



Mastering the Leadership, Organizational & Emotional Challenges of a Career in Teaching and/or Research:

Day 3, Language, Speech Acts & Stories

Dave Goldberg & Viola Schiaffonati

ThreeJoy Associates, Inc. & Politecnico Milano

deg@threejoy.com & schiaffo@elet.polimi.it

Overnight Reflection

- Coaching talk: “Sitting in the question.”
- What questions are you sitting in following yesterday’s session.

Centering Exercise

- First, sit down, preferably in a chair which supports your back upright.
- Put your feet flat on the floor directly below your knees.
- Rock from side to side to locate your 'sitting bones' beneath your buttocks.
- Close your eyes.
- Imagine a thread coming from the top of your head gently lifting up your spine.
- Drop your shoulders and allow your head to fall forward slightly.
- Breathe out, completely emptying your lungs.
- Breathe in from your abdomen, counting slowly until your lungs are filled - 3 or 4 should do it - hold it for a couple of seconds then,
- Exhale slowly, counting out to the same number.
- Breathe in and out twice more.
- If thoughts come into your head, just let them float on by.

Toolkit, Part 2: Language in the University

What is language?

Conventional vs. New View

Conventional

- We are thinking beings.
- Language separate tool we use from time to time.
- Language is descriptive and large passive.
- Language is merely an extension of thought.

New View

- We are linguistic beings.
- We are *in* language all the time.
- Language is generative & creative (not merely passive & descriptive).
- Language is action. To speak is to act.

Toolkit, Part 2: Distinctions

What is a distinction?

Distinctions

- Making a distinction is the use of a term or terms to discriminate between things as different.
- A conceptual separation or demarcation.
- Intuitively, the way we dimensionalize stories.
- Neil Stroul: “Distinctions are the horse your stories ride in on.”
- Consider listening exercises earlier.



Distinctions in Earlier Client Language

- **Client:** The new house **is a mess**. I've got boxes everywhere. I can hardly get from the front door to the bathroom—and I've got **the biggest proposal of my career** to finish by Friday.
- **COACH:** I went through the same thing last year. The key is to make sure you've got your long-term vision in sight.
- **Client:** That's **sort of the dilemma**, though. Because I traveled so much last month, my wife's **past the point of patience**. I'm really not **pulling my weight** at home.
- **COACH:** That'll work out. The mess is temporary. Don't let it distract you from the real issue—maintaining momentum.
- **Client:** This feels like **more than a little distraction**.
- **COACH:** I'm sure you can explain why this is so important. In the meantime, let's get back to your proposal.
- **Client:** Okay. If you're sure . . .

Distinctions

Is a mess

The biggest proposal of my career

Sort of the dilemma

Past the point of patience

Pulling my weight

More than a little distraction

Distinction Listening Exercise

Form listener-storyteller pair.

Storyteller: *Tell your partner about a recent challenge that you have faced, or are facing, in your work (teaching, research, or otherwise). Choose something a bit meaty: ideally something that you have not totally figured out yet. Also give your story a title.*

Listener: *Listen at level-two, using powerful questions, articulation, clarification. On the provided sheet, make a list of distinctions the storyteller makes in her/his story. If you are unsure what is meant by term, ask “What do you mean by <term>?”*

Reverse roles.

Debrief

Toolkit, Part 2: Assessments and Assertions

Speech Act Theory: How Language Works

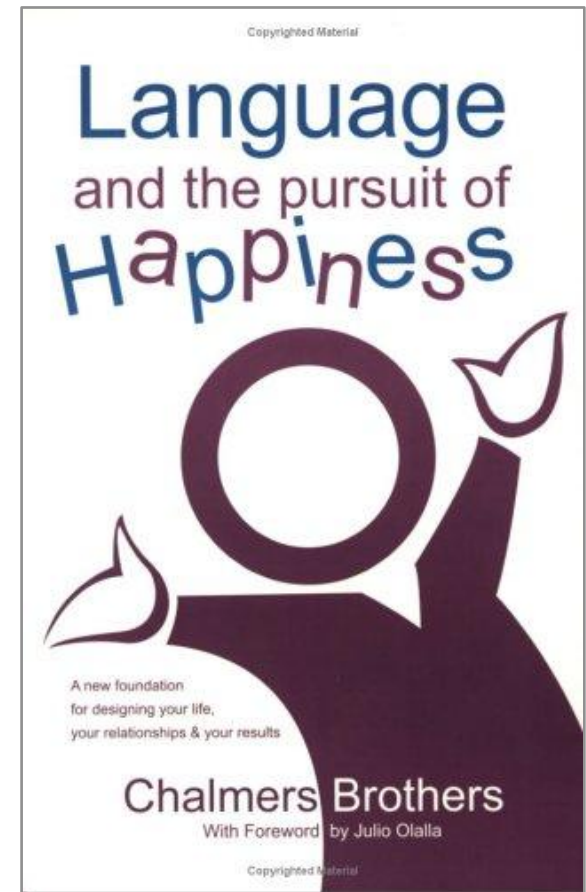
- Speech acts: 5 different types.
- Can describe, promise, command, etc.
- Austin defined “illocutionary act:”
 - Speaker says something.
 - Means something by it.
 - Tries to communicate what he means to hearer.
- Distinction between propositional content and force or type of the speech act.
- Examples:
 - Please leave the room.
 - Will you leave the room?
 - You will leave the room.



J. L. Austin (1911-1960)

Speech Acts in Practice

- 5 “illocutionary” acts:
 - Assertions: commit to truth
 - Assessments: give opinion
 - Requests: ask or direct to do
 - Commitments: commit to do
 - Declarations: cause to exist
- Consider confusion of assertions and assessments.
- Agreements & coordinating action.
- An aside on complaints.
- What about this slide?



Assertions versus Assessments

- *Assertions* committed to the truth.
- *Assessments* committed to expressing an opinion.
- Contrast
 - It's 60 degrees C outside (assertion).
 - It's very hot (assessment).
 - If in doubt, it's probably an assessment.

Assertion/Assessment Exercise

Return to your listener-storyteller pair.

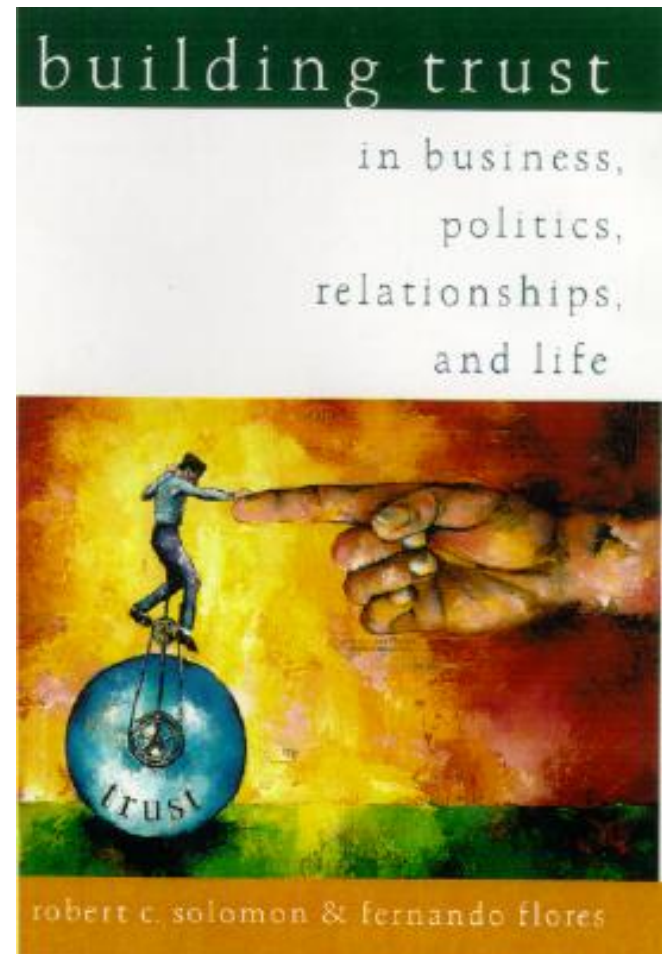
Using the worksheet, review the distinctions you identified while listening to your partner. Identify which are assessments or assertions.

Discuss your interpretations. Do you both agree?

Toolkit, Part 2: Requests and Complaints

Types of Trust

- Lencioni says willingness to be vulnerable & trust team members is opening move of great teamwork.
- 2 types of trust:
 - Relationship trust
 - Task trust (or trustworthiness)
- Can we understand coordination of action and influence on trust.



Coordinating Action

BASIC ACTION WORKFLOW



How we make requests

Fill in the provided request worksheet.

Try, as much as possible, to capture your language.

Requests in Action

Using your sheet as a script, act out your requests with 2-3 other people at your table.

What did you notice about the way your/your colleagues' speech changed depending on the person to whom the request is made?

What else did you notice about the nature of request making?

Anatomy of a Proper Request

- 6 elements for proper request:
 - Engaged speaker
 - Engaged listener
 - Future action
 - Time of completion
 - Conditions of satisfaction
 - Shared context
- Works for proper promise (commitment) as well.
- Dropped balls often result of unrecognized, weak, or incomplete requests and commitments.
- Shared context especially problematic across disciplines.

Proper Signaling of Requests

- Signal a proper request with distinct and clear language:
 - I request <x>.
 - I please request <x>.
 - May I please request that <x>?
- As opposed to
 - X isn't done yet.
 - Is X done yet (hint, hint)?
 - Could you do <X>?
 - Would you do <X>?
 - Could I pretty please with sugar on top ask your highness to do <X>?

Repair earlier requests, content & signal.

Aside on Complaints

- Consider recent complaint against a person (not a system or bureaucracy).
- Write down or get clearly in mind.

Structure of (Unreasonable) Complaints

- Complaints often occur in situations
 - where an implicit agreement is thought to exist
 - when no explicit request was ever made.
- Solution:
 - Stop complaining and
 - Make better requests!!!!

Stand Up & Request

- “I request ...”
- Eyeball to eyeball.
- The person requested answers: “yes,” “no,” counteroffer, or commit to commit at some future time.
- Let’s do it. Use missing request, or a request you have made recently, or need to make in the future.
- Reverse roles

**What is relationship between trust,
requests, commitments & action?**

Toolkit, Part 2: Reframing Stories

Stories that Serve, Stories that Don't

- All stories a combination of assertions and assessments.
- Subject to error correction, assertions don't change.
- Assessment subject to reframing, reevaluation, deletion, addition.
- What stories do we tell ourselves that serve us?
- What stories do we tell ourselves that don't?

Overcoming Adversity: Jun Hua's Story

Listen to Jun Hua's story with special ear:

Listen for key distinctions.

Listen for assertions & assessments.

Listen for changes in story.

Make notes on JH worksheet.



Small group discussion about JH story

What were the key assertions (facts/data) in the story?

What were the key assessments (judgments/opinions/feelings) in the story?

In what ways did JH reframe his story?

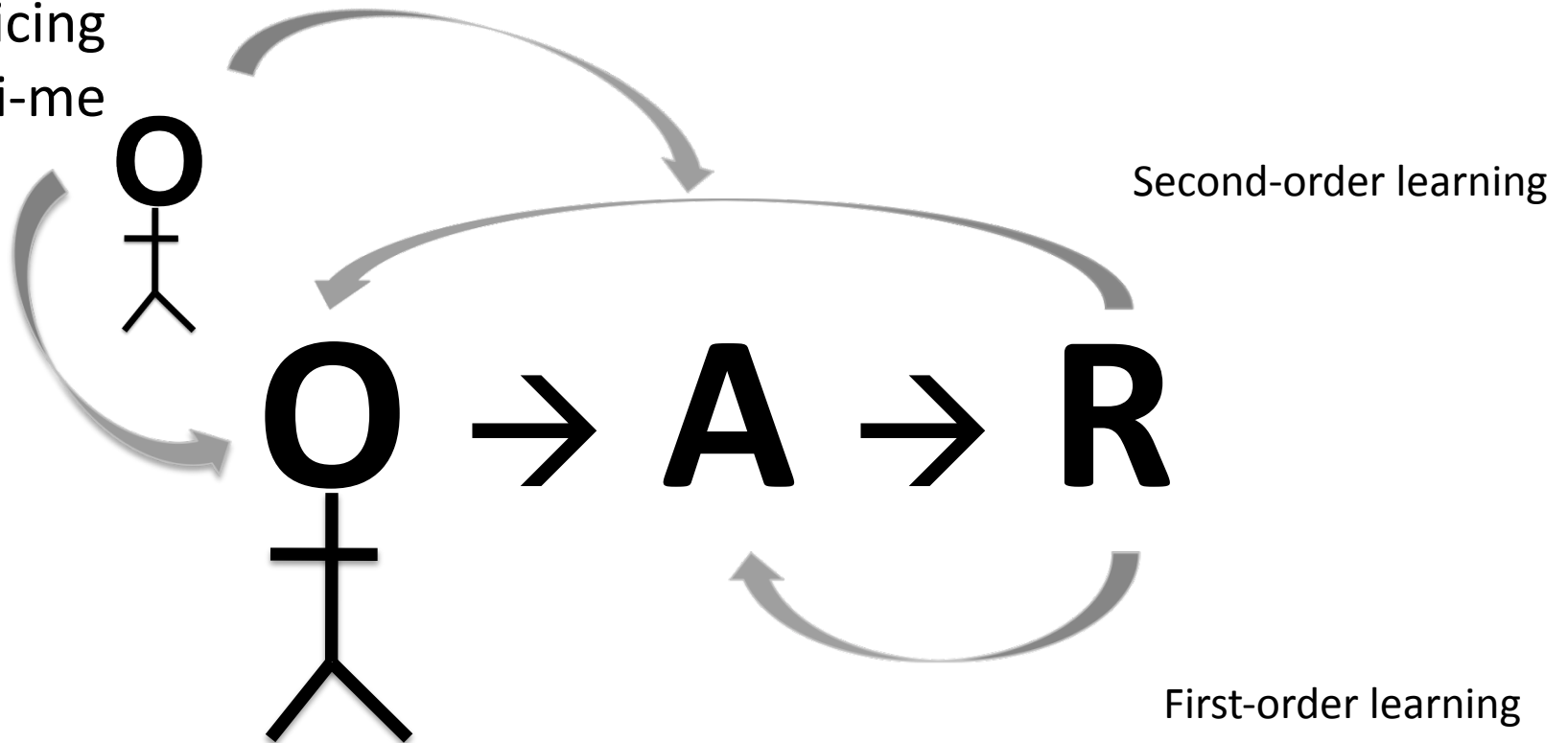
In what ways did JH reframing(s) serve him (or not)?

What powerful question(s) would you ask to help him progress?

Debrief

O-A-R Model

Noticing
mini-me



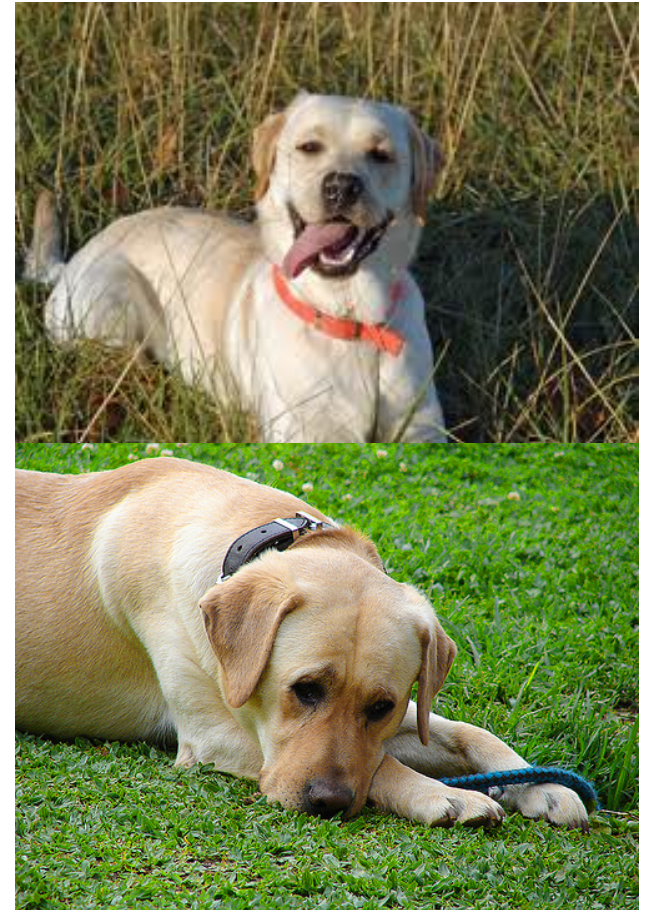
Observer

Action

Results

Learned Helplessness

- Martin Seligman's experiments with dogs in the 60s.
- Gave shocks to dogs.
 - One group could push lever and escape.
 - Other group lever had no effect
- 2nd group learned to be helpless.
- In 2nd phase of experiments dogs could escape shocks by moving, but chose inaction.
- 1/3 of dogs escaped shocks.



Humans Different from Dogs: Humans Speak

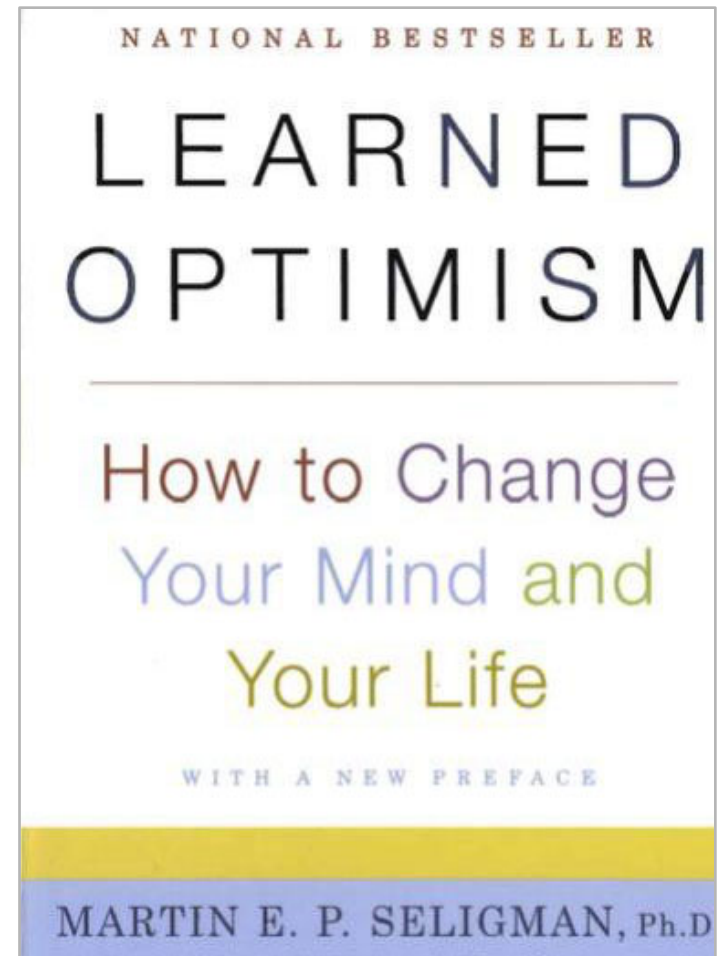
- Humans also show learned helplessness, but we can ask them why they don't help themselves.
- Helpless humans tend to have pessimistic *explanatory style*.
- They speak of negative events as
 - *Personal* (“it’s my fault”)
 - *Pervasive* (“I can’t do anything correctly”)
 - *Persistent* (“it will never change”)
- Those not helpless have more optimistic explanatory style.
- Key to not being helpless is *attributional reformulation*, a fancy phrase for changing your assessments.



The key to change is reframing your assessments from negative to positive.

Negative-Positive Assessment Reframing (NPAR)

- Facts are facts. You can't change assertions (except to correct the facts).
- Assessments are subject to revision.
- **Assessments are data poor.** Most assessments based on small sample size.
- You can change your assessments to serve you better.



Steps

1. Separate assertions and assessments.
2. Identify negative assessments that are personal, pervasive, and persistent.
3. Rewrite assessments to positive ones that are plausibly consistent with the data.

Bringing the toolkit to bear: Journaling for change

Fill in the provided journaling worksheet.

This is a private exercise; you will not be asked to share your thoughts.

Reflections / Closing



Mastering the Leadership, Organizational & Emotional Challenges of a Career in Teaching and/or Research:

Day 3, Language, Speech Acts & Stories

Dave Goldberg & Viola Schiaffonati

ThreeJoy Associates, Inc. & Politecnico Milano

deg@threejoy.com & schiaffo@elet.polimi.it