

## Harnessing the Inexplicable-The Power of Language

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### Abstract

Words have power. This has been a cliché, and like any other proverbial truism, this also has been one of the courses of our human lives at the surface level. However, a deeper exploration of this maxim's implication can pave the way for designing our thinking, our future even the destiny we often think of as inexplicable. This paper focuses on the immense power that our language has on breaking cognitive biases, questioning ourselves, and training our minds for a better future and destiny. This paper focuses on language and the power of self-conversation in breaking stereotypical thinking, diluting biases that govern us, eliminating human error, and taming our wandering minds to be more productive and predictable. The focus areas would be the power of language through *Self Interrogations, Countering, Reiteration, Self-Validation, Body Language, and Complete Contextual scanning*. This paper would term it **-Linguistic Rewiring**. These are techniques formulated through this paper to explore the immense power that our language has in taming and training our minds for a better state of living and better prediction of the future and destiny-*Harnessing the Inexplicable*.

### 1. Introduction

‘A chicken has four legs’ sounds truer than ‘A chicken has three legs,’ same as ‘How many animals did Moses take to the ark?’ says more believable than ‘How many animals did Modiji take to the ark?’. If language can leave this immediate tricky imprint on human minds, its sufficiency in training the human senses could be well imagined as proficient. Not only our speech but our thinking is also powered by language. Language has immense power in creating and shaping our destiny. Language has tremendous power in taming and training the mind minimizing human error due to cognitive biases. Before understanding language's incredible power in taming the human mind, let us examine the nature of Cognitive Bias and its Language connection.

### 2. Linguistic Connection to Cognitive Bias

‘Language is Power. Language can be used to change reality.’-Adrienne Rich.

What is fundamental and more potent if language creates thinking that leads to actions? It is nothing but the majestic power that Language possesses in creating thinking. We develop cognitive bias as and when we start thinking and using language. These fallacies predominantly color human beings. Knowingly or unknowingly, all our actions and perceptions are based on these biases. These cognitive biases are structured and formulated using language. If language frames the harm done by cognitive biases, the language can act as an effective antidote to break these harmful biases or ‘fallacy statements.’ It is amusing to observe or feel that we don’t have to create false statements in our mind deliberately; it is spontaneous and somewhat ‘System 1 thinking’, as rightly pointed out by Daniel Kahneman in his book ‘Thinking Fast and Slow.’ They flow free and get formulated in a jiffy based on

the priming effect that we go through. Deliberately opposing these fallacy statements and creating counter-fallacy messages is the key. If language is primarily responsible for effectively formulating the fallacy statements, language itself could be a powerful tool in deliberately debunking these fallacy statements and reframing these dysfunctional belief statements.

We spontaneously formulate numerous fallacy statements every minute, every day. Since it is easy for the brain to develop these statements, it is easier not to notice them. However, whether seen or unnoticed, these statements ultimately mold our perceptions and actions. Hence it becomes instrumental to notice these statements consciously to avoid any perspective coloring which may arise from these.

For instance :

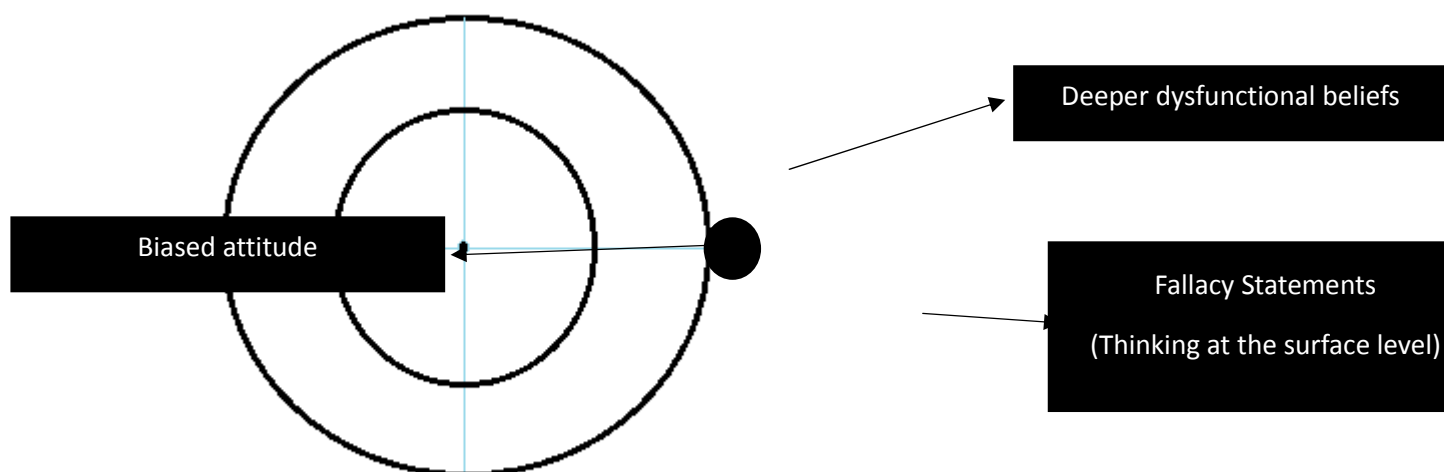
1. *Why should I bother?*
2. *I won't be able to do this*
3. *She seems so tricky.*
4. *I will need help to get along with that group.*
5. *What would others think of me?*

These are some of the fallacy statements that we spontaneously create every day. Unfortunately, in a usual and casual scenario, we let these thoughts sink in mostly unnoticed, strengthening our already formed perspectives and leading towards biased attitudes and consequent action. A thorough analysis of these statements would help us reveal the more profound dysfunctional beliefs.

<b>Fallacy Statement (Thinking Language at the surface level)</b>	<b>Deeper dysfunctional belief (Thinking Language at the deeper level)</b>	<b>Biased Attitude</b>
<i>Why should I bother?</i>	It is unnecessary to extend help. It might lead to a waste of time and energy.	Non Caring
<i>I won't be able to do this</i>	It requires stretching beyond my comfort zone, and I won't be able to	Diffidence
<i>She seems so tricky.</i>	I have already framed a judgment about her.	Judgemental
<i>I will need help to get along with that group</i>	I have certain preconceived notions about this group.	Inferiority Complex
<i>What would others think of me?</i>	I am afraid that I will be judged.	People Pleasing

Fig 2.a

As depicted in Fig 2.a, the Fallacy Statements are surface-level thinking language and reflect a person's more profound dysfunctional beliefs, revealing the type of biased attitude one possesses. These language systems function inside out and project an individual's attitude and personality.



Hence, cognitive biases are linguistic and require linguistic rewiring for effective remediation. The proceeding session would discuss the different types of linguistic rewiring and evaluate their contextual relevance in reframing dysfunctional beliefs.

### 3. Linguistic Rewiring

‘This seems difficult,’ the system one thinking says. The mind deliberately opposes and rephrases the language ‘ I have done similar challenges before too. I will be able to do it.I will try.’ Slowly fighting our spontaneous flow of thoughts is a conscious process, as the name suggests-Deliberate. It calls for an awareness of what we think, how we feel, and why we think that way. Hence ‘Deliberate Opposition’ requires self-awareness and being mindful of our thinking process. Though challenging at the surface level, this comes with easy practice. It is similar to the slight body aches that one experiences while at exercise on the first day, and as the day goes on, we become more proficient and skilled at the practice moves with the added benefit of making our body more flexible. The deliberate opposition of the thoughts is similar to these exercises, which might look like a task initially but become part of our thinking process once practiced and acquired. This section of the paper focuses on some effective deliberate opposition practices which would aid in reframing dysfunctional beliefs through *Linguistic Rewiring*.

#### A. Self Interrogations

The Socratic way is asking the right questions to discover the existing truth. While philosophy believes in that, Sciences believe in falsification. Falsification is nothing but new findings and studies replacing the existing ones wholly or sometimes partially. Falsification again happens due to continuous questioning, and new knowledge or results exist when answers no longer fit the questions. This has happened with ‘flat-earthers’ and ‘geocentricity.’ Suppose interrogations have so much power in changing the existing truth to a new reality; what could be the power of questions within us in changing our dysfunctional beliefs and un progressive fallacy statement?

Self-interrogations question our existing beliefs formed out of biases and personal experiences. We are the sole creators of our thoughts. We tell stories to ourselves

every minute, firming these beliefs and letting them govern our life. Self-interrogation is the art of questioning our ‘self ‘and ‘beliefs’ to dive deep into our ideas for a reality check and explore the truth about them. For instance, let’s examine how self-interrogation works.

<b>Dysfunctional belief</b>	<b>Linguistic Rewiring 1- Self Interrogation</b>	<b>Reframing of dysfunctional beliefs to make them functional</b>
Even if I do it, I might fail.It is better to leave it.	What if I succeed?	I will attempt it first. Success and failure come after that.
	How do I know if it is successful or not without trying?	
	Won't I get to learn something even if I fail?	

Fig 3a

Self-interrogation prevents us from falling in love with our firm belief system and helps us segregate them into ‘functional’ and ‘dysfunctional’ beliefs. It also helps them ‘reframe’ the dysfunctional thoughts for our benefit. And all these are done by carefully and deliberately framed words-the power of language. Self Interrogation emerges as one of the most crucial language rewiring processes.

**B. Countering**

‘I can’t’ in one moment, ‘Yes, I can’ in a jiffy. That’s how countering works simply. Our mind is constantly processing thoughts, negative and positive, every second. Many pass by without our notice, and many we notice. We are conscious of the opinions spoken by others, and if we disagree with them, we counterclaim or oppose them to put forth our ideas. Rarely do we listen to our views that rise from within. A listening ear to our thoughts and opinions is the first step towards effective countering. As mentioned earlier, countering would take a while to keep as a practice, but once acquired, we can effectively get into this habit of constantly varying our dysfunctional beliefs. For that, it is essential to understand the concept of ‘self-efficacy.’ Self Efficacy arises from a person’s belief that an action can be achieved, however challenging it might be. The proponent of Self Efficacy, Prof Albert Bandura, speaks thus about self-efficacy as *"the belief in one’s capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations."*

Self-Efficacy is a profound self-development concept, and it is nothing but a constant language rewiring, specifically -countering. The continuous reframe from ‘I can’t do it’ to ‘I will do it’ is shown in the figure below.



Fig 3b

### C. Reiteration

Our mind has this incredible power to believe what is repeatedly told us. The art of positive parenting focuses on how parents must be mindful about reiterating or repeating the child's capabilities rather than concentrating on what they are incapable of. These reiterated statements significantly impact how a child is shaped or molded to be competent. This is an external scenario. This is possible in a conversation with ourselves too. Repeatedly telling oneself, 'I am capable' and 'I have done more challenging tasks than this before' would reiterate the possibilities in life and capabilities in facing those challenges. The biggest challenge in anyone's life, for that matter, is nothing external but the thought that 'It wouldn't be possible.' Hence we are what we are because of what we constantly tell us. Reiteration is the deliberate repetition of encouraging oneself for challenges and challenging goals. Starting a day with positive affirmation is an excellent way to reiterate.

'Today is my day. I am ready to embrace the challenges that come my way.'

'I am a powerful being. I am capable of bigger things in life.'

'I am set to complete this.'

The above positive affirmations are carefully framed words that would help us get into the habit of reiteration. We have immense power to listen to the stories our mind tells us. The main idea is to make those stories more desirable.

### D. Self Validation

'Well Done' and 'Good Job' always light up our spirits. Irrespective of age, humans like to hear praise and validation, which would help us move with more energy. However, the motivation that comes from outside can be temporary and short-lived. It could be untimely and unsystematic. The external validation mechanism is not at our disposal, and we have less power to bring it to our advantage. Coining a self-validation system that would help us derive inner strength is a methodical approach to helping us achieve greater control and motivation.

When we have a mechanism internally to validate our actions and consequences, our dependence on external validation becomes minimal. Self Validation brings in:

- Constant reflection on our actions and thoughts
- Increased self-awareness
- Improved ability to predict the pattern of behavior

Self-validation is a deliberate attempt to appreciate when we catch ourselves right using motivating language. There are several moments in our life to praise or lift ourselves through self-validation. Instances like:

1. At a shopping mall- 'This dress would look good on me.'
2. After a task- 'I have done this pretty well.'
3. After tackling a challenging situation- 'I had the courage. Get going'
4. After a failed task- 'I will try it again; this is not the end.'

Self-validation enables the effective use of language in lifting our spirits, leading us towards high self-awareness of the direction in which our mind wanders when encountering moments of pleasure and pain.

### **E. Body Language**

Research proves that 80% of our communication is non-verbal, and 20% use words or language. This 80% communicates more effectively, setting the context for communication. Body Language plays a vital role in non-verbal communication. Like being aware of what crosses our mind, we could also be mindful of our body language -especially our posture and facial expression. Our body language is often a determiner of our receptiveness or non-receptiveness. Scrunching and hunching are often perceived as escapism and a lack of transparency with ideas. When we stand straight with our shoulders back, we signal to our brain that we are ready to take on challenges with boldness and courage.' Walk tall and gaze forthrightly ahead.'

"Simply moving your facial muscles to mimic a smile can trick your brain into a more positive state, according to a recent study published in *Experimental Psychology*" (*Very Well Mind*)

If the above-given statement is accurate, we have the incredible power of consciously alerting and amending our body language to make our thoughts and actions more positive. In his book '12 Rules of Life', Jordan Peterson says that 'standing straight with our back straight' gives us the courage to face challenges with developed confidence. This highlights the essence of body language in channelling our thoughts and providing clarity to our actions:

1. Carrying a smile
2. Keenness to listen
3. Keeping our eyes wide open

An alert body language is a conscious creation and can send positive signals to our brains. A deliberate attempt at alerted body language is an efficient language rewiring technique.

### **F. Complete Contextual Scanning**

'Change is inevitable. Bring change to make it easier for everyone -Karan Shaji. Several interpretations came in when the above quote was given for analysis in a social experiment. Some connected it to the famous Gandhian quote, 'Be the change you wish to see in the world,' and some spoke about 'Change being the only reality.' After a thorough discussion of almost 15-20 min, the group was redirected to research a bit on the person who said this quote. The name was strange for Google, and it spoke about how it could not find 'Karan Shaji' from the search, though some related



words popped up. When the group discussion leader revealed that ‘Karan Shaji’ is a bus conductor in Kerala, one of the southern states in India where private buses are widespread, the educators were perplexed at the over-analysis they did on the quote. This social experiment brings in the point of ‘over analysis’ and ‘over interpretation’ our mind can do. In layman’s terminology, ‘over thinking.’ When our mind is cluttered, it can lead to the reinforcement of dysfunctional beliefs. Hence the relevance of context comes as one of the most robust language rewiring mechanisms. A complete understanding of the context helps us eradicate the biases created through over analysis or over thinking For instance-

- ‘He didn’t bother to visit me even though he was in town today’ changes to ‘He was in town, but he already had prior commitments scheduled at specific times and could not visit. However, he did reach out to me.’
- ‘I have had no news about her in a while changes to ‘I wonder why she hasn't been in touch. I'll try to assume everything is okay and figure out why she is silent.’

Complete contextual scanning triggers our empathetic mind and helps us focus on the productive side of human life.

### Conclusion

Everything is language. Everything is about words. Language rewiring is a conscious strategy of rearranging these words to form more powerful and positive language to experience the state of living beyond biases. Debunking myths and reframing dysfunctional beliefs is the way forward for a healthy social existence and fulfillment. These strategies spring from self-realization and expands the wings of self-awareness along the journey. “*Watch your thoughts; they become your words; watch your words, they become your actions; watch your actions, they become your habits; watch your habits, they become your character; watch your character, it becomes your destiny.*”- Loa Tzu.

If thoughts can design our destiny, why not change the language of our thoughts to create a better and more positive one?

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