the sentence.
   4. it is not true that children acquiring Mandarin acquire verbs earlier than children acquiring English.

1. The term *language socialization* refers to the way in which:
   1. cultures differ in how they use language socially.
   2. children learn to socialize in their culture.
   3. children become socially competent language users in their cultures.
   4. adults socialize with children in the culture.

1. Japanese mothers are more likely to use an indirect comment to instruct a child (e.g., *Drinking juice is healthy)* while American mothers are more likely to use a direct command (e.g. *Drink your juice!)*. This difference in phrasing reflects:
   1. a difference in grammatical structures available in the two languages.
   2. a difference in social values between the two cultures.
   3. a difference in cultural attitudes towards the importance of children drinking juice.
   4. a difference in how much authority a mother has over her child in the two cultures.

1. A comparison of the expressions of different languages has found that:
   1. all languages are direct translations of each other and use the same terms to describe the same things.
   2. every language is completely unique in its descriptions and there are many terms that simply cannot be translated from language to language
   3. different languages use different terms to describe the same thing, but one can usually see why a language chooses the terms that it does.
   4. the English language is the only one that accurately describes the world.

1. Evidence for the position that language and thought are independent of each other comes from:
   1. research with infants. Even before they have any language, infant are capable of a variety of kinds of abstract thought.
   2. research on children’s storytelling. Extensive investigations into how children tell the “Frog Story” have shown that language and thought are independent.
   3. research on phonological development. Children’s developing use of phonology does not require any thought at all.
   4. there is no evidence that supports the idea that language and thought are independent.

1. Researchers have found that children’s ability to use their understanding of object permanence to guide their actions was correlated with their understanding and use of the word *gone.* Which approach to the relationship between language and thought best explains this link?
   1. the language and cognition as tandem developments position
   2. the language as an influence on thinking for speaking position
   3. the language as providing the categories of thought position
   4. the language as an expression of independent cognition position
2. Benjamin Lee Whorf is associated with what strong hypothesis about the relationship of language and thought?
   1. Whorf hypothesized that language and cognition were independent of each other and had no strong influences on each other.
   2. Whorf hypothesized that as we learn language, it enhances our cognitive capabilities, enabling us to think about more things.
   3. Whorf hypothesized that you have to think in order to use language.
   4. Whorf hypothesized that the language we speak determines the way we think, including determining the categories of our thought.
3. Which of the following is NOT a piece of evidence supporting the idea that our ability to reason numerically depends on the use of specific number words?
   1. the fact that bilingual speakers are better able to remember numerical facts if they are tested in the same language they were trained in
   2. the fact that speakers of languages without exact number words have difficulties discriminating between large exact quantities
   3. the fact that adults can make better estimations of approximate quantities than pre-linguistic infants can
   4. the fact that pre-linguistic infants can only keep track of up to 4 objects
4. Some researchers have argued that our autobiographical memories depend on language because:
   1. we know that all cognition requires language.
   2. most people cannot remember anything about their childhood from before they had enough language skills to tell a basic story.
   3. pre-linguistic infants have been shown to be incapable of remembering events.
   4. most people use language to tell other people about themselves.
5. Which of the following is an example of how using language can help children think more effectively?
   1. children are better able to find analogies between situations when the similarities are explicitly labeled with language.
   2. children quickly learn the spatial terms of their language, regardless of the way their language organizes them.
   3. children tell better organized narrative stories about topics that they find emotionally engaging.
   4. all of the above are examples of how language can help children think more effectively.

1. Adult English and Korean speakers often describe spatial situations differently. For example, speakers of English describing a ring on a finger focus on support (e.g., they use the word *on*) while speakers of Korean describing the same thing focus on the tightness of the fit of the ring (e.g. they use the word *kkita*, meaning ‘tight fit’). Research with young children acquiring these two languages has found that:
   1. children learning English are able to correctly use English spatial terms several months BEFORE children learning Korean are able to correctly use Korean spatial terms.
   2. children learning English are able to correctly use English spatial terms several months AFTER children learning Korean are able to correctly use Korean spatial terms.
   3. children learning English are able to correctly use English spatial terms at approximately the same age that children learning Korean are able to correctly use Korean spatial terms.
   4. spatial terms such as these are quite difficult to learn and there is too much individual variation in when they are learned to make any generalizations across different languages.
2. When telling the Frog Story, children learning different language tend to package the information in their stories differently. For example, children learning Spanish tend to put information about the path of motion into the main verb (e.g. *entrar*, ‘enter’) while children learning Englsh tend to put information about the manner of motion into the main verb (e.g. *running*). Which approach to the relationship between language and thought best explains this phenomenon?
   1. the language and cognition as tandem developments position
   2. the language as an influence on thinking for speaking position.
   3. the language as providing the categories of thought position.
   4. the language as an expression of independent cognition position
3. Researchers have found a strong correlation between children’s Theory of Mind abilities and which aspect of their language knowledge?
   1. children’s understanding of mental state words, such as *think* and *know*
   2. children’s understanding of syntactic structures that let them embed one sentence inside another (e.g. *Mary says that she saw a ghost*)
   3. children’s skill with social conversations
   4. correlations between all of these aspects of language knowledge have been found to exist with Theory of Mind ability
4. What is language socialization? Define the term and give an example of it.
5. The strongest version of the Whorfian hypothesis says that the language we speak determines what we can think. Does the evidence support this strong view? Discuss at least two studies that have investigated the Whorfian hypothesis and explain what they tell us about the relationship between language and thought.
6. Many researchers believe that the acquisition of language creates new opportunities for thought and enhances children’s cognitive abilities. Discuss one study that supports this point of view. Which theory (or theories) about the relationship between language and thought can explain the study you discussed, and how do they do so?