

Psych56L/ Ling51

Fall 2008

Review Questions: Special Populations

(1) Terms/concepts to know: deaf children's language environment, iconic signs, pointing in sign languages, overregularization errors in sign language, lexical development in autistic children, syntactic development in autistic children, specific language impairment (SLI)

(2) Why might it be surprising that deaf children learning sign language take a while to understand what the signs for "you" and "I" refer to? Does their performance on these signs support the idea that learning a signed language is the same as learning a spoken language? Why or why not?

(3) How does the syntactic and lexical development of blind children compare to that of sighted children?

(4) One view of language acquisition believes that language development builds on nonverbal communication. Would this view find blind children with good language problematic? Why or why not?

(5) How can mentally retarded children's language development help us answer the question of whether language is a separate (domain-specific) ability?

(6) Briefly describe the basic profile of a Down's Syndrome child. Would a social interactionist find a typical Down's syndrome child problematic for the theory? Why or why not?

(7) Describe the basic profile of a typical Williams Syndrome child. Would a social interactionist find a typical Williams Syndrome child problematic? Why or why not?

(8) Does Williams Syndrome, and the linguistic development of children who have it, support the dissociability of language and general intelligence? Why or why not?

(9) Explain how having more brain space devoted to language may actually lead to poorer language development. (Hint: Think of Karmiloff-Smith et al. (1997)).

(10) What evidence from autistic children can be used to support the separation of a syntactic/semantic language component in the brain from a social/communicative component? Explain how the evidence you cite supports this.

(11) How would nativist theories explain SLI?

(12) What evidence is there to support the idea that SLI children are simply on the low end of the spectrum of language acquisition, i.e. they acquire language the same way everyone else does, but they're just not very good at it? (Important idea: There is no specific linguistic deficit – so the name SLI is actually a misnomer.)