

LANGUAGE AND THINKING

1. **THINKING**
2. **CONCEPT FORMATION**
3. **REASONING**
4. **PROBLEM SOLVING AND DECISION MAKING**
5. **Creativity**

Is **LANGUAGE** related to **THINKING** ?

- The connection between language and thought is profound. The majority of our everyday life involves the use of language. We tell our ideas to others with language, we “read” their responses and understand their meanings with language, and very often, we “speak” internally to ourselves when we process this information and make logical conclusions. It seems that rational thinking unavoidably involves certain degree of the use of language. This connection seems so tight that, some linguists like Sapir and Whorf had to propose that thought is indeed utterly determined by language.
- On the other hand, some linguists hold that language and thought are two separate and independent entities. The differences in the syntactic structure and the lexicons available in different languages, for example, cannot possibly determine the way these people think. Thus we have thought in the very first place, and then language came in as a tool for expressing our thought.
- Still some others, not feeling contented with either version, proposed a third possibility, that language and thought are interdependent. “Language is a regular part of the process of thinking... It is not a question of one notion taking precedence over the other, but of both notions being essential.”

While the conclusion on this issue is not a simple this-or-that answer and cannot be easily drawn, this paper will nevertheless try to provide adequate evidences in linguistic and psycholinguistic studies and seek for a reasonable conclusion.

1. **THINKING**

Despite the fact that thought is a fundamental human activity familiar to everyone, there is no generally accepted agreement as to what thought is or how it is created. Thought can refer to the ideas, or arrangements of ideas, that result from thinking. Thinking is considered the act of producing thoughts, or the process of producing thoughts.

Thought underlies many human actions and interactions. Our way of thinking is influenced by the way we talk, although thought can and does, in fact, occur without language. While thinking, a person often moves one's mouth, head, eyes, or makes facial expressions, as he or she would do while talking. Thinking allows humans to make sense of, interpret, represent, or model the world they experience, as well as to make predictions about that world.

Thinking is helpful to any organism with needs, objectives, and desires, as it makes plans or otherwise attempts to accomplish its goals. This intellectual exertion is aimed at finding the answer to a question or the solution to a problem; it can be as simple as where to get food, or as difficult as solving an equation in quantum mechanics.

Researching Thinking

Researchers have studied thinking in the form of reasoning, how people make decisions and choices or solve problems, and how people engage in creative discovery and imaginative thought.

Jean Piaget (1896 - 1980) studied the development of thought in children from birth to maturity. In his theory of cognitive development, thought is based on actions within an environment. This environment becomes understood through the assimilation of objects which an individual already knows and understands (i.e., the incorporation of new concepts into existing schemes). An individual accommodates the new objects with his or her prior knowledge and understanding (i.e., revisits existing cognitive schemas, perceptions, or understanding so that new information can be incorporated). Regardless of the individual's understanding of the new objects in relation to an individual's prior knowledge, thought helps make sense of the world around him or her.

Thought evolves from being based on perceptions and actions at the sensorimotor stage in the first two years of life, to internal representations in early childhood. Internal representations are gradually organized into logical structures, which first operate on the concrete properties of the environment, in the stage of concrete operations. Then, in the stage of formal operations, these logical structures operate on abstract principles that organize concrete properties.