



RECIPE FOR 1 HUMAN: INGREDIENTS

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Background to session

This enquiry was written for a Yr5 class that had lead a previous enquiry into exploring the EQ: “What features would a robot have to have in order to be a real human?” They had expressed a desire to explore this further the following week. Engagement was a given and we could dive quickly into a TQ that is both conceptually and grammatically very open. Though ‘The Recipe Game’ should help with preparation for TQ1, it would be interesting to see how the enquiry fares when introduced without previous foundation.

THE RECIPE GAME

Starter Question: What is a recipe?

Listen out for children mentioning ‘a list of ingredients’ being part of a recipe, but don’t stop as soon as you hear it. Good to hear some different ways of thinking about recipes. After a brief discussion, inform the class that for this session you will all be thinking about the ingredients needed for different recipes (you could begin with this and skip the starter question). Then ask them to discuss the ingredients for each of the following (or anything suitably similar).

1. One Boiled Egg
2. Pancakes
3. Mobile Phone
4. A Good Story (this was specific to a certain project, could be left out)
5. A Fun Party

The idea is that they become more complicated and potentially more relative as you move down the list. This game is a good way of introducing and exploring necessary and sufficient conditions, ‘what is needed’ and ‘what is enough’. Each ingredient list can be left open and inconclusive.

STIMULUS

Imagine that we are all friends with a genius scientist who has been working on building a robot that is exactly the same as a human. After years and years, she has finally worked out how to build her robot. She knows how to make it look like a human, how to make it move like a human, and even how to build it a brain. The one thing she is not sure about is what ingredients she needs to put into her robot’s brain to make it the same as a human. So today we’re going to help her.

(A picture might help with this. I had a drawing at the top of a roll of parcel paper which was revealed as I spoke, see resource below)

TQ1: What ingredients does the scientist need to put into her robot’s brain to make it the same as a human?

Collect as many ideas as possible (write them down on the board or paper roll).

TESTING AND EXPLORATION QUESTIONS

Once you have a good list and/or the class are ready to stop sharing ingredients (you can always add more later), explore the suggestions. The possibilities of the enquiry become very open at this point. One could explore some suggestions in detail (e.g. “The robot would need some knowledge” - What is knowledge? What would a robot need to know to be human? Can humans know nothing?), test each idea (e.g. If someone didn’t have a personality, would they not be human?), or develop the enquiry with the nested and emergent questions below. To avoid influencing the philosophy, try to randomly pick suggested ingredients (ask two children for two different numbers between 5 and 20, subtract or add them, and then count down the list).

Nested and Emergent Questions

1. If our robot had all of these features/ingredients, would it be human?
2. Is it possible to make a robot the same as a human? (the stimulus seems to assume a theoretical ‘yes’ to this question and some children will probably want to challenge this)
3. Is there one thing that makes us human or lots of things?
4. Can you be human without a human body?
5. What is a human body?
6. Is there a difference between a human and a person?
7. Can there be non-human persons?

8. What ingredients do we need to make a person?
9. Could we tell the difference between a perfect robot human and a human?
10. Could the robot human decide what to do?
11. Could the robot human decide what/who to be?
12. Should scientists try to make robot humans?
13. What ingredients should a robot human have? (normative/descriptive distinction)
14. Should robot humans/persons have the same rights as humans/human persons?
15. What ingredients would a perfect human have?
16. Should we use science to try to make perfect humans?
17. Does a human/person have a function? If yes, what is it?
18. Is the/a brain the same as the/a mind?