

Life experiments (c.f. thought experiments)

Life experiment

Take a time when you can listen to someone speaking at length in a foreign language you do not understand. Listen to the language as pure sound, without any meaning

Next take a time when you are listening to someone speaking at length in your native language, but don't need to pay close attention to them. Try to hear what they are saying as pure sound without any meaning. Write down what you find out.

Life experiment

Take one hour when you are awake and functioning and do not use any language for that hour (neither speaking nor writing). Write down what you find out about what you can and cannot communicate, and what you can and cannot do, without language.

Life experiment

Take one day and observe all the knowledge that you possess, which you use in your life during that day. Then think about this knowledge and consider how much and what kind of it you acquired through immediate experience, perception, or contact; versus how much and what kind you acquired through language. Write down what you discover or conclude.

Life experiment

Find an automated speech recognition system somewhere that you can talk to. Using your linguistic knowledge, try and see if you can break it. Describe what you found out. If you can break it, describe in linguistic terms where the system failed.