

Assignment 1

1. (4 points) On page 16, Pinker quotes linguist Max Weinreich when he says “a language is just a dialect with an army and a navy.” What does he mean by this?

2. (12 points) In each pair of sentences below, one would be called “ungrammatical” in sense (a) on page 11 of the APS book (it does not conform to a norm of “standard” English) whereas the other would be called “ungrammatical” in sense (b), the linguist’s sense (it does not follow the system of “rules” of native speakers of English). For each pair,

- state which is ungrammatical in sense (a) and which in sense (b).
- state what the “standard” native English version would be.
- try to decide WHAT makes the sentence ungrammatical in sense (a) or (b).

a. Me and my mom went to the movies.

Me went to the movies.

b. We no need no stinking badges!

We don’t need no stinking badges!

c. I ain't going to the store.

I aren't going to the store.

d. Finish quickly your carrots.

Finish your carrots quick.

3. (10 points) In class we looked at 2 instances of real life evidence that to support the claim that language is biologically innate and not a human invention. Briefly describe one instance and give one specific piece of evidence that supports this claim, ie. if I were discussing pidgins and creoles, I would want to give a specific example of how pidgins and creoles are different. Make sure you explain how your evidence supports this claim.

4. (4 points) How do the cases of Specific Language Impairment (SLI) and William Syndrome support the claim that language is a biological human function separate from general intelligence?

5. (5 points) The Whorf hypothesis claims that language causes its speakers to view the world in certain ways.

As an example of how different languages might influence world view, consider the following example of possessives in Marshallese and English. Whereas English uses a possessive pronoun followed by the noun, Marshallese must also use a possessive classifier. A classifier is a word applying to objects that share certain characteristics, eg. *kij-* is used for food, *lim-* for drinks, *nej-* for children, pets and musical instruments.

<u>English</u>	<u>Marshallese</u>
my rice	raij eo kij-a rice the "classifier"-my
my cola	kola eo nim-a cola the "classifier"-my
my dog	kidu eo nej-u dog the "classifier"-my

Using these facts we might argue that English speakers see objects in the world as differentiated individuals with no particular connection to each other whereas Marshallese speakers see objects as representative of a more abstract group. WHAT IS THE FALLACY OF REASONING IN THIS ARGUMENT THAT THE SYSTEM OF LANGUAGE STRUCTURE INFLUENCES WORLD VIEW?

6. (5 points) In the film "Colorless Green Ideas," Chomsky uses the sentence "Colorless green ideas sleep furiously" to make a point about the connection between language and thought. What is this point? Give one example that supports the independence of language and thought and explain how this supports the independence of language and thought. Your example may be from the film, lecture, readings or one you have made up on your own.