NOBA

Language and Language Use

Instructor Manual

Editors: Dr. Regan A. R. Gurung and Dr. Aaron Richmond
Contributing Authors: Dawn Albertson, Bethany Fleck, Travis Heath, Phil Kreniske, Linda Lockwood, Kristy Lyons, Aliza Panjwani, Janet Peters, Kasey Powers, Amanda Richmond, Anna Ropp, Jeremy Sawyer, Raechel Soicher, Sunda Friedman TeBockhorst, Courtney Rocheleau

Understanding the role of language is important because it is ubiquitous in our lives. Most of us couldn't imagine a world without language. We use it to communicate, and even those without a formal language will create their own. Humans are social beings and each time we enter into a conversation we not only use language, but adjust the terms and contexts used based on what we know of the others involved and of the clues and responses given throughout the give and take of a conversation. Conversation is cooperative and each group will have a unique set of rules they follow. While humans have the ability to communicate philosophical thoughts, the majority of conversations revolve around gossip or our social world. Our brain size is an important part of what makes us able to communicate and use language in the ways we do. Language also affects neural processing as well as memory and emotional responses.

Learning Objectives

- Relevant APA Learning Objectives (Version 2.0)

  - Describe key concepts, principles, and overarching themes in psychology (1.1)

  - Describe applications of psychology (1.3)

  - Use scientific reasoning to interpret psychological phenomena (2.1)

  - Demonstrate psychology information literacy (2.2)

  - Engage in innovative and integrative thinking and problem solving (2.3)

  - Incorporate sociocultural factors in scientific inquiry (2.5)

- Content Specific Learning Objectives: Language and Language Use

    - Define basic terms used to describe language use.

    - Describe the process by which people can share new information by using language.

    - Characterize the typical content of conversation and its social implications.

    - Characterize psychological consequences of language use and give an example.

Abstract

Humans have the capacity to use complex language far more than any other species on Earth. We cooperate with each other to use language for communication; language is often used to communicate about and even construct and maintain our social world. Language use and human sociality are inseparable parts of Homo sapiens as a biological species.

Class Design Recommendations

Language and Language Use can be taught in one long class period. If you have a course set up with a long and a short class period it is optimal to lecture during the long period and use the shorter time for a class activity. Please also see the Noba PowerPoint slides that complement this outline.

1st class period (50 min – 75 min):

- Introduction
- How do we use language
- What do we talk about
- Psychological consequences of language use
- Conclusion
- *if no second class period, activity here.*

Optional 2nd class period (50 min – 75 min):

- Language Development Activity

    ○ Develop your own language: http://www.devpsy.org/teaching/language/language_game.html

Module Outline

Introduction

- Language is central to our everyday lives. We all use it and infants learn it without being explicitly taught.
- Even when children don't have much language, when brought together they will create one. In the 1980s deaf children in Nicaragua were brought together for school. They did not learn the Spanish the teachers were teaching, but created their own sign language to communicate.

How do we use language?

- While language has many uses, the primary use is to communicate with others.
- In order to carry on a conversation, common ground is necessary. The speaker assumes that the listener knows what the words mean. The listener responds with an utterance that he understood and adds more information.
- A speaker takes into account common ground with unique listeners. Adam said "Gary" because he knew Ben knew who Gary was. If Adam were speaking to you, he might have said "my friend" as you do not know Gary. Audience design allows us to use brief labels for people or things when the audience is knowledgeable and descriptive labels if the audience is less knowledgeable.
- Conversation is a cooperative activity that most often occurs in small groups. The rapid exchange of utterances in a noisy environment requires a great deal of coordination.
- When we enter a conversation we align ourselves to the other(s) we are speaking to. People tend to match phrases (choosing the phrase used first to continue the conversation when there are multiple that could be used), and syntactic structure. People also tend to match

speech rate and accent.

- Priming occurs when thinking about one concept reminds you of other related concepts.

What do we talk about?

- When we talk, we can communicate about the mundane to the philosophical. However, 60-70% of natural conversation revolves around gossip.

- While gossip may seem a trivial use for an ability that makes humans unique from other animals, some argue that it is one of the most important uses for understanding our social world and is the human equivalent to primates grooming one another.

- Talking about our social world (gossip) helps us to make sense of and regulate our social circles.

- Dunbar's social brain hypothesis predicts group size based on brain size and estimated that humans can support groups of up to about 150 – the size of modern hunter-gatherer communities.

- Dunbar's hypothesis about gossip and its role in human evolution is controversial, but either way language is an important tool for maintaining our intergroup structures. Subtle language cues, such as choosing a verb (a state of particularity) or an adjective (a state of permanency) to describe someone gives information about how we construe our social world.

- Linguistic intergroup bias is the phenomenon where we tend to talk about positive attributes of the ingroup and negative attributes of the outgroup with adjectives instead of verbs. So ingroup members are viewed as generally and permanently good and outgroup members generally and permanently bad, where the negative attributes of the ingroup and positive attributes of the outgroup would be talked about using verbs – because they are viewed as a one-time occurrence.

- When stories are told and retold they tend to become conventionalized as they reach a broader group of people. Counter-stereotypical details are dropped and stereotypical detail is more likely to be kept. The story will have meaning for a broad audience.

Psychological Consequences of Language Use

- When people talk about an experience, their thoughts are shaped by the linguistic expression more than the experience itself.

- When presented with an image and asked to label the emotion, people remember the

depiction of emotion as being stronger if they explained why the person felt that way rather than simply identifying the emotion.

- Neural processing is affected by linguistically labeling emotions.

Conclusion

- Language is central to human psychology.

Difficult Terms

ingroup
intergroup bias
lexicon
outgroup
phoneme
syntax/syntactic
utterance

Lecture Frameworks

Language is such an important part of what makes us who we are. We use it to communicate and it is something most of us learn without explicit instruction. Language is one of the things that makes humans different from other animals. It affects our social interactions, but also our brain functions. Language plays a part in shaping memory and emotional experience. Language is so ingrained in our day-to-day functioning that most of us probably have never thought about what life would be like without language.

1st class period

- Discussion/warm-up

  - Start by asking students questions that provoke their own broad thinking about language use and language acquisition. For example, you might have them meet in small groups

to consider how the world would be different if humans did not have spoken language.

- Lecture – Refer to PowerPoint slides for the following:

  ○ Talk about what language is and why it's important. While most animals have some sort of communication system, none is as complex as that of humans. Humans can think and reason and generate language to convey thought.

  ○ Talk about how we use language in conversation: common ground, audience design, priming. Here there is an embedded 2 minute video showing toddler twins communicating with each other.

  ○ Priming activity: this is a quick activity that can be done mid-lecture. Show a slide with the following:

    ■ Tab__ Cha__ Des_ Sof_ Ask the student to fill in the missing letters.

    ■ Show group 1 possible answers: Table, Chair, Desk, Sofa. Ask how many students got these answers.

    ■ Then show group 2 possible answers: Taboo, Chant, Destiny, Soft. Ask how many students chose these words.

    ■ Ask why more students chose the first four words than the second. Because of priming. We are primed to fill in the missing words, which is why most people can read a paragraph with the middle letters blacked out. Priming is also in effect where we guess with words that go together. Group 1 is all furniture. Group 2 are four words that could be correct but have no relationship. Priming makes group 1 more probable.

  ○ Use of language: Here you can introduce two key vocabulary terms—lexicon and syntax

  ○ What do we talk about? Discuss the social nature of language in regard to gossip and ingroups and outgroups.

    ■ See PowerPoint for the following: Psychology of language use.

- Activity: Language Development (*could also be used for an entire short second class period)*

  ○ Now that we've discussed how language is used and why it's important. Let's figure out if we can develop our own language.

  ○ Students develop their own language regarding shape color and placement, to the effect that they can instruct a group member to build a shape*.*

  ○ See the PowerPoint slides for this activity find this activity

- Conclusion: Wrap up with any remaining questions.

Activities & Demonstrations

Language Development Activity – Develop your own language

http://www.devpsy.org/teaching/language/language_g...

- The web link really lays this out step-by-step, but we want to give you an overview here. The text in this module talks about why language is important and how we use it. The purpose of this activity is to think about how language develops and how communication can take place with the most basic language as long as there is commonality among the participants in the conversation.

- Start with having a volunteer come up with a note pad and pen (or provide one). Have him face the class then put up the final PowerPoint slide. You, or a second student volunteer should describe the image. The student sitting (facing so he can't see the image) draws it based on the descriptions.

- Talk about the difficulty. Then tell students they are going to do the same thing, only they can't use English!

- Break the class into groups of 4-6. Give each group a set of phonetic symbols and a set of image tiles. You can print and cut out the image from slide 11.

- The task is to come up with a language using the phonemes where one group member can direct a second to recreate a shape through language only. You may need to help get a group started by pointing to a shape and naming it – the group will likely use your word, then start creating their own.

- The link gives a few time-out, time-in mini discussions that can happen throughout the activity.

- At the end of the activity, ask for a couple of groups to volunteer. Create a new arrangement of the tiles and have one member tell the other what to do.

Priming Activity: Word Stem Completion Task

Phonetic Symbol	As used in:
p	pit, tip, stop
b	bat, tab
m	mitt, ham, smoke
f	fig, gift, muff
v	vat, save
(th)	thin, bath
(th)	thus, bathe
t	tip, put, stick
d	dip, pad
n	know, pan, snow
s	sun, bus
z	zoom, fuzz
l	lit, till, slit
(ch)	chew, hitch
(j/g)	gem, badge
(sh/ch)	show, bush, chaperon
(zz/gg)	treasure, garbage
r	right, tire, shrimp
y	you, yew
w	win, when
k	catch, back, skin
g	give, plague
h	how, who
i	see, each, machine
I	it ,myth
e	able, weigh, great
Ee	said, says, guest
ae	at, plaid
ee	about, son, cup, easily
aw	out, cow, bough
u	fruit, ooze, move
U	book, full, could
o	flow, road, open
AU	raw, fought, taught
a	tot, father
ay	my eye, buy
oy	toy, boil, lawyer

Sample Groups

Phonetic Symbol	As used in:
p	pit, tip, stop
b	bat, tab
o	flow, road, open
ay	my eye, buy
(zz/gg)	treasure, garbage

Phonetic Symbol	As used in:
w	win, when
k	catch, back, skin
aw	out, cow, bough
u	fruit, ooze, move
(ch)	chew, hitch

- Tab__ Cha__ Des_ Sof_ Ask the student to fill in the missing letters.

- Show group 1 possible answers: Table, Chair, Desk, Sofa. Ask how many students got these answers.

- Then show group 2 possible answers: Taboo, Chant, Destiny, Soft. Ask how many students chose these words.

- Ask why more students chose the first four words than the second. Because of priming. We are primed to fill in the missing words, which is why most people can read a paragraph with the middle letters blacked out. Priming is also in effect where we guess with words that go together. Group 1 is all furniture. Group 2 are four words that could be correct but have no relationship. Priming makes group 1 more probable.

Additional Activities

Carroll, D. W. (2004). Web-based assignments in the psychology of language class. *Teaching of Psychology, 31* (3) 204-206.

- This activity requires a web search, so only works as an in class activity If you are in a computer lab. It works well for homework. The goal is for students to gain awareness of lexical networks by comparing web information and text information.

Radiolab.com (August 2010) Words. Retrieved from (http://www.radiolab.org/story/91725-words/)

- We meet a woman who taught a 27-year-old man the first words of his life, hear a firsthand account of what it feels like to have the language center of your brain wiped out by a stroke, and retrace the birth of a brand new language 30 years ago.

Demonstrating the McGurk effect (if you see someone f and hear b, you think you hear f) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G-lN8vWm3m0

http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/nature/bird-brains.html

- Birds have an undeserved reputation for low brainpower. In fact, they produce one of the most glorious phenomena in nature: birdsong. How do their brains do it? And what does this skill tell us about the evolution of another remarkable phenomenon, human language?

Links to ToPIX Materials

Activities, demonstrations, handouts, etc.:
http://topix.teachpsych.org/w/page/19980978/Cognition%20in%20the%20Classroom

Thinking-Language Intelligence In the News:
http://topix.teachpsych.org/w/page/26682121/Cognition%20in%20the%20News

Video, Books and Film:
http://topix.teachpsych.org/w/page/39237027/

Video:
http://topix.teachpsych.org/w/page/19980979/Cognition%20

Teaching Topics

Teaching The Most Important Course
https://nobaproject.com/documents/1_Teaching_The_Most_Important_Course.pdf

Content Coverage
https://nobaproject.com/documents/2_Content_Coverage.pdf

Motivating Students
https://nobaproject.com/documents/3_Motivating_Students_Tips.pdf

Engaging Large Classes
https://nobaproject.com/documents/4_Engaging_Large_Classes.pdf

Assessment Learning
https://nobaproject.com/documents/5_Assessment_Learning.pdf

Teaching Biological Psychology
https://nobaproject.com/documents/6_Teaching_Bio_Psych.pdf

PowerPoint Presentation

This module has an associated PowerPoint presentation. Download it at https://nobaproject.com//images/shared/supplement_editions/000/000/124/Language%20a-nd%20Language%20Use.ppt?1416598987.

About Noba

The Diener Education Fund (DEF) is a non-profit organization founded with the mission of re-inventing higher education to serve the changing needs of students and professors. The initial focus of the DEF is on making information, especially of the type found in textbooks, widely available to people of all backgrounds. This mission is embodied in the Noba project.

Noba is an open and free online platform that provides high-quality, flexibly structured textbooks and educational materials. The goals of Noba are three-fold:

- To reduce financial burden on students by providing access to free educational content
- To provide instructors with a platform to customize educational content to better suit their curriculum
- To present material written by a collection of experts and authorities in the field

The Diener Education Fund is co-founded by Drs. Ed and Carol Diener. Ed is the Joseph Smiley Distinguished Professor of Psychology (Emeritus) at the University of Illinois. Carol Diener is the former director of the Mental Health Worker and the Juvenile Justice Programs at the University of Illinois. Both Ed and Carol are award- winning university teachers.

Acknowledgements

Copyright

R. Biswas-Diener & E. Diener (Eds), Noba Textbook Series: Psychology. Champaign, IL: DEF Publishers. Retrieved from **http://noba.to/mnpe35f9**

The Internet addresses listed in the text were accurate at the time of publication. The inclusion of a Website does not indicate an endorsement by the authors or the Diener Education Fund, and the Diener Education Fund does not guarantee the accuracy of the information presented at these sites.

Contact Information:

Noba Project
www.nobaproject.com
info@nobaproject.com