Psych56L/ Ling51
Winter 2014
Review Questions: Introduction to Language Acquisition

(1) Terms/concepts to know: phonology, lexicon, morphology, syntax, pragmatics, grammar, prescriptive grammar, descriptive grammar, explicit correction, recast, motherese, language pathology, language pedagogy, diary studies, CHILDES, MLU, MacArthur-Bates CDIs, Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test, Act-out tasks, pointing tasks, grammaticality judgment tasks, elicited production, repetition/imitation elicitation, syntactic priming, Language Acquisition Device (LAD), domain-specific knowledge, domain-general knowledge, Universal Grammar, poverty of the stimulus, empiricism, nativism, generativist, constructionist

(2) What is one reason why children can't learn to understand and produce full sentences in their language just by imitating sentences they hear? Does it seem like children try to imitate sentences they hear word-for-word in real life?

(3) What is one reason why it's unlikely we get taught everything we know about language? (Hint: What kinds of things might be difficult to teach, and why might they be difficult to teach?)

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

(5) What is one reason why children probably don't learn everything they know about language by being explicitly corrected by their parents? (Hint: What errors are parents more likely to explicitly correct?)

(6) How is a recast different from explicit correction? Why are recasts not necessarily a reliable source of correct language use? Is there any evidence that recasts are helpful nonetheless?

(7) What are some properties that often are true of motherese that might make it easier for children to learn from?

(8) What evidence is there that motherese is helpful for language acquisition?

(9) What evidence is there that words children overhear are not as useful for learning as words that are specifically directed to children (usually in the form of motherese)?

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

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

(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) Which task, an act-out task or a pointing task, is likely to be more cognitively demanding for the child? (Hint: Which requires less conscious effort?)

(15) How does a standard elicitation task differ from a repetition/imitation elicitation task?

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

(17) What does the linguistic approach to language acquisition believe to be true about the Language Acquisition Device? Does this approach believe that data from the surrounding linguistic environment are needed to learn language?

(18) Does the domain-general cognitive approach to language acquisition believe there are any learning processes specific to language?

(19) Which viewpoint, generativist or constructionist, believes the linguistic input plays a larger role in the language acquisition process?

(20) Does a nativist necessarily have to believe that the child has innate knowledge about the general form of language? (Hint: Is there a different way for the child to have innate abilities relating to language? Do all innate abilities have to be domain-specific?)

(21) Are both the nativist and constructionist perspectives on language acquisition compatible with the idea that there is some innate knowledge the child has? If so, how do these views differ? (Hint: Your answer to (20) will probably help you with this one.)

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