Your notes

GCSE Psychology: revision notes

Language, thought and communication

Contents

1. Language and thought
2. Human and animal communication
3. Non-verbal communication
4. Key terms
5. Quick questions
6. What to do next

Language and thought

- Piaget believed thought comes first, and language develops to express it.
- The **Sapir-Whorf hypothesis** suggests language affects thought: the words we have shape how we see the world. A strong version says language determines thought; a weaker version says it influences it.
- Evidence includes cultural differences in recognising and remembering colours and in recalling events, which may be linked to the words a language has.

Human and animal communication

- Animals communicate for survival, reproduction, territory and food. Von Frisch studied the "**waggle dance**" of bees, which shows other bees the direction and distance of food.
- Human language is different: we can discuss the past and future and things not present (**displacement**), create endless new sentences, and use language creatively.

Non-verbal communication

- **Non-verbal communication** includes eye contact, facial expressions, body language (open and closed postures, **postural echo**, touch) and **personal space**.
- **Personal space** varies with culture, status and gender.
- Darwin argued **non-verbal communication** evolved because it helped survival. Evidence that some expressions are innate comes from similar expressions across cultures and in babies born blind.
- Yuki found that Japanese people focus more on the eyes and American people more on the mouth when reading emotions, suggesting culture shapes **non-verbal communication**.

Key terms

Sapir-Whorf hypothesis	The idea that language affects thought.
Displacement	Talking about things not present, in the past or future.
Waggle dance	The movement bees use to show others where food is.
Non-verbal communication	Communication without words, such as body language.
Postural echo	Copying another person's body posture.
Personal space	The area around a person they consider their own.

Quick questions

Cover the answers and test yourself: remembering is what makes it stick.

1. What does the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis suggest?
2. What did Piaget believe about language and thought?
3. What did Von Frisch study?
4. What is displacement in human language?
5. What is postural echo?
6. What affects personal space?
7. What did Yuki find about reading emotions?
8. Why did Darwin think non-verbal communication evolved?

Answers

1. Language affects thought
2. Thought comes first and language expresses it
3. The waggle dance of bees
4. Talking about things not present, in the past or future
5. Copying another person's body posture
6. Culture, status and gender
7. Japanese people focused more on the eyes, Americans more on the mouth
8. It helped survival

What to do next

Practise 10 questions on this topic

Try 4 exam questions, with mark schemes

Read the lesson, one step at a time

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