

Introduction to Semantic Processing



Task 1: Discuss the following questions with your partners. You don't need to write unless the prompt specifically requests it. Also, feel free to reference your study guide when necessary.

Comprehension: Read the quote below and tell your partners why the author refers to comprehension as “structure building or construction integration”.

- **Quote:** *“Although in the vernacular the term listening comprehension is widely used to refer to all aspects of listening, the term comprehension is used in a more specific sense in this chapter. Comprehension can be broadly understood as structure building or construction integration (p. 49).”*

Schemata: Based on your understanding of the reading, what is a schema (plural schemata)? What is the role of schemata in listening comprehension?

Activation Space: The author says that understanding occurs when the listener is able to activate schemata that are consistent with the central concepts expressed in the speaker's discourse. Of course, no two people have identical schemata. However, due to the associative properties of schemata, a network of related concepts are activated any time a particular schema is retrieved. This collection of interrelated concepts forms what is known as an activation space that will allow two people to “arrive at mutual empathy and acceptable understanding, due to their having common cultural, educational, professional, or experiential backgrounds (p. 53).”

In the study guide you were asked to do a 30 second brainstorm for each of the concepts below and list as many related words, concepts, places, people, etc. that you associate with these terms. Copy/paste your lists in the columns below and compare to what degree these terms activated similar concepts in your memory.

Beach	Allergies	Trump
Manuel Antonio, Flamingo, beach ball, sand, waves, palms, sunglasses, sunscreen, towel, swimming suits, surfboard.	Lactose intolerance, Gluten, Nuts, Rash, pollen, dust, sneezing, coughing, runny nose, itchy skin, swollen lips, ER, IV.	Ex-president, Billionaire, Wig, money, fame, executive, The Apprentice, New Yorker.

<p>Sand, waves, boogie board, sandcastle, shells, surf, boat parasailing, sunrise, sunset, volleyball, running, playing soccer at the beach, dogs, tourists, fishing boats</p>	<p>Skin rash, sneezing, allergy shots, drugs, doctors, medical appointment, relief, cough, dust, pollen, cat fur</p>	<p>Former president, childish behavior, no-more-than-a-two-syllable-word speaker, orange, capitalist, double standards, wall between Mexico and the US, towers, xenophobic, make America great again</p>
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Inference: Consider the quote below and then tell your partners some specific examples of how inferencing is needed for comprehension to occur.

- **Quote:** *“In one view of psycholinguistics, inferences are always problem-solving processes. In practice, any unmade inference is a problem during listening: In a typical monologue or dialogue situation, the listener must draw relevant inferences repeatedly before comprehension can continue (p. 56).”*

Claims and Grounds: In addition to making inferences about the speaker’s intentions, we also need to evaluate the speaker’s claims and grounds. Read the quote below and then explain what the terms claims and grounds refer to.

- **Quote:** *“The point here is that a central part of the propositional comprehension of conversation consists of initially understanding the claims that the speaker is making and then accepting, rejecting, or partially accepting or rejecting them (p. 60).”*

Role of Visual Input: The author says that the integration of visual input (gesture, facial expressions, lip movements, etc.) with speech greatly aids comprehension. Consider the following quote and then discuss the unique challenges to listening comprehension in an English teaching context due to students and teachers wearing masks and/or virtual lessons.

- **Quote:** *“Because of the importance of visual cues, psycholinguists consider face-to-face and audio-visual speech perception to be seamlessly bi-modal, involving an interplay of auditory and visual senses.”*