

Advanced Grammar and Vocabulary: Scientific Foundations

Grammar & Vocabulary · Answer Key · 14 Questions

1. The Chomskyan concept of Universal Grammar posits that humans possess an innate, biologically endowed language faculty. Which of the following is NOT a core principle of this theory?

- A) All languages share a common underlying structural blueprint.
- B) Language acquisition is primarily driven by environmental conditioning and imitation.**
- C) Children can generate novel sentences they have never heard before.
- D) The human brain is pre-wired for language acquisition.

2. In psycholinguistics, the 'Garden-Path Sentence' phenomenon illustrates how humans process syntax. Which of these sentences is a classic example of a garden-path sentence?

- A) The old man the boat.
- B) The complex houses married and single soldiers and their families.
- C) The horse raced past the barn fell.**
- D) That is the cat that chased the rat that ate the cheese.

3. According to historical linguistics, the Great Vowel Shift, a major series of changes in the pronunciation of English vowels, primarily occurred during which period?

- A) The Old English period (c. 450-1150 AD)
- B) The Middle English period (c. 1150-1500 AD)
- C) The Early Modern English period (c. 1500-1800 AD)**
- D) The Late Modern English period (c. 1800-Present)

4. The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, in its strong form (linguistic determinism), suggests that the structure of a language affects its speakers' cognition and worldview. Which of the following is a commonly cited, though debated, example used to support this?

- A) The presence of color terms in different languages (e.g., Russian having distinct terms for light and dark blue).**
- B) The universal acquisition of basic grammatical rules across all human languages.
- C) The ability of speakers of different languages to learn new languages.
- D) The consistent phonetic inventory across Indo-European languages.

5. In semantics, the concept of 'polysemy' refers to a word having multiple related meanings. Which of the following word pairs best exemplifies polysemy?

- A) Bank (financial institution) and bank (river's edge).
- B) Bat (flying mammal) and bat (sports equipment).
- C) Bright (intelligent) and bright (luminous).**
- D) Crane (bird) and crane (machine).

6. The 'principle of charity' in linguistic interpretation suggests that when interpreting an utterance, we should assume the speaker is attempting to be rational and meaningful. This principle is most closely associated with which philosopher of language?

- A) Ludwig Wittgenstein
- B) J. L. Austin
- C) Donald Davidson**
- D) W. V. O. Quine

7. The phenomenon of 'grammaticalization' describes the process by which lexical words or phrases evolve into grammatical markers. Which of the following is a commonly accepted example of grammaticalization in English?

- A) The evolution of 'going to' as a future marker from its original locative meaning.**
- B) The adoption of the loanword 'sushi' into English.
- C) The creation of new compound words like 'smartphone'.
- D) The development of slang terms like 'lit'.

8. In phonetics and phonology, 'minimal pairs' are words that differ in only one sound. This concept is crucial for identifying distinct phonemes. Which of the following is a minimal pair in English?

- A) Cat, dog
- B) Pin, bin**
- C) Chair, table
- D) House, home

9. The 'n-gram' model in computational linguistics predicts the probability of a word given the preceding n-1 words. A bigram model considers:

- A) The probability of a word given the previous single word.**
- B) The probability of a word given all preceding words.
- C) The probability of a word based on its frequency in a corpus.
- D) The probability of a word given the previous two words.

10. The 'Prince's Rule' (or Principle of Uniqueness) in diachronic linguistics is an observation about sound change. It states that:

- A) Sound changes are exceptions to the rule.
- B) No two languages are identical in their sound systems.
- C) A single sound change will not be reversed.**
- D) All languages will eventually converge on a single set of sounds.

11. In the study of semantics, 'entailment' is a relationship between propositions where the truth of one guarantees the truth of another. Which of these pairs demonstrates entailment?

- A) John is married. John is a bachelor.
- B) The cat is on the mat. The mat is under the cat.
- C) Mary is alive. Mary is dead.
- D) Peter owns a car. Peter drives a car.**

12. The 'innateness hypothesis' in language acquisition, championed by Noam Chomsky, is supported by evidence such as:

- A) The rapid acquisition of language by children despite impoverished input.**
- B) The extensive use of formal grammar instruction in early childhood.
- C) The uniform vocabulary size across all languages.
- D) The direct correlation between IQ and language fluency.

13. Etymology, the study of word origins, often reveals semantic shifts. The word 'nice', originally meaning 'ignorant' or 'foolish' in Middle English, evolved to mean 'pleasant' or 'agreeable'. This demonstrates:

- A) A pejoration (meaning becomes more negative).
- B) An amelioration (meaning becomes more positive).**
- C) A broadening of meaning.
- D) A narrowing of meaning.

14. In pragmatics, 'Grice's Maxims' of conversation (quantity, quality, relation, manner) are guidelines for cooperative communication. Violating the maxim of relation (being relevant) might manifest as:

- A) Providing too much or too little information.
- B) Stating something one believes to be false.
- C) Speaking in an obscure or ambiguous way.
- D) Changing the subject abruptly without apparent connection.**