

MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION:
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IDENTIFYING ENGLISH LEARNERS WITH POSSIBLE DISABILITIES

MAKING
RESEARCH
RELEVANT

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Improvement

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Who is Here?

About me

About you – Specialization areas

- English language learners (ELLs)
- Special education (SpEd)
- Speech-language pathology (SLP)
- Title program
- Classroom teaching
- Counseling

What is the problem?

Over- and under-identification of English learner students in special education, especially for learning disabilities

Sources: Artiles, Rueda, Salazar, & Higareda, 2005; Samson, J. F., & Lesaux, N. K., 2009.

What are the causes of the problem?

1. Misunderstandings about the identification requirements
2. Inappropriate curriculum, instruction and interventions for ELs
3. Reliance on only 1–2 means to determine student's learning in English and content areas
4. Confusion as to “Who takes the lead?”– “Who is responsible?”
5. **Difficulty in determining language learning disability versus normal English language development**

A Quick Review about English Learner Students

Question	Answer
How long does it take to learn English?	
What is the meaning of “to learn”?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is BICS?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is CALP?	

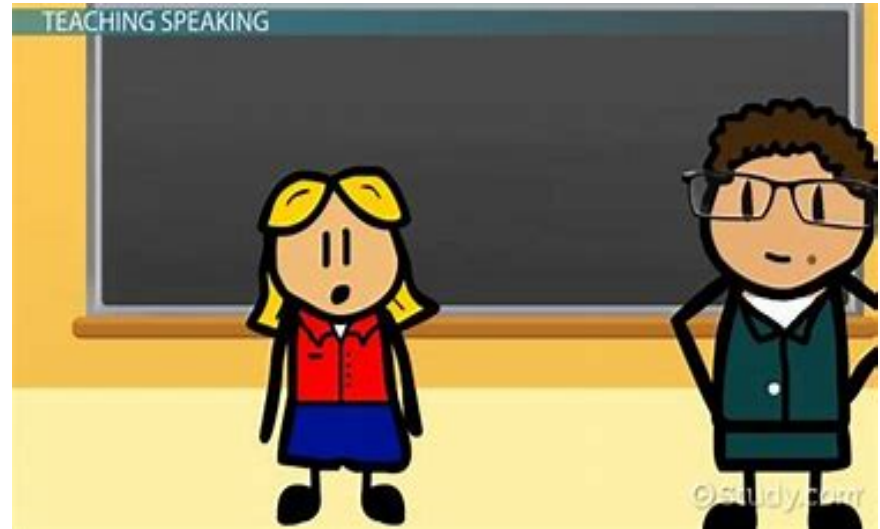
A Quick Review about English Learner Students

Question	Answer
How long does it take to learn English?	5–7 years
What is the meaning of “to learn”? <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is BICS?• What is CALP?	<p>Basic Interpersonal Communication: 1–3 years</p> <p>Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency: 3–7 years</p>

BICS = social language **CALP = academic language**



6 months – 2 years



5-7 years

Causes of Over- and Under- identification of EL Students with Disabilities: Four Simple Solutions

Cause #1: Misunderstandings about the identification requirements

Solution: Know the federal & Mississippi requirements

✓ Check Your Knowledge

1. What is the LAS-Links score level required for a student to be referred for a special education evaluation?
2. How long must the student receive RTI/ MTSS interventions before being referred for evaluation?
3. What is the “window of time” for evaluating English learner students for special education?

1.

2.

3.

Cause #1: Misunderstandings about the identification requirements

Solution #1: Know the Federal & Mississippi requirements

✓ Check Your Knowledge

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. What is the LAS-Links score level required for a student to be referred for a special education evaluation? | 1. There is no requirement related to the LAS-Links score level. |
| 2. How long must the student receive RTI/ MTSS interventions before the student may be referred for evaluation? | |
| 3. What is the “window of time” for evaluating English learner students for special education? | |

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| 3. What is the “window of time” for evaluating English learner students for special education? | |

Cause #1: Misunderstandings about the identification requirements

Solution #1: Know the Federal & Mississippi requirements

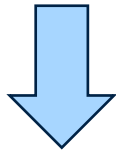
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| 3. What is the “window of time” for evaluating English learner students for special education? | 3. There is no “window of time.” |

Cause #2: Absence of school/district self-evaluation

WHY? Federal Law and Civil Rights Act
Requires Schools/Districts to Provide English Learners with

- ✓ The same rigorous, state-standards-based curriculum, as their peers.
- ✓ The same highly-qualified educators that their peers have.
- ✓ The same evidence/research-based instructional practices and interventions as their peers



THEN ✓ Additional EL programs and supports

Cause #2: Absence of school/district self-evaluation

Solution #2: Self-evaluation of curriculum, instruction, and interventions for students

Before considering if an EL student has a disability, ask and answer the three questions representing federal (and ethical) requirements of educating EL students:

1. Is the **curriculum** in each content area that the student studies . . .

2. Are the **instructional practices** both for learning English and learning the content subjects . . .

3. Are the **interventions** (not related to special education) used . . .

Evidence-based?

Implemented with **fidelity** based on the evidence (research) by a **knowledgeable** educator?

Culturally responsive to the student?

Cause #3: Use of only 1–2 measures to determine student abilities in English and content areas

Solution #3: Use multiple measures

1. Qualitative – Formative Information

(classroom and EL teachers)

- Oral and written language samples
- Observations
- Portfolios
- Weekly/chapter tests
- Projects
- Include all content-area classes

2. Quantitative – Standardized Information

- LAS-Links
- MAAP (if taken)

3. Other Information

- Tardy and attendance rates
- Social-emotional family/community or individual conditions/changes

Solution #3: Use multiple measures and make decisions (cont'd.)

The Decision to be Made: *Before considering evaluating for special education*

Questions :

Are we meeting our obligations as a school for this student with student's

- Appropriate identification as an EL?
- Appropriate placement?
- Appropriate instructional methods in all classes?
- Appropriate, knowledgeable educators about ELs?
- Appropriate RTI or MTSS supports?

No - Go back to Solution 2



Yes - Go forward



Solution #3: Utilize multiple measures to evaluate student for special education (cont'd.)

Determine: What additional assessments should we conduct and how?

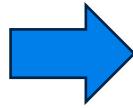
Who: (1) An experienced bilingual educator or a EL educator AND
(2) A school psychologist with knowledge about ELs to determine the appropriate materials and procedures for evaluation

What: Evaluate content knowledge and content skills – not English language skills.

How: (1) Use culturally fair, bilingual assessments (if applicable) and unbiased assessment tools; (2) rule out presence of cultural and linguistics factors in the assessments; and (3) follow appropriate procedures for the use of interpreters and translators.

Problem #4: Confusion as to “Who Takes the Lead?”

Solution #4: Create and use team approach



Expertise Recognized and Utilized

- Educator of EL students
- Psychologist with knowledge about testing of EL students
- Educator of special education

Addressing the Problem of Over- and Under-Identification of EL Students in Special Education

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Misunderstandings about the identification requirements | ➤ Know the identification requirements. |
| 2. Inappropriate curriculum, instruction, and interventions for ELs | ➤ Ensure appropriate curriculum, instruction, and interventions for EL students. |
| 3. Reliance on only 1–2 means of student’s learning in English and content areas | ➤ Use multiple measures to evaluate student content knowledge. |
| 4. Confusion as to “Who takes the lead?” | ➤ Create and utilize a team approach. |

Causes of Over- and Under- Identification of EL Students with Disabilities:

The Difficult Solution

Language Learning Disability?

or

Normal English Language

Development?

Building Background: IDEA – Disabilities

1. Autism
2. Deaf-Blind
3. Development Delayed
4. Emotional Disability
5. Hearing Impairment
6. Language-Speech Impairment
7. Intellectual Disability
8. Multiple Disabilities
9. Orthopedic Impairment
10. Other Health Impairment
11. Specific Learning Disability
12. Traumatic Brain Injury
13. Visually Impaired

Building Background: Learning Disabilities (LDs)

Refers to a generic group of disorders that:

- Is a central nervous system dysfunction
- Causes deficit areas in basic skills
- Affects language processing
- Causes language difficulties
- Contributes to visual/auditory/spatial-motor disorders

Building Background: Most Common Types of LDs

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Dyslexia | Severe difficulty affecting <u>reading and related language-based processing skills</u> ; may affect reading fluence, decoding, comprehension, recall and more |
| 2. Dysgraphia | Severe difficulty in <u>producing legible handwriting</u> (e.g., inconsistent spacing, poor spelling), difficulty composing writing, and thinking and writing at the same time |
| 3. Dyscalculia | Severe difficulty in <u>understanding numbers</u> and <u>learning math facts</u> ; may not comprehend math symbols, struggle with memorizing and organizing numbers |
| 2. Auditory processing disorder (APD) | Severe difficulty in <u>processing or interpreting sounds in words</u> , where sounds are coming from, making sense of sounds, and blocking out background noise |

AND MORE!

Source: [Learning Disabilities Association of American](#)

Behavior Associated with Learning Disabilities

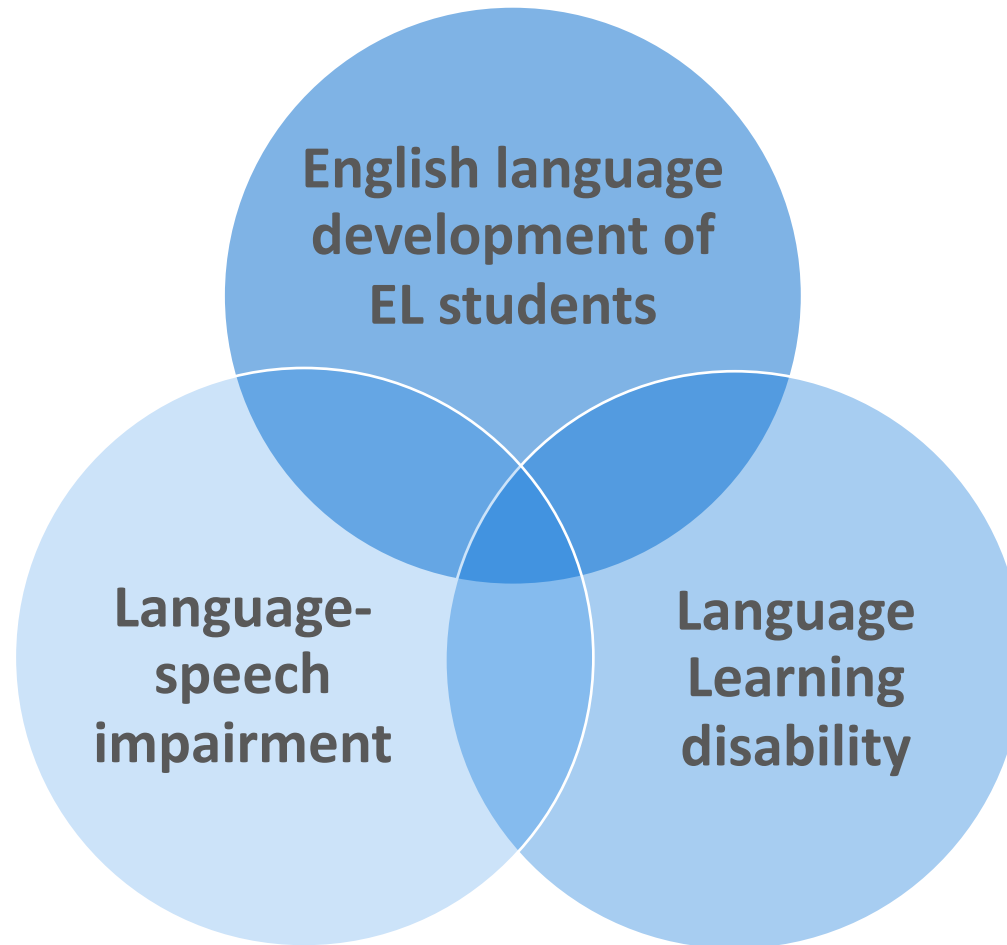
- Difficulty completing series of directions, often due to poor short-term memory or inability to pay attention.
- Difficulty with phonological awareness such as distinguishing sounds, even though “knows” the sounds.
- Difficulty learning sound-symbol correspondence; may know one day but not the next.
- Difficulty remembering sight words; may know one day but not the next.

Associated Behaviors with Acquiring a Second Language

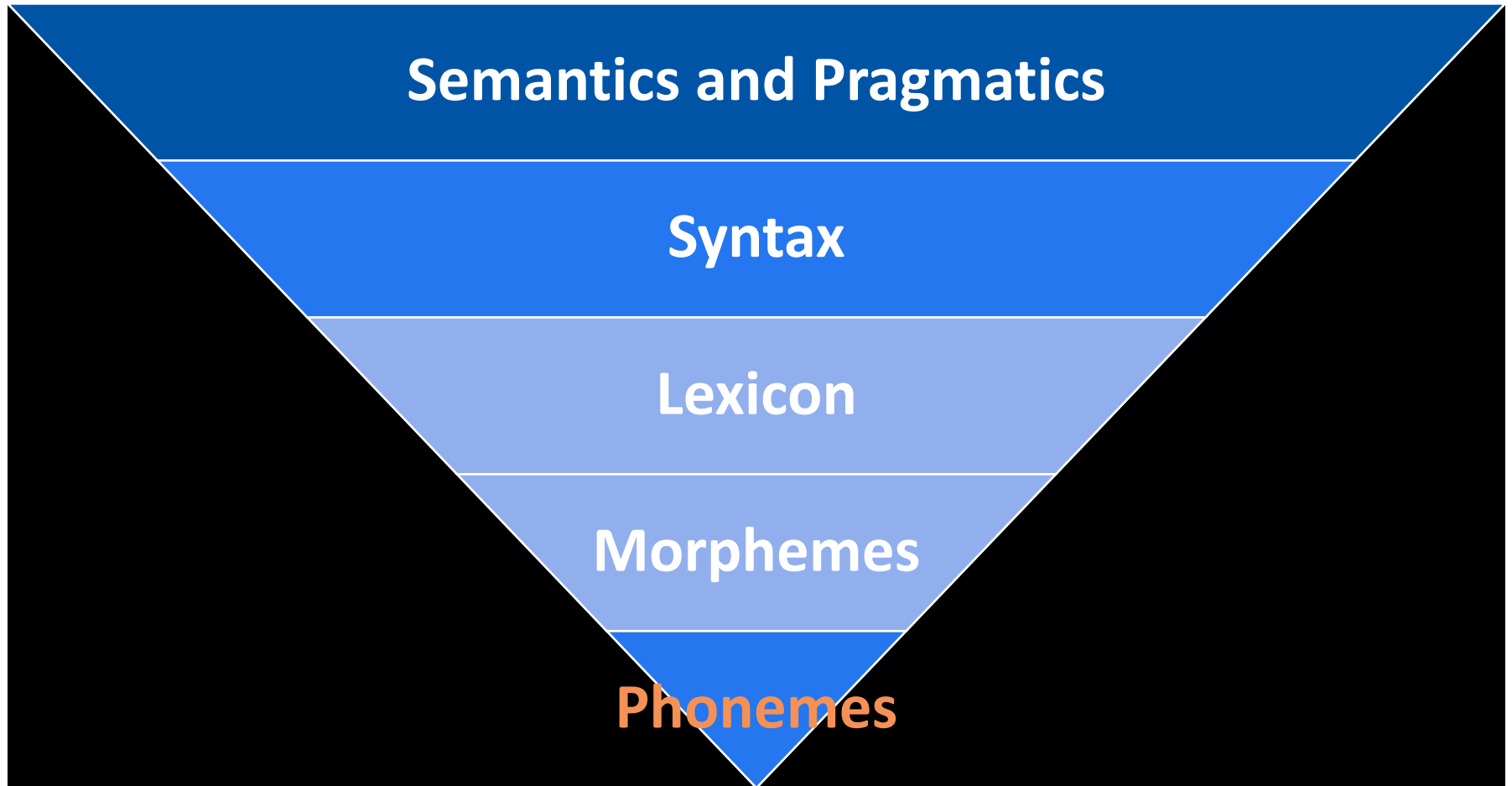
- Difficulty completing series of directions due to
 - Does not linguistically understand words.
 - Harder to remember languages in a second language (Service et al. 2002)
- Difficulty distinguishing through listening between sounds not in one’s home language
- Confusion with sound-symbol correspondence if different from home language
- Difficulty remembering sight words when meaning are not understood or when irregular patterns are used (*ea* = each and feather)

Source: Klinger & Eppolito (2014)

Why Identifying ELs with LD is Difficult



Components of Language



Components of Language: Phonemes

Phonics

Phonic Awareness

Long Vowels

Blends

- Phonemes: The sound system of a language and the rules that govern the sound combinations
- Underpinning of speaking and listening AND reading and writing
- Each language has its own sounds, but Indo-European languages have many that are similar to one another.
- In the first few months, a baby has the ability to physically produce the phonemes of any language (Kuhl & Meltzoff, 1996).

Phonemes Development

Phonemes	Age development (in general)
p, m, n, w, h	1–2 years
b, d, k, g, f, y	2–4 years
t, -ing, r, l	5–6 years
voiced sz, v, z, sh fashion, very, zebra	6–7 years
voiceless th; sh, ch thin, shut, church	7–8 years

- What does this mean for English language students?
- What does this mean for referral to the speech-language pathologist (SLP)?

Phonemes: Omissions – Substitutions

Pronunciation	What is it?	What home language?
chirt <i>for</i> shirt		
tink <i>for</i> think		
at <i>for</i> that		
lize <i>for</i> rise		

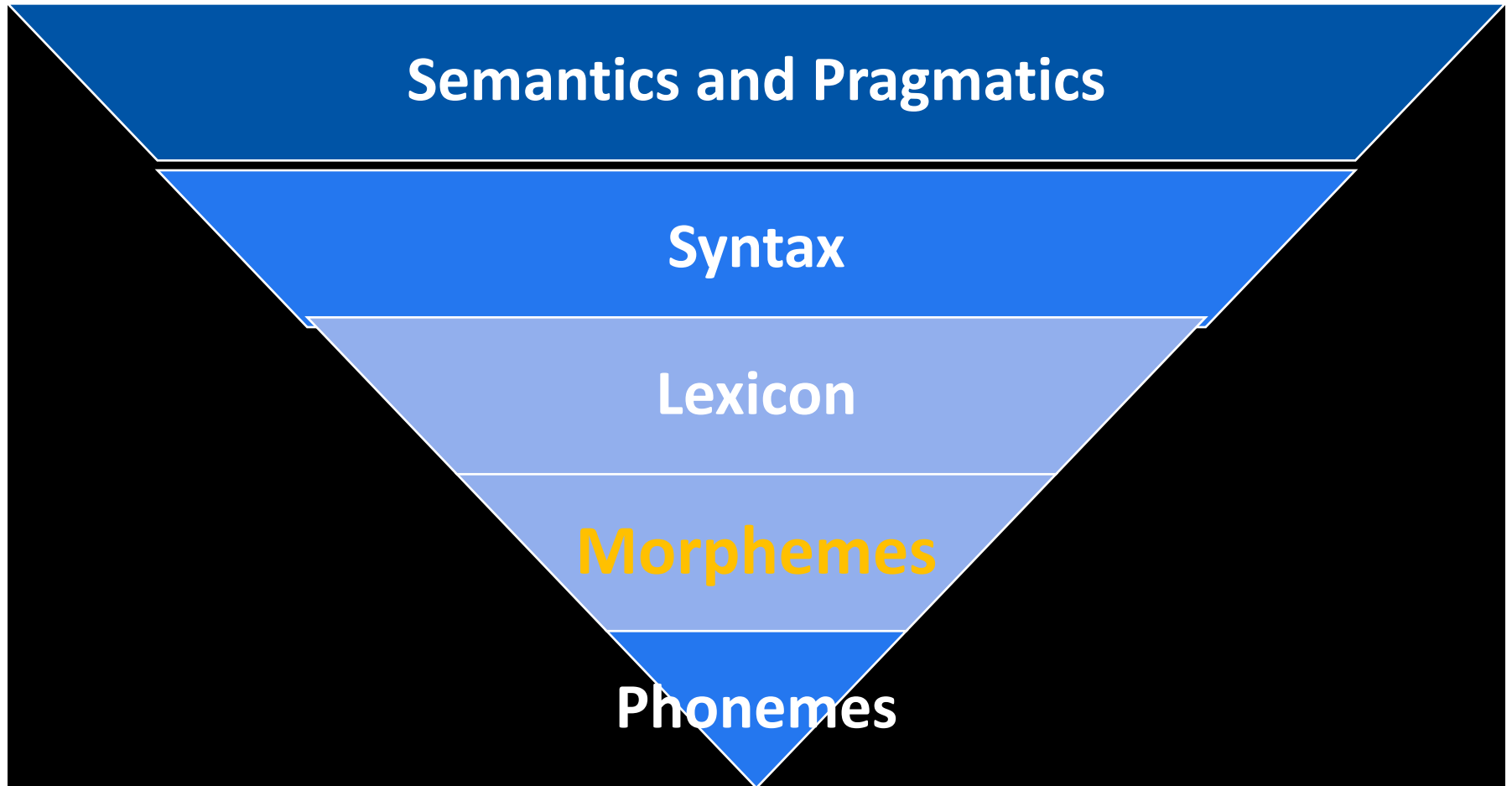
- Is this an omission or a substitution?
- What home language might this student speak?

Phonemes: Omissions – Substitutions

Pronunciation	What is it?	What home language?
chirt <i>for</i> shirt	Substitution ch/sh	Spanish
tink <i>for</i> think	Substitution t/th	Spanish Middle Eastern
at <i>for</i> that	Omission /h/	Spanish (when /h/ starts word)
lize <i>for</i> rise	Distortion r/l	Asian

- Would you refer your EL student to the SLP?
- Would you refer for possible language disability?
- What should you investigate about your students' home language?

Components of Language



Components of Language: Morphemes

-s

-ed

eco-

pre-

-ly

- The system that governs the structures of words and the construction of word forms
- Carries grammatical information such as noun plurals, past tense and possessives
- “Good” errors (interlanguage) shows growth

Morphemes: “Good Errors”

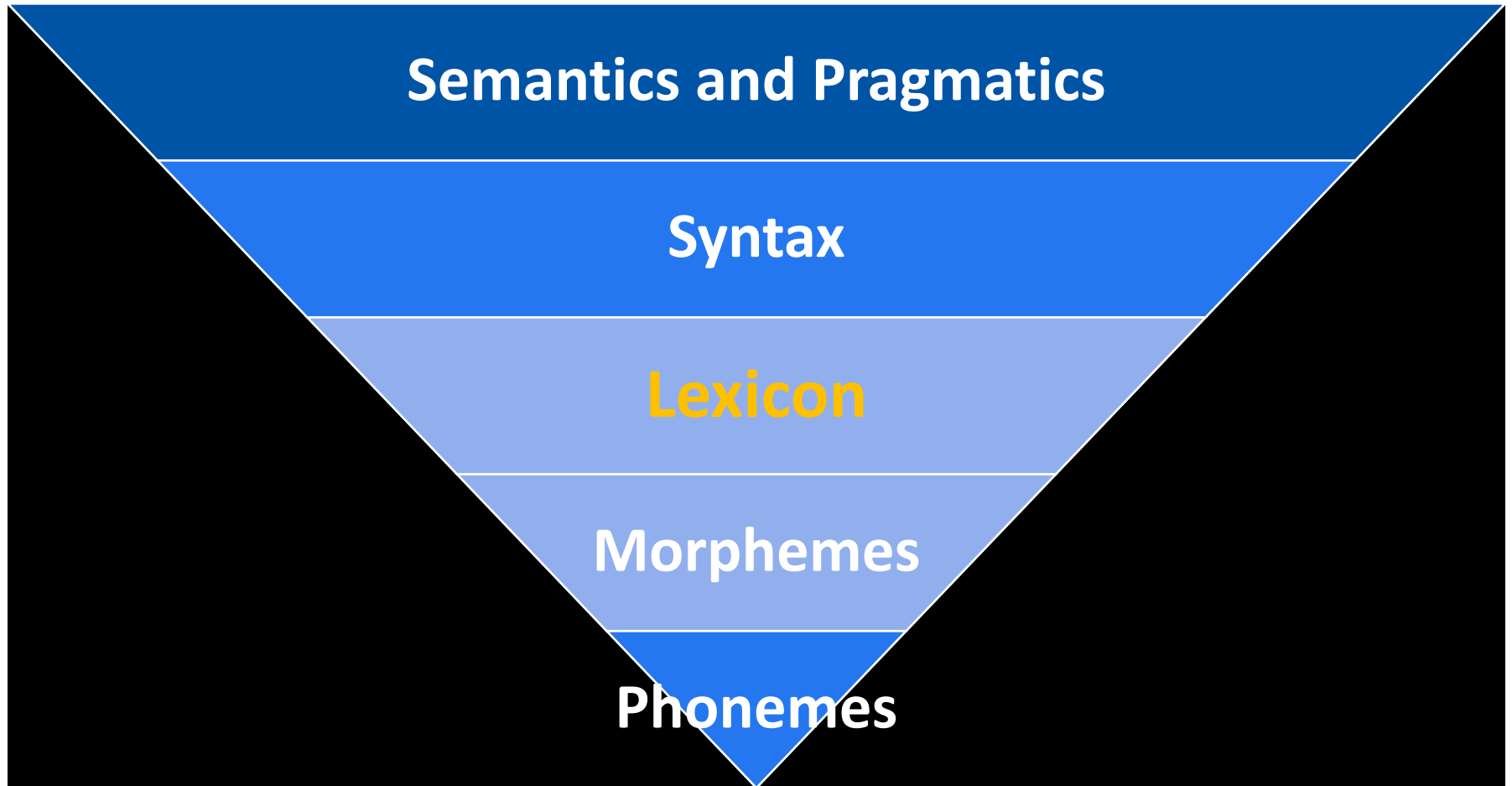
Utterance	Morpheme Grammatical Use	Good Error Y/N?	Why or why not?
“No but my tooth ^s !”	-s: plural “s”		
“Mine maryroni all eated!”	-ed: regular past tense verb		

Morphemes: “Good Errors”

Utterance	Morpheme Grammatical Use	Good Error Y/N?	Why or why not?
“No but mine tooth ^s !”	-s: plural “s”	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Developmentally: “but/brush”; “mine/my”• Overuse of plural noun rule – has learned it!
“Mine maryroni all eat ^{ed} !”	-ed: regular past tense verb	Yes	<p>Developmentally: “maryroni/“macaroni”; “mine/my”</p> <p>Overuse of regular past tense verb – has learned it!</p>

- Do you see these “good errors” in native speakers of English?
- Do you see “good errors” in your EL students?
- How to keep track of student utterance?

Components of Language



Components of Language: Lexicon

big

large

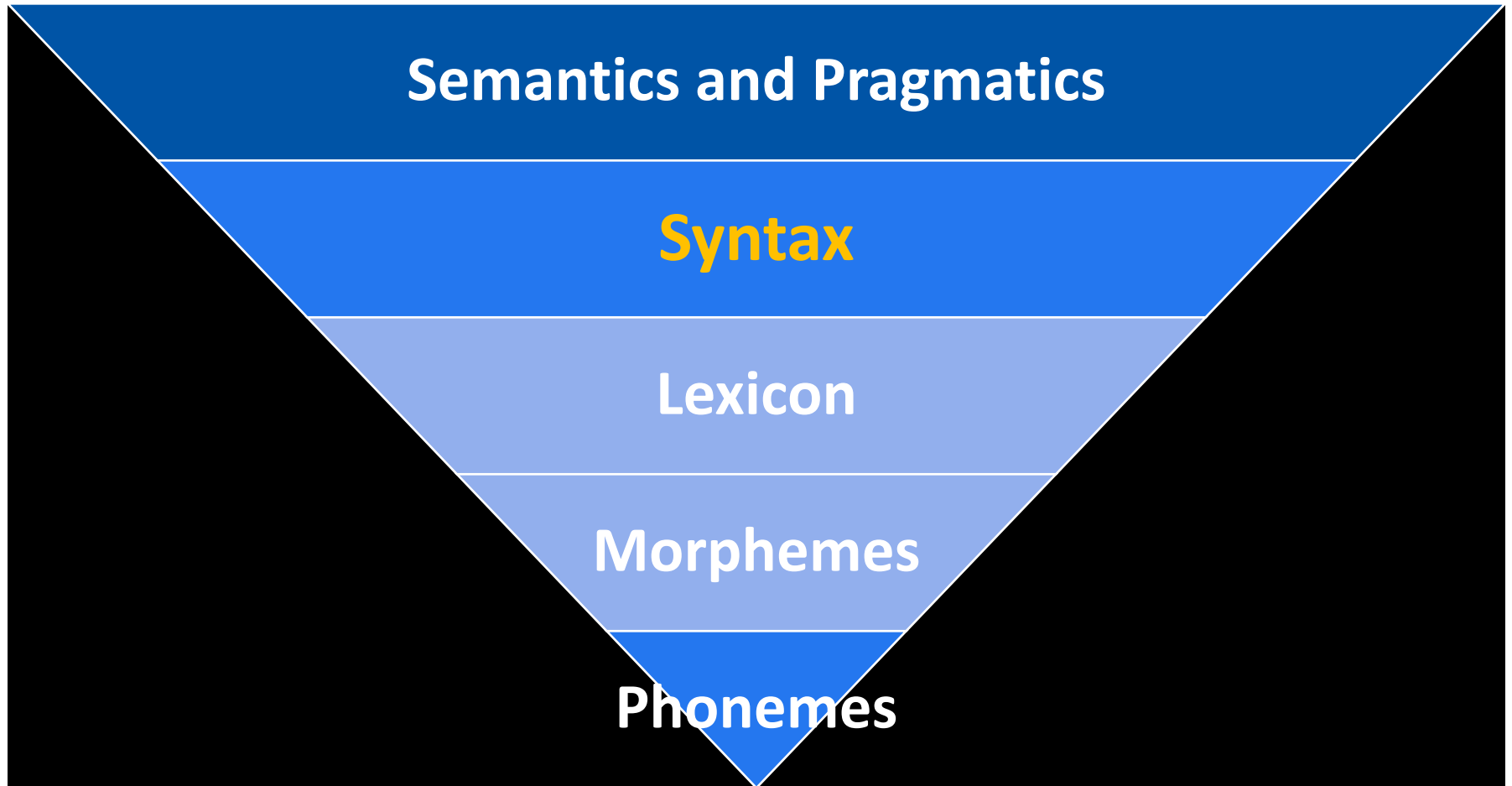
giant

enormous

galactic

- Lexicon: represents the individual words of a language—the vocabulary.
- Develops through hearing others' speech; later through reading
- English words often derive from Latin and Greek
 - Language with similar derivatives—like Spanish—have commonalities with English
- Lexicon includes
 - Synonyms and antonyms
 - Words with multiple meaning

Components of Language



Components of Language: Syntax

I ate sausage pizza. The sausage pizza, I ate. The pizza, sausage, I ate.

- Syntax: the order of the words in a language.
- Syntax develops in a predictable order.
- Syntax varies within language.

Basic English Syntax Order: Subject + Verb + Object (direct/indirect object, adverb, adjective, phrases)

Subject (S) + Verb (V) = “Maria reading.”

S + V + DO = “Maria reading a book.”

S + V + DO + IO = “Maria gave her book to me.”

Syntax: English Order of Development

Length of Phrase	Age	Says	Syntax
1 word	1–1½ years	“ju-Ju” (for “juice”)	S
2 words	1½–2 years	“Juice drink”	S + V (or no S – V +O)
3 words	2–2½ years	“Nadan wants drink.”	S + V + DO
4–5 word sentence	2½–3½ years	“Mommy dranked his big milk!”	S + V + DO
Compound sentence	3½–4 ½ years	“Daddy ran slow and Fido ran fasted.”	S + V + Adverb + Conjunction + S + V + Adverb

Syntax Order: Other Languages

Language	Syntax	
English	S + V + O	I drink coffee.
Spanish	S + V + O (often)	I drink coffee.
Japanese	S + O + V	Watachi wa kofi nomiwashtaka I + coffee + drink.
Other		
Other		

- Which of your EL students might struggle the most with English syntax and why?

Components of Language

Semantics and Pragmatics

Syntax

Lexicon

Morphemes

Phonemes

Components of Language: Semantics

- Semantics: the meaning of language
- Lexical semantics: occurs at the word level; e.g., “motor” as a verb and a noun
- Compositional semantics: how individual words and the syntax create meaning
- **Why it matters**: Students must use words correctly in sentences:
 - How and where to use words in different social settings
 - Know all the possible meanings for a word
 - Know what other words might be used in its place

Components of Language: Pragmatics

- Pragmatics: language in use and the contexts in which it is used

Pragmatics Communication Areas:

1. Using language for different purposes:
 - Greetings, informing, demanding, promising, commanding, requesting
 2. Changing language based on needs of a listener or situation, such as
 - Talking differently to a toddler rather than an adult; Speaking differently in a classroom than on a playground; Giving background information to an unfamiliar listener
 3. Following rules for different kinds of conversations, such as
 - Taking turns in conversations; Introducing topics of conversation; Staying on topic; Determining how close to stand to someone when speaking
- What could be a reason for an EL student not functioning well in one of the communication areas?

Practice Making Decisions: What to do?

Age	Yrs. Eng.	Home Language	Language Behavior	What to do? (after do school self-assessment)
9	2	Japanese	Says “liver” for “river” and “light” for “right” [phonemes]	Evaluation: ____ SLP ____ SpEd Other:
5	0	Spanish	Appears to stutter	Evaluation: ____ SLP ____ SpEd Other:
13	6	French	Difficulty selecting best words to us in situations [pragmatics]	Evaluation: ____ SLP ____ SpEd Other:

Practice Making Decisions: What to do?

Age	Yrs. Eng.	Home Language	Language Behavior	What to do? (after do school self-assessment)
9	2	Japanese	Says “liver” for “river” and “light” for “right” [phonemes]	Evaluation: ____ SLP ____ SpEd Other: None
5	0	Spanish	Appears to stutter	Evaluation: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SLP ____ SpEd Other:
13	6	French	Difficulty selecting best words to us in different situations [pragmatics]	Evaluation: ____ SLP ____ SpEd Other: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Assess in home language

Practice Making Decisions

Age	Yrs. Eng.	Home Language	Language Behavior	What to do? (after school do self-assessment)
9	2	Chinese	Difficulty putting English words together [syntax]	Evaluation: ____ SLP ____ SpEd Other:
7	1	Japanese	Uses S + O + V [syntax]	Evaluation: ____ SLP ____ SpEd Other:

Practice Making Decisions

Age	Yrs. Eng.	Home Language	Language Behavior	What to do? (after school do self-assessment)
9	2	Chinese	Difficulty putting English words together [syntax]	Evaluation: ____ SLP ____ SpEd Other: Language samples
7	1	Japanese	Uses S + O + V [syntax]	Evaluation: ____ SLP ____ SpEd Other: None

Reading and Writing: Did you know?

Language	Directionality of Reading and Writing	
English	Top to bottom	Left to right
Spanish	Top to bottom	Left to right
Arabic	Top to bottom	Right to left
Japanese/Chinese	Top to bottom	Right to left
	Columns: Top to bottom	Left to right
Hebrew	Top to bottom	Right to left

- What are the implications for EL students that know how to read in their home languages for learning to read English?
- What could happen if teachers are unaware of the differences in reading and writing directionality in students' home languages?

What Needs to Happen Next in Your School/District?

Conduct a self-evaluation of the quality of our curriculum, instructional practices, and interventions for our EL students.

Create a team for reviewing EL student learning.

Review our **prior decisions** with this new information.

Provide teachers with new information and skills in this area.

Develop a process for evaluating EL students for disabilities.

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MAKING
RESEARCH
RELEVANT

THANK YOU