



Languagequestions

How do we define language? Is it a code of symbols? Do we include human bodily gesture or communications amongst animals? Are words and grammar the only key elements?

If language works according to sets of rules and conventions, how much scope do we have as individuals to break the rules, to challenge convention, to be “creative”?

What is the difference between sign and symbol?

Are vagueness and ambiguity shortcomings of language that must be eliminated in the interests of knowledge, or can they be also viewed as positive aspects of language?

If communication with others is taken as the major purpose of language, are there other uses too, such as developing inner thought, arguing with oneself, or creating memory?

What do we mean when we talk about meaning? Can we distinguish between different kinds of meaning, such as the literal versus the symbolic, the dictionary definition of a term versus its everyday use?

What is meant by definition?

What are the different functions of language?

Which language functions contain or convey knowledge, truth or belief?

****Using concepts involves language and thus enters the public domain, in which what we think can be communicated, debated, checked, confirmed or refuted.****

If language is particularly significant in relations of power and authority, how do teachers maintain authority by use of certain forms of language? What language is expected of students and what happens when they challenge this? How are power relations between men and women reinforced by language use? How is language used in government?

What is the role of language in creating and reinforcing social distinctions, such as class, ethnicity and gender?

Are words simply labels for things out there, or are they tools with which we investigate the world?

How is language related to the formation of concepts?

What problems are encountered in translating words and meanings from one language to another?



Can one plausibly argue that people who speak different languages live in different worlds? What exactly would this mean?

Is it reasonable to argue that one language is better than another as far as knowledge is concerned?

Can language be said to hinder knowledge?

What can be said for or against the view that if we cannot say something then we do not know it?