

2 Introduction to ways of knowing

Synonyms

processed dealt with

constructed built

retained kept

General vocabulary

balanced giving equal attention to all sides or opinions

tools useful pieces of equipment, methods or skills

complex consisting of many different parts and often difficult to understand

gestures movements of a body part (especially hands or head) to show meaning or feeling

The eight ways of knowing

The ways of knowing assume knowledge is dynamic and is influenced by:

- how knowledge is received
- how knowledge is mentally **processed**
- how knowledge is emotionally processed
- how knowledge is **constructed**
- how knowledge is communicated
- how knowledge is shared
- how knowledge is **retained**, Figure 2.1.

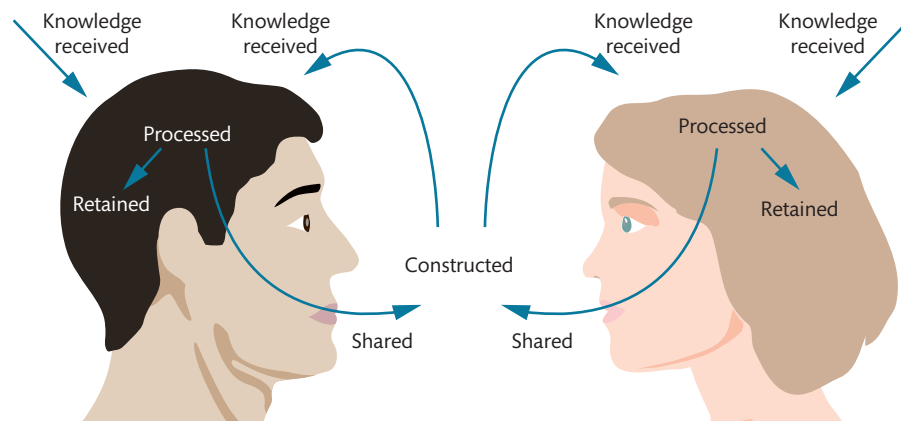


Figure 2.1 Knowledge is received, processed, constructed, communicated, shared and retained.

The ways of knowing also assume the way an individual or group of individuals knows is as important as *what* they know.

Students must explore a range of ways of knowing. The IB has identified eight ways of knowing. It is suggested that studying **four** of these eight in depth would be appropriate. The ways of knowing selected for detailed study should be carefully selected to ensure a coherent and **balanced** approach.

There are two central purposes to the ways of knowing in TOK. On the one hand they are the **tools** that answer the question 'how do we know?' and on the other hand they help us answer the question 'how do I know?', Figure 2.2.

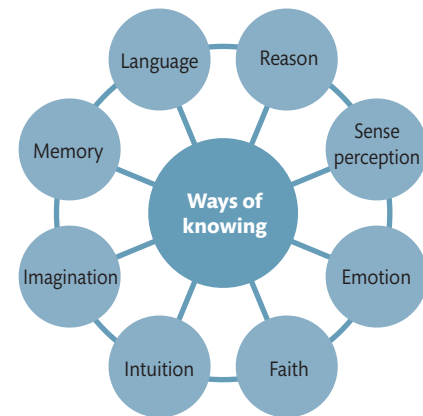


Figure 2.2 Eight ways of knowing.

Language

Language can refer to the mental faculty which allows people to learn and use **complex** communication systems, or it can refer to those systems themselves. The systems are based on agreed rules and signs such as letters, symbols, sounds, **gestures**, images, and so on.

Sense perception

Sense **perception** is the process by which we can gain knowledge about the outside world. Traditionally, there were believed to be five senses: sight, touch, smell, taste and hearing. However, many now argue that there are others such as a sense of heat, sense of pain, sense of movement, sense of **balance** and the senses of hunger and thirst, or a sense of where our body parts are.

Emotion

Emotions are strong feelings humans experience. They are the products of natural processes and have a **physiological element**, a **cognitive** element, and a behavioural element. The IB seems to regard *feelings, moods, emotions*, and *emotion* as the same. The **plural** and the **singular** are used **interchangeably**.

Reason

Humans do not form judgements based **solely** on facts. We 'go beyond' the facts to form our judgements. This is because we have the *ability* to think beyond our immediate experiences. Judgements are formed through thinking or arguing in a logical manner. We **reason** in many ways: using comparison, **rational** thinking, **deductive** and **inductive** reasoning. When we reason, we seek causes, explanations and justifications.

Imagination

Imagination is the ability to create mental ideas without the input of sense perception. Imagination is connected with images, both real and imaginative. It is about imagining things that do not exist or that we have not seen.

Faith

The term 'faith' is most frequently used to refer specifically to religious faith, but can also be used in a **secular** sense as a **synonym** for trust. Although most associated with belief in a God or gods, faith can be religious without being **theistic**. Alternatively, it can be seen as a commitment to a particular interpretation of experience and reality.

Intuition

Intuition is knowing something without knowing why. Intuition just happens and does not require evidence or justification. Intuition includes beliefs that have no apparent source. It is associated with **instinct** and **innate** knowledge.

Memory

Memory is the processing, storage, and **retrieval** of information. Some people (e.g. Christopher Hitchens) have suggested a further **function** of memory is to *forget*. If we could not forget, we would be **overburdened** with events and unable to function.

“Articulation sentence:

The ways of knowing assume knowledge is dynamic and active. Knowledge can be seen as **malleable** and **relative**. Ways of knowing are the tools we can use to answer the question 'How do we know?' and they can also help us answer the question 'How do I know?'

Subject vocabulary

physiological relating to the way the body works and affects behaviour

cognitive concerning mental processes such as memory, perception and attention

reason think beyond our immediate experiences

rational thoughts, decisions, etc. based on reason rather than emotion

deductive using available knowledge and information to understand or form an opinion about something

inductive using known facts to produce general principles

theistic relating to belief in the existence of a god or gods

innate inborn

malleable changeable and open to influence

relative specific to an individual, time or place; not fixed and can change

Synonyms

element..... factor

plural..... many

singular..... one

solely..... only

secular..... non-religious

retrieval..... recall

function..... purpose

General vocabulary

perception the process by which humans gain knowledge about the outside world using the senses

balance a state in which weight is evenly spread so a person or thing does not fall

interchangeably in the same way to mean the same thing

synonym an alternative word that has the same meaning

instinct a natural tendency to behave in a particular way or a natural ability to know something, which is not learned

overburdened having more of something than can be dealt with