

Homework 1: Preliminary ideas of linguistic theory

Linguistics 201, Fall 2015

8 September 2015

- 1 Discuss the difference between the following two statements. What terms we learned in class sum up the difference, which of the two better reflects the point of view taken in this class, and why is this question important?
 - a People who say "I didn't see nobody" instead of "I didn't see anybody" are speaking ungrammatically and must be corrected; double negatives are poor English.
 - b Some varieties of English allow double negation, such that "I didn't see nobody" is used more commonly than (but means the same as) "I didn't see anybody", while other varieties disallow the first version. But, both varieties of English have systematic grammars which produce the respective structures.
- 2 Discuss two pieces of evidence that linguistic structure is subject to rules, even when the rules are not taught.
- 3 What is the Big Question which we will be investigating throughout this course, and why would we want to answer it?
- 4 Think of an English utterance that is unacceptable – that sounds unnatural to you (or if you are not a native English speaker, that sounds unnatural to them). How would you change it to make it natural? What did you change? What part of linguistic form (sound, word-form, sentence-form)?

DUE IN CLASS, 9/15