Psych156A/ Ling150
Spring 2010
Review Questions: Introduction to Language Acquisition + Arguments and Mechanisms

(1) Terms/concepts to know: phonology, morphology, lexicon, syntax, pragmatics, grammar, phonemes, morphemes, derivational morpheme, inflectional morpheme, compounding, linguistic infinity, prescriptive grammar, descriptive grammar, Marr's hierarchy, computational level, algorithmic level, implementational level

(2) What does it mean to say that children don't get explicit instruction in much of the knowledge they eventually come to have about language? What kind of input do they get? What evidence is there that children don't pay much attention to explicit corrections their parents make about the grammatical form of the utterances they produce?

(3) What is "noise" for language acquisition? Give an example of "noise" a child might encounter in language input.

(4) How can you demonstrate that we can create an infinite number of sentences? Why does this mean that we need rules for generating sentences?

(5) Why do prescriptive grammar rules have to be taught in school in order for speakers to use them? (That is, why aren't they learned just by listening to native speakers speak?) What's an example of a prescriptive rule of English grammar?

(6) Do descriptive grammar rules have to be taught in school in order for speakers to use them? Why or why not? What's an example of a descriptive rule of English grammar?

(7) Why might it be difficult to teach a child the meaning of a word like "the"?

(8) One view of language learning supposes that children learn language via imitation. Give one example that shows children are not simply imitating the language they hear. Be sure to point out why this example shows the child is producing something different than what they would have heard from native speakers of the language.

(9) We might expect children to continuously improve their language performance. Describe one piece of evidence that demonstrates that sometimes children's performance worsens before it gets better again.

(10) In the cash register example in the lecture notes, the computation of addition was carried out by placing numbers in a column and following the rules of addition to add up the columns until a final answer was reached. Electronic and mechanical components implemented the rules of addition.

(a) Suppose the process of addition is carried out by a very small man inside the cash register who placed numbers in a column on a very small blackboard and follows the

rules of addition. What level(s) would this be a change to? Make sure to explain your answer.

(b) Suppose the process of addition is carried out by a very small man inside the cash register, who derives the correct answer by tossing a set of dice in the air. What level(s) would this be a change to? Make sure to explain why you think so.