

Fall 2011 Midterm Study Questions
85-423/723 Cognitive Development
October 19, 2011

1. What is dynamic assessment? What are its advantages and disadvantages? Would dynamic assessment be a superior alternative to current standardized tests?
2. What good does it do people to have good self-monitoring skills? Why might younger children be less good at self-monitoring than older ones?
3. How does communication differ from meaning?
4. How well do Piaget's general characterizations, such as preoperational stage children being described as egocentric, fit children's thinking?
5. What is the logic underlying the moderate discrepancy hypothesis? Does the moderate discrepancy hypothesis provide useful insights for improving children's learning?
6. What is grammar? What evidence is there that it is separate from meaning psychologically?
7. What is intersubjectivity, how does it develop, and why is it such an important concept within sociocultural theories?
8. What similarities unite information processing theories? What dissimilarities divide them? Are the similarities or differences among information processing theories greater?
9. What is the "language explosion," and what does it tell us about the developing child?
10. High IQ children with little knowledge of soccer learn less about new soccer games they are told about than do low IQ children with more knowledge of soccer. What are the implications of this finding?
11. Why do infants become less able with age to discriminate sounds from languages other than their own? Why does the change occur at the age that it does?
12. Why are psychologists interested in individual differences in children's thinking? Is the interest primarily for practical reasons, for theoretical ones, or both?
13. Why is prior knowledge both helpful and harmful in children's eyewitness testimony? If you were a jury member, would you put more credence in the eyewitness testimony of a child who had a lot of prior knowledge about the person who was accused of a crime or a child who had never met the person?

14. Do infants perceive sounds categorically? On what evidence is this conclusion based? (Describe the experiment and the logic underlying it.)
15. What are the implications of cognitive variability for Piagetian and information processing approaches to children's thinking? How can the variability be explained within each approach?
16. How do babies choose which words to include (and not include) in their early utterances? What do their choices tell us about their purpose in talking?
17. What is the logic underlying looking time experiments with infants, such as that of the Spelke (1976) study of intermodal integration? What are the advantages and disadvantages of this approach?
18. In what ways do languages accommodate the abilities of toddlers?
19. What is infantile amnesia, and why do you think it is universal?
20. What are Piaget's proposed change mechanisms of assimilation, accommodation, and equilibration? What are their strengths and weaknesses? Are the strengths or the weaknesses of these mechanisms greater?
21. What is the difference between the intermental and the intramental levels of learning? Why are both necessary within Vygotsky's theory? How does learning about abacuses illustrate both levels of learning?