

Name: _____

Section: _____

Linguistics 001
Spring 2009
Homework 6
Due: Wed, April 8 2009

Acquisition: Stages of Production 4 points, 1 a freebie

Study the chart below.

Stage	Typical age	Description
Babbling	6-8 months	Repetitive CV patterns
One-word stage (aka holophrastic stage)	9-18 months	Single open-class words or word stems
Two-word stage	18-24 months	"mini-sentences" with simple semantic relations
Telegraphic stage	24-30 months	"Telegraphic" sentence structures of lexical or early multiword* stage rather than functional or grammatical morphemes
Later multiword stage	30+ months	Grammatical or functional structures emerge

1. Below are sets of utterances spoken by a child named Naima between the ages 1 and 4. For each set, make an estimate of Naime's age in months based on the complexity of her speech.

a. Age: 24-30, half credit for 30+
middle finger go?

my index finger!

what's daddy doing?

what does the duck see?

b. Age: 18-24, half credit for 9-18

froggy froggy.

shovel.

hand.

blue one.

play Mommy.

c. Age: 30+, half credit for 24-30

no, yeah, clip it to the bear.

no like this.

no Daddy's gonna be the customer and you're gonna be the store-owner.

fifty is a lot.

Acquisition of Syntax **2 points**

Consider the following ADULT production data.

Gianni non ha visto niente (Italian)
John not has seen nothing
“John didn’t see anything”

Dhen ipa tipota (Greek)
not I.said nothing
“I didn’t say anything”

Janek nie pomaga nikomu (Polish)
Janek not helps nobody
“Janek doesn’t help anybody”

Johnwa nanimo tabe-nak-atta (Japanese)
John nothing eat-Not-Past
“John didn’t eat anything”

2. Explain why children learning Standard English sometimes use double negation, e.g. “I don’t get nothing?” Is it because they have not yet developed their logical system and don’t know that two negatives make a positive? Or is there a better explanation? Relate this to the kinds of errors children are known to make (and NOT to make) during the language acquisition process.

1 point: no, it's not a fact about logical development, since adult speakers of MOST languages (including the four above) don't perceive a “positive” meaning.

1 point: a better explanation would take into account the fact that children's productions are not ideal in English (at least they violate a mostly-prescriptive rule of English), but that they are licet in other languages: we can view this as children testing out UG. Children's errors, of course, are constrained by POSSIBLE grammars.

Diagnosing Aphasia

View this YouTube video, paying attention to the first passage of more or less continuous speech (and not the "naming" or "repeating" parts, where the experimenter asks the subject to repeat back the names of objects): <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B-LD5jzXpLE>

3. This first patient has been diagnosed with Wernicke's aphasia. Choose two utterances, one consistent with this diagnosis, and one utterance which is incorrect but behaves more like other varieties of aphasia, and explain your choice.

A SAMPLE SOLUTION

1 point: “Oh mistress triangland...”: this shows the stereotypical lexical problems Wernicke's patients exhibit, with a neologism and several weird words chosen.

1 point: “my own my eat my only for my and everythin like that an cleaning my dead me by is always...”: this shows not a purely-lexical issue but also deficient syntax as well, perhaps more characteristic of other varieties of aphasia.

Broca's Aphasia 2 points

As discussed in the lectures, English past tense verbs consist of two pieces, the verb itself, and an inflectional morpheme that expresses past tense:

kick, kick-ed
leave, lef-t
hit, hit-Ø
etc.

Consider an experiment in which aphasic patients are required to produce past tense forms, in frames like the following:

I like to kick tennis balls. In fact, yesterday I _____ tennis balls for three hours.

In order to complete the task, the subject must produce the correct past tense form (here, *kicked*).

It was found that Broca's aphasics produced many **uninflected** or 'bare' forms, e.g. *kick* instead of *kick-ed*, for regular verbs. They also made similar mistakes with irregular forms like *sing/sang*, and so on. However, they made more mistakes with regular forms than with irregular forms.

4. Relate this to our recent discussions of the language faculty, and language acquisition. What difference between how we learn regular and irregular forms might make this an expected result?

1 point: regular inflection is more like syntax than lexical/morphological facts.

1 point: fleshing that out: we might assume that regular rules, which are not facts about individual words, and irregular rules, which are, might pattern differently and be expressed in different portions of the brain. If regular inflection is performed by different means than irregular (lexically-sensitive) inflection, we predict that the former will be impaired in Broca's patients, and the latter in Wernicke's aphasics.