Chapter 9

Language & Thought

Main Focus
1. Thinking & Mental Processes
2. Creativity & problem solving
3. Language

I. Thinking & Mental Processes

Thinking:
mental manipulation of information that has been
- sensed
- perceived
- learned
- remembered

Concept: a mental category for similar objects or events
(birds, trees, flowers, holidays, emotions)

• Concepts are defined by Prototypes

Prototypes:
• familiar or typical examples of a category
• defined by typical features
How do we organize Concepts & Prototypes?

a) Hierarchy

b) Spreading activation:
process by which one concept activate/prime the concepts linked to it

Schema:
a cognitive structure that represent one’s general knowledge about a given concept or domain

Examples of Schema:
- Gender roles
- “Rich & beautiful”

Examples of Schema
- Depressive schema
- Positive illusions
• Attachment schemas
  - secure
  - dismissive
  - preoccupied

Power of thinking
• Victor Frankl (existentialist)
• Self-fulfilling prophecies
• Rational-Emotive therapy
  (Albert Ellis)

Thinking-Emotions-Behavior
situation \(\rightarrow\) appraisals/thinking
\(\downarrow\) emotion
behavior

Language
• Stages of language development
• Theories of language acquisition
• Critical period
• Bilingualism
• Sign language
• Language & culture
• Animals & language

Stages of language development
3 m. - 1yr: babbling

By 1yr.
- babble in their language
- words emerging
By age 2
- two-word combinations
- telegraphic phrases

By age 4
- basic rules of grammar
- error of overgeneralization

By age 5-6
- speech competence

Theories of language acquisition

1. Behaviorists:
   positive reinforcement

2. Social learning theorists:
   observation & imitation

3. Nativist (Chomsky)
   language is inborn
   ("native") ability

Chomsky
Language acquisition device
- physiological & neurological features in the brain
- vocal apparatus
Critical period
- a period of time optimal for language acquisition
- children raised in isolation
  - Geine
- Brain damage

Bilingualism
- if fluent in 2 languages, have higher:
  - cognitive flexibility
  - analytical reasoning
  - selective attention
  - linguistic awareness

Sign language
- Autonomous language with its own grammar
- Processed in the Left hemisphere

Language & Culture
The interplay of thought and language. The traffic runs both ways between thinking and language. Thinking affects our language, which affects our thought.