

PHIL/PSYCH 256
INTRODUCTION TO
COGNITIVE SCIENCE
Week 5: Analogy

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Analogy

Analogy: use mental representation of one example (source, base) to solve another one (target)

Great scientific analogies:

Sound/wave

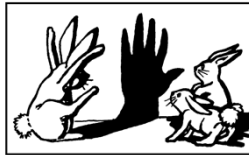
Lightning/electricity

Natural selection/artificial selection

Mind/computer

Bad analogies: Dell.

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Why Use Analogies?

- Often there are no established rules and concepts available.
- Easier to adapt cases.
- Human mind is good at matching and adapting.

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Analogy: Representation

- Source and target representation:
 - Verbal
 - Pictorial
 - Sensory
 - Emotional
- Not a full theory of mental representation: still need concepts, rules, images, etc.

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Analogy: Procedures

1. Pursue target
2. Find source that matches target
 1. Given
 2. Retrieve from memory
 3. Construct
3. Map source to target: correspondences
4. Adapt source to generate solution
5. Learn by forming schema

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Analogy: Constraints

1. Purpose: what is the use?
2. Similarity of elements: meaning, visual similarity
3. Structure: approximation to isomorphism: preserve relational structure

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Constraints on Analogy

<i>Stage</i>	<i>Main constraint</i>
Retrieval	Similarity
Mapping	Structure
Adaptation and transfer	Purpose

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Discussion Question

- When have you found analogies to be useful or harmful? What constraints were operating?



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Computational Power

- Analogical problem solving useful for decisions, explanations, and other problems.
- Learning: adapt old solutions.
- Language: metaphor, e.g. poetry.

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Key Points

- Analogies are a powerful way of creatively solving problems when established rules and concepts are not available.
- Using analogies requires attention to the constraints of purpose, structure, and similarity.

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A behavior is innate?

1. Culturally universal.
2. Specific brain area(s).
3. May have precursors in lower animals.
4. Adaptive during evolutionary period.
5. Not a side effect of other behaviors.

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Limitations of Analogy

- Lack of previous experience
- Hard to find relevant cases
- Adaptation may be complex
- Analogies may be misleading
 - Worst analogy ever made

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Using Analogies Well

- Use familiar sources
- Make the mappings clear
- Use deep systematic analogies
- Describe the mismatches
- Use multiple analogies
- Perform analogy therapy to correct bad analogies

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Discussion Question

- Can my advice for using analogies well improve your use of analogies?



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Key Points in Gentner

- Similarity is like analogy.
- Systematicity: match connected systems of relations.
- Focus on alignable differences.
- Make inferences and extend mappings.
- Importance of similarity for categorization.

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Key Point Overall

- Analogies can be powerful for solving problems and providing explanations, but they can be misused.

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