

Psych56L/ Ling51

Winter 2010

Review Questions: Introduction to Language Acquisition

(1) Terms/concepts to know: phonology, lexicon, morphology, syntax, pragmatics, vocabulary spurt, grammar, prescriptive grammar, descriptive grammar, language pathology, language pedagogy, diary studies, Language Acquisition Device (LAD), domain-general knowledge, domain-specific knowledge, Universal Grammar, empiricism, nativism, statistical learning, generativist, constructionist, social interactionist, MLU, MacArthur-Bates CDIs, Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test

(2) Which grammar – descriptive or prescriptive - do linguists generally care about? What are some examples of prescriptive rules? What are some examples of descriptive rules?

(3) Is the following a grammatical question for a native speaker of English?

“Who did you see who did that?”

How does knowing whether or not this is acceptable for native English speakers help us make the argument that acceptable language structure doesn't necessarily have to do with meaning?

(4) What are some practical applications to studying how normal children acquire their native language?

(5) What do we gain by studying the language of “wild children”? Why might wild children *not* be the best subjects for research on language acquisition?

(6) Why is language learning thought to be about more than simply fulfilling the urge to communicate?

(7) Why are researchers interested in studying the communication systems of deaf children of hearing parents? What kind of information does this yield?

(8) What are some arguments in favor of linguistic nativism?

(9) Are both the nativist and interactionist perspectives on language acquisition compatible with the idea that there is some innate knowledge the child has? If so, how do these views differ?

(10) What is the constructionist view on language acquisition? Is it incompatible with the nativist view? Why or why not?

(11) Is statistical learning domain-specific or domain-general? How do you know? Give an example to support your claim.

(12) What kind of information does the CHILDES database contain? Why would it be useful for language acquisition research?

(13) Give one example of a measure of a child's language comprehension abilities, and give one example of a measure of a child's language production abilities.

(14) Would proponents of the social interactionist view find autistic children who have very good language problematic? Why or why not?

(15) Why is it important to do language acquisition research across different cultures?

(16) Why is computational modeling a useful research method? Describe how computational modeling generally works. What does it usually test?