

Second and Last Seminar Paper Due Friday, May 22

Assignment: Write a 3-page (double spaced, normal margined) paper. If it is initially shorter than 3 pages you need to explore the question more extensively. It can be longer than 3 pages only if you have a particularly challenging take on the question. The paper should make clear reference to the text, but should not be just a collection of quotations. Select one of the questions listed below for your paper. Indicate which one. The questions are designed to integrate some of the texts we have read. If you see any connections to additional texts relating to the topic you could include them as well.

Q1 On p. 258, Bloom draws an analogy between language and vision: “Language may be useful in the same sense that vision is useful. It is not a mechanism that gives rise to the capacity to generate and appreciate these ideas in the first place.” Do you find this analogy apt? Bloom goes on to say that his book “can be seen as a long argument for just this conclusion.” Discuss whether you think the book is successful in this endeavor, by pointing to evidence that seemed particularly compelling (or particularly weak) to you. Compare or contrast Bloom’s view on language and its evolution to at least one other author we have read.. (*Adapted from Bloom II Q6*)

Q2. Discuss the four features of Lieberman’s proposed model (pp. 6-7). How do these features relate to his claims about human language and its evolution? Mithen ends the book with a coda concerned with the evolution of *homo sapien* language. In particular, how does he account for the transition from Hmmmm language to compositional language using a modified version of Wray’s ideas (p. 253)? How does his view about the move of compositional language from the role of supplement to that of the dominant form of communication allow him to accept a version of Bickerton’s position on protolanguage (p. 259-260)? Compare or contrast Mithen’s view with that of Lieberman or Chomsky. (*Adapted from seminar questions Lieberman I Q2, and Mithen II Q6*)

Q3 How, if at all, do Lieberman and Chomsky differ with respect to evolution of language? Cite relevant portions of Chomsky’s *On Nature and Language* or the 2002 *Science* article. Do you think that Lieberman’s claim to having outlined an approach to language and its evolution justifies his “final message” calling for a biological linguistics that is “real science.” (p. 167) (*Adapted from seminar questions Lieberman II, Q7, Chomsky Q5*)

Q4 In Chapter 2, Chomsky traces aspects of the history of science relating to Galileo, Descartes and Newton. He returns to the discussion of the “Galilean style” of science in Ch. 4 (p. 98). Given what was said in both chapters, what exactly is the “Galilean style” or what he calls the “Galilean-Newtonian style” (p.104) He more explicitly embraced Popperian falsificationism in the handout from Wednesday of Week 7. How do these two approaches to the philosophy of science relate to his linguistics? (Optionally, do you see any aspects of them in the Jackendoff reading?) (*Adapted from Chomsky seminar question Q1*)

More Challenging (“extra credit”) Alternatives

Q5 What is Chomsky’s (“final”) view of language and its evolution in the two readings posted on Moodle (Hauser, Chomsky, Fitch 2002) and relevant portions of (Fitch, Hauser and Chomsky2005—you will have to read additional sections of this, and how do they differ from that of Jackendoff (in our text and (optionally) sections of (Pinker and Jackendoff 2004, or Pinker and Jackendoff 2005 on Moodle).

Q6 Devise a question related to the themes of the program as you understand them and the readings and topics covered in Week 3-8. Write out the question. Get approval from your seminar leader. You should submit the question AND your reason for thinking that it is relevant (up to 1 page) as well as the paper addressing the question. You will be evaluated on both the question and the paper.