Psych56L/ Ling51
Fall 2008
Review Questions: Syntactic & Morphological Development

(1) Terms/concepts to know: syntactic structure, cross-linguistic variation in syntactic structure, fixed word order, free word order, recursion, morpheme, free morpheme, bound morpheme, inflectional morphology, derivational morphology, MLU's relation to children's syntactic development, questions, imperatives, declaratives, negations, auxiliary verbs, determiners, morphologically rich, morphologically poor, word order interpretation strategy, comprehension, production, semantically-based grammar, syntactically-based grammar, linguistic parameter, Principles & Parameters Theory, poverty of the stimulus, semantic content of motherese, explicit feedback

(2) Why does being able to generate sentences of infinite length indicate that adults must have an underlying system for generating sentences?

(3) Describe the nature of children's early syntactic productions. That is, what kinds of words do they use and what kinds of words do they leave out? What kinds of clauses do they produce earlier, and what kinds of clauses do they produce later?

(4) What does it mean for a language's morphology system to be predictable? Does having a predictable system mean a language is likely to be easier to learn?

(5) One strategy children use to interpret sentences is the order of the words. Give one example where this strategy would work, and one example where this strategy would fail. Make sure to explain why the strategy would work for the first example you give, but not the second.

(6) What evidence is there that children who do not use grammatical morphemes (like determiners and auxiliary verbs) are still sensitive to these morphemes when they listen to other people speak?

(7) What is one piece of evidence used to support the position that children's grammars are the same as adult grammars?

(8) How does the nativist position on language acquisition relate to the Principles & Parameters Theory?

(9) Why might a nativist be more likely to believe that children's grammars are the same as adults' grammars?

(10) Even if their parents do tend to respond differentially to grammatical and ungrammatical sentences in children's input, why might this not actually be helpful for children to learn what is grammatical syntactic structure in their language?