

Psych56L/ Ling51

Winter 2011

Review Questions: Lexical Development

(1) Terms/concepts to know: lexicon, referential, semantic features, compositional semantics, prototype theory, graded membership, production task, verification task, context-bound, noun bias, overextension, underextension, word spurt, production vocabulary, comprehension vocabulary, fast mapping, whole-object assumption, mutual-exclusivity assumption, syntactic bootstrapping hypothesis, lexical gap

(2) What does it mean for words to be referential? Is it true that all words in language are referential? Why or why not?

(3) What are some issues with the idea that a word's meaning is simply whatever it refers to in the real world?

(4) What is the classical theory of meaning as definition? (Hint: Semantic features play a role.) How are new meanings created, given this theory? Is it always easy to come up with the set of necessary and sufficient features? If you knew the set of necessary and sufficient features, would you still sometimes run into trouble when forming the meanings of new phrases? (Hint: Look at the example phrases in the lecture notes.)

(5) How can a production task reveal which members of a category are more prototypical?

(6) In a verification task, for which of the following objects is a subject likely to be fastest at verifying that the object belongs to the category? Which is the subject likely to be the slowest at?

- (a) a high-frequency, highly prototypical object (a robin is a bird)
- (b) a low-frequency, highly prototypical object (an wren is a bird)
- (c) a high-frequency, not very prototypical object (a bat is a bird)
- (d) a low-frequency, not very prototypical object (a kiwi is a bird)

(7) Is any single feature necessary in order to be a member of a category, under a graded category membership approach?

(8) Sigmund has heard that English children have a noun bias in their early vocabularies. What does that mean? Is it true for all children of the world?

(9) One idea why children have a noun bias in their early vocabularies is that the meaning of nouns is easier to learn from observation than the meaning of verbs. What evidence do we have that this might be true?

(10) Snedecker & Gleitman (2002) explored three different kinds of information children might use to learn verb meaning. What were the three information kinds? When these

information types were used individually, which was most effective at indicating verb meaning? Was there any benefit from using these multiple information sources together?

(11) Does every child have a word spurt? How can you tell if a child has a word spurt?

(12) Are children's production vocabularies smaller than their comprehension vocabularies? Why might this be?

(13) What is phonological memory? How might it help learning new words?

(14) Briefly describe the mapping problem children face when learning the meaning of words, and give an example of a mapping problem scenario. (Hint: Think about what Quine said.)

(15) Give explicit examples for how the whole-object assumption and the mutual-exclusivity assumption would help with the mapping problem.

(16) How do social cues help with the mapping problem? Give an example of a social cue that helps children solve the mapping problem, and an example of that social cue helping a child solve a particular mapping problem.

(17) Sigmund remembers hearing about different strategies children use to help them learn words, such as the whole-object assumption and the mutual-exclusivity assumption.

(a) Sigmund then observed a child named Remus trying to learn the word "beak". His mother picked up a stuffed penguin toy and said, "Look at the beak!" Remus subsequently started calling all his stuffed toys "beak". What assumption does Remus seem to have used to map the word "beak" to a meaning? Explain why you think so.

(b) Remus's mother realized what had happened and so picked up the stuffed penguin toy again to try to correct Remus's understanding. She said, "No, honey, this is your toy. This is your penguin." When she later asked him to pick up his penguin, Remus didn't seem to know what the word "penguin" referred to. Why might Remus have had trouble learning what the word "penguin" meant given what his mother said? That is, what assumption does he seem to have used and why did that lead to him not learning what penguin referred to in this situation?

(18) How can syntactic structure help a child figure out a word's meaning? Give an example of this. (Hint: What's the difference in meaning for DIV in these utterances? "Look, a DIV!" "He's DIVing!" "That's a DIV kitty.")

(19) Is it true that there is a word for every possible concept in every language? Give an example to support your viewpoint.