

Day 1: Wittgenstein and Language Game

In the early days of linguistics, scientists used the ideas of other disciplines such as philosophy and mathematics. It's natural to say that when a new field is created, it will be interesting to notice the establishing process of a new field of science.

Ludwig Josef Johann Wittgenstein (Germany: 1889–1951) A philosopher from Vienna, Austria. He had a strong influence on linguistic philosophy and analytic philosophy. He studied philosophy under Bertrand Russell (1872–1970) at Cambridge University. He published “Theory of Logical Philosophy”^{*1} in Germany, 1921. He incorporated the concept of logic into philosophy for the first time.



Ludwig
Wittgenstein
1889–1951
CC4.0

1 Language game

Language game (Sprachspiel in German; ca. 1934) is a linguistic notion introduced by Wittgenstein.

- Q1: What kind game is a language game mentioned by Philosopher Wittgenstein? Discuss what it is.
- Q2: What is the difference between “words when explaining theory and mathematical formulas” in science classes and “words when talking” in everyday life? Give an example and discuss the difference between the two.
- Q3: Discuss which of the two you think is the nature of the language.

2 Family resemblance

Family resemblance is a concept in linguistic philosophy and cognitive linguistics, and is an idea that regards the meanings of words as an aggregate connected by partial commonality.

Family resemblance

Mr. A knows what a “desk” is. You don’t know what a “desk” is. So, Mr. A brings various desks one after another and shows them to you. This is also a “desk.” This is also a “desk.” Every desk is a little different. The shape is different. The number of legs is different. The size is different. The color is different. The material is different... But as a whole, they are somewhat similar to each other. As you look at them one by one, you will soon understand what a “desk” is. Then you shout, “I understand!” Once you know, you don’t need to ask him to bring the desk any more. Why did you understand? You don’t know why you understand. Anyway, you figured it out. So what is a desk? You are not always able to explain it, and you are not always able to define it.

- Q4: “What is a desk? you are not always able to explain it” “You figured it out, but you are not always able to explain what it is”— what does it mean?
- Q5: Showing various desks, Wittgenstein said that they were “family resemblance” because they were similar. Give an example other than a “desk.”
- Q6: When we replace “desk” with “meaning,” “rule,” “society,” “human,” “something,” what does the above story mean?
- Q7: Is there any problem with calling what is known as a “desk” an “ectsu”? If there is a problem, tell us what kind of problem it is. If there is no problem, think about what it means to say that language is arbitrary. (“Arbitrary” means that it does not follow the rules, and that it is arbitrary)
- Q8: “Some features of language and reality cannot be expressed in senseful language but only “shown” by the form of certain expressions.” What does Wittgenstein want to say the above?

^{*1} Original title: Logisch-philosophische Abhandlung / Tractatus Logico — Philosophicus

3 Mason and his assistant

Read the following sentences and discuss the following questions:

Mason and his assistant

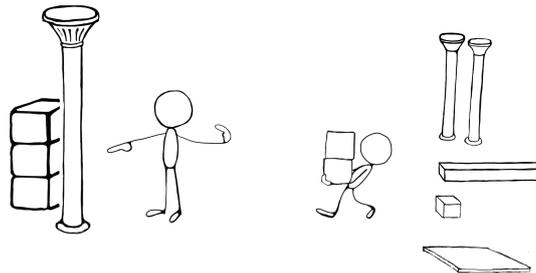
Two people are doing something. I pass there.

What are they doing? I've been watching for a while, but I have no idea what they are doing.

When one person shouts something, the other person hurries and brings something.

When he shouts again, the other person brings something again. The longer I watched, the more I began to understand what they were doing. It turns out that there are four kinds of stones: "blocks," "columns," "tiles," and "beams." Two of them are a stonemason and his assistant, and when the stonemason yells out the name of a stone (or any of the four), the assistant takes it. I learn that they are building something that way, and so on.

Modified by Hilofumi Yamamoto based on Wittgenstein (1953: p.5, seg.7)



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- Q9: What state was their game already in when "I pass by"?
- Q10: What does the game look like when you rephrase "there I pass by" to "there I am born"?
- Q11: What does the game look like if you think of "two people, four words, game" as "N people, n words, game"?
- Q12: What does the game look like if you think of "N people, n words, game" as "N people, n messages, game"?
- Q13: What does Wittgenstein's opinion "Language must be public" mean?

4 Wittgenstein and Linguistics

- Q14: Wittgenstein is a philosopher. Think about the relationship between Wittgenstein and linguistics in your own way.

5 Further reference

- [Ludwig Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations](#): pdf booklet (Wittgenstein 1953)
- Wittgenstein and Categorization Research in Cognitive Psychology (Rosch 1987)

References

- Rosch, Elenor (1987) "Wittgenstein and Categorization Research in Cognitive Psychology", in Dixon R.A. Chapman M. ed. *Meaning and the Growth of Understanding: Wittgenstein's Significance for Developmental Psychology*, Berlin, Heidelberg: Springer, Chap. 9, pp. 151–166.
- Wittgenstein, Ludwig (1953) *Philosophical investigations*, Oxford: Blackwell.