Chapter 9: Thinking & Language

Key Terms

Writing Definitions

1. **Cognition** refers to all the mental activities associated with thinking, knowing, remembering, and communicating information. (p. 369)

2. A concept is a mental grouping of similar objects, events, and people. (p. 369)

3. A prototype is the best example of a particular category. (p. 370)

4. An algorithm is a methodical, logical procedure that, while sometimes slow, guarantees success. (p. 371)

5. A heuristic is a simple thinking strategy that often allows us to make judgments and solve problems efficiently. Although heuristics are more efficient than algorithms, they do not guarantee success and sometimes even impede problem solving. (p. 371)

6. Insight is a sudden and often novel realization of the solution to a problem. Insight contrasts with trial and error and, indeed, may often follow an unsuccessful episode of trial and error. (p. 371)

7. The confirmation bias is an obstacle to problem solving in which people tend to search for information that supports their preconceptions. (p. 372)

8. Fixation is an inability to approach a problem in a new way. (p. 373)

9. Mental set refers to the tendency to continue applying a particular problem-solving strategy even when it is no longer helpful. (p. 373)

10. **Functional fixedness** is a type of fixation in which a person can think of things only in terms of their usual functions. (p. 373)

11. The representativeness heuristic is the tendency to judge the likelihood of things in terms of how well they match particular prototypes. (p. 374)

12. The availability heuristic is based on estimating the probability of certain events in terms of how readily they come to mind. (p. 375)

13. Another obstacle to problem solving, overconfidence refers to the tendency to overestimate the accuracy of our beliefs and judgments. (p. 376)

14. Belief perseverance is the tendency for people to cling to a particular belief even after the information that led to the formation of the belief is discredited. (p. 377)

15. Intuition is an immediate, automatic, and effortless feeling or thought. (p. 378)

16. Framing refers to the way an issue or question is posed. It can affect people’s perception of the issue or answer to the question. (p. 381)

17. **Language** refers to spoken, written, or signed words and how we combine them to communicate meaning. (p. 382)

18. Phonemes are the smallest units of sound in a language that are distinctive for speakers of the language. (p. 383)

19. **Morphemes** are the smallest units of language that carry meaning. (p. 384)

   Example: The word “dogs,” which contains four phonemes, contains only two morphemes—“dog” and “-s.” Although most morphemes are combinations of two or more phonemes, the plural “-s” conveys a distinctive meaning of “more than one.”

20. **Grammar** is a system of rules that enables us to communicate with and understand others. (p. 384)

21. **Semantics** is the set of rules used to derive meaning from morphemes, words, and sentences in a given language. (p. 384)

   Example: One semantic rule of English is that adding -ed to a verb gives the verb a past-tense meaning.

22. **Syntax** is the rules for combining words into grammatically sensible sentences in a given language. (p. 384)

   Example: One syntactic rule of English is that adjectives are positioned before nouns.

23. The babbling stage of speech development, which begins around 4 months, is characterized by the spontaneous utterance of speech sounds. During the babbling stage, children the world over sound alike. (p. 385)

24. Between 1 and 2 years of age, children speak mostly in single words; they are therefore in the one-word stage of linguistic development. (p. 385)

25. Beginning about age 2, children are in the two-word stage and speak mostly in two-word sentences. (p. 386)

26. Telegraphic speech is the economical, telegram-like speech of children in the two-word stage. Utterances consist mostly of nouns and verbs; however, words occur in the correct order, showing that the child has learned some of the language’s syntactic rules. (p. 386)

27. **Aphasia** is an impairment of language as a result of damage to any of several cortical areas, including Broca’s area and Wernicke’s area. (p. 389)

28. Broca’s area, located in the left frontal lobe, is involved in controlling the motor ability to produce speech. (p. 389)

29. Wernicke’s area, located in the left temporal lobe, is involved in language comprehension and expression. (p. 389)

30. **Linguistic determinism** is Benjamin Whorf’s hypothesis that language determines the way we think. (p. 391)