

Language structure, perception and acquisition

Supported GRE teaching and original transfer practice

Identify the evidence

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Order the units of language from phoneme to sentence

Use the overview measurement lesson VI for research inference.

Concepts 1

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Language is hierarchical. Phonemes are the smallest sound units that distinguish meaning (/b/ versus /p/); morphemes are the smallest meaning-bearing units (un-happy-ness has three); syntax governs how words combine into phrases and sentences; semantics concerns meaning. A sentence can be grammatical yet meaningless — syntax and semantics are separable.

Speech perception is categorical: continuous acoustic variation is heard as discrete phonemes, so a sound between /b/ and /p/ is reported as one or the other. Listeners segment a continuous stream using transitional probabilities and knowledge, not audible gaps between words.

Concepts 2

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Reading links print to sound and meaning. Skilled readers use both a grapheme-to-sound route (sounding out) and a direct whole-word route for familiar words; dyslexia research separates phonological decoding deficits from surface patterns. Eye-movement studies show reading is a series of fixations and saccades, not smooth gliding.

Bilingualism research separates language proficiency from general intelligence: balanced bilinguals show executive-control practice effects, while subtractive schooling can harm both languages. Second-language learning declines with age of onset, especially for pronunciation and grammar, without a single sharp critical cut-off.

Reason through the worked case

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A child says walked correctly and then says goed. What does the second form suggest about learning, and what would be an overclaim?

Goed applies a productive past-tense pattern to an irregular verb, consistent with overregularization. The child is doing more than repeating every form exactly. This does not prove that input or reinforcement never matters or that one complete theory has been established. Examine patterns across forms and development.

Read the reviewed representation

Language is hierarchical: each level has its own units and rules



Original schematic for Language structure, perception and acquisition. Illustrative relationships and numbers are not research results.

Attempt an unfamiliar case

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Explain how a message can have correct syntax but be misunderstood because of context, using an original example.

Pause and write the explanation before continuing.

Check the transfer argument

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Can you open the window? has interrogative syntax but may function as a request. Someone answering only yes may understand literal ability but miss the pragmatic intention. Meaning depends on speaker, setting and conventions. Accept another example that clearly separates grammatical form from use without treating a language community as uniform.

Accept a different explanation when its evidence and limits are justified.

Limit the conclusion

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Counting morphemes by letters or syllables, or treating word boundaries in speech as physically present; segmentation is inferred by the listener.

Original classroom cases are not official questions or personal clinical advice.

Check yourself

Independent retrieval

A child produces a grammatical form never explicitly taught. What does this challenge, and what does it fail to settle?

Write your reasoning before comparing it with the methods and limits taught in this lesson.