



EduTrend Contents

P4C · LANGUAGE AND MEANING · MIDDLE SCHOOL

Can You Think Without Words?

Language, thought and other minds

Ages 12–14

Level: Intermediate

50 minutes

Circle and small groups
· up to 30

Activity 04

Inside: activity at a glance · step-by-step session plan · facilitator notes · 3 student worksheets · assessment checklist

ACTIVITY 04 · AT A GLANCE

Can You Think Without Words?

Students consider invented cases: a baby who finds a hidden toy, a crow that solves a puzzle, a person who pictures a route home without saying it and a student who knows a feeling but cannot name it. They discuss whether each involves thinking. They create questions and enquire into whether we can think without words.

Learning outcomes

By the end of the session students can:

- analyse links between language and thought;
- use cases as evidence;
- reason about animal and baby minds;
- build a justified view.

KEY WORDS

thought · language · word · picture · animal · meaning

CURRICULUM LINKS

English: vocabulary. Science: animal behaviour. Modern languages: words that do not translate.

1**STIMULUS**

Share something to think about

2**THINK**

Quiet thinking time

3**QUESTION**

Create and choose a question

4**ENQUIRE**

Reason together

5**BUILD**

Agree, disagree, add

6**REFLECT**

Last words

Materials (per class)

- Thinking case cards
- Question and thinking-move cards
- Worksheets 1, 2 and 3

Before the session

- Read the stimulus and note possible concepts.
- Prepare question and thinking-move cards.
- Set out a circle so everyone can see each other.
- Print the worksheets.

SAFETY

Everyone may pass. Discuss ideas, not people, and use the story or invented examples rather than personal situations.

ACTIVITY 04 · SESSION PLAN

Step by step

Stay neutral: ask for reasons, examples and counter-examples rather than giving your own view.

Time	What happens	Say or ask
0–8 min Stimulus	Share the thinking cases.	<i>"What did you notice?"</i>
8–20 min Questions	Students create questions in pairs and vote on one.	<i>"Which question is most interesting to talk about?"</i>
20–44 min Enquiry	Enquire into the chosen question, building on each other's ideas.	<i>"Can you think without words?"</i>
44–50 min Last words	Each person says one last thought or passes.	<i>"Has your thinking changed?"</i>

CHALLENGE CARD (print or copy onto the board)

Argue whether thinking needs words.

ACTIVITY 04 · FACILITATOR NOTES

The philosophy in brief

Philosophers and psychologists debate how closely thought depends on language.

Studies of animals and babies suggest some kinds of thinking happen without words, while language may shape other kinds.

Common ideas to listen for

- “All thinking is in words.” Some is in pictures or actions.
- “Animals can’t think at all.” Many solve problems.
- “Words don’t affect thinking.” They may shape it.

Adapting the activity

Support

Discuss two cases.

Stretch

Find a word in another language with no simple English translation.

WORKSHEET 1

Our questions

Name: _____

Class: _____ Date: _____

Write questions the stimulus makes you wonder about.

Our questions

Question	Who asked	Votes

WORKSHEET 2

Thinking cases

Decide.

Thinking cases

Case	Thinking?	With words?

WORKSHEET 3

Last words

Before and after.

Does learning new words let us think new thoughts? Before the enquiry I thought... Now I think... because...

FOR THE TEACHER

Assessment checklist

Use during the session. One sheet covers up to eight students; copy as needed.

Student	Asks a philosophical question	Gives reasons and examples	Listens and builds on others

Suggested codes: W = working towards · E = expected · G = greater depth

ABOUT THIS ACTIVITY

Can You Think Without Words? is a sample activity from the EduTrend Contents P4C Language and Meaning programme (middle school, level: intermediate). Every activity in the programme follows the same format: a practical challenge, a clear session plan, facilitator notes and ready-to-print worksheets, so that teachers, club leaders and parents can run it without extra preparation.

Full 15-, 20- and 32-week programmes are available from EduStore at edutrend.org.

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