

READING REVIEW EXERCISE (Skills 1–6): Read the passage and answer the questions that follow.

Paragraph

Caretaker Speech

- 1► Children learn to construct language from those around them. Until about the age of three, children tend to learn to develop their language by modeling the speech of their parents, but from that time on, peers have a growing influence as models for language development in children. It is easy to observe that, when adults and older children interact with younger children, they tend to modify their language to improve communication with younger children, and this modified language is called caretaker speech.
- 2► Caretaker speech is used often quite unconsciously; few people actually study how to modify language when speaking to young children but, instead, without thinking, find ways to reduce the complexity of language in order to communicate effectively with young children. **5A** A caretaker will unconsciously speak in one way with adults and in a very different way with young children. **5B** Caretaker speech tends to be slower speech with short, simple words and sentences which are said in a higher-pitched voice with exaggerated inflections and many repetitions of essential information. **5C** It is not limited to what is commonly called baby talk, which generally refers to the use of simplified, repeated syllable expressions such as “ma-ma,” “boo-boo,” “bye-bye,” “wa-wa,” but also includes the simplified sentence structures repeated in sing-song inflections. **5D**
- 3► Caretaker speech serves the very important function of allowing young children to acquire language more easily. The higher-pitched voice and the exaggerated inflections tend to focus the small child on what the caretaker is saying, the simplified words and sentences make it easier for the small child to begin to comprehend, and the repetitions reinforce the child’s developing understanding. Then, as a child’s speech develops, caretakers tend to adjust their language in response to the improved language skills, again quite unconsciously. Parents and older children regularly adjust their speech to a level that is slightly above that of a younger child; without studied recognition of what they are doing, these caretakers will speak in one way to a one-year-old and in a progressively more complex way as the child reaches the age of two or three.
- 4► It is thought by some linguists that this adaptation of speech to the corresponding verbal ability of a child is in fact a response to cues from the young child that may also be processed unconsciously. For instance, as a caretaker speaks to an infant, the infant may respond with smiles, laughter, or other vocal sounds. This signals to the caretaker that the infant is responding positively to the speech. Even an intense gaze at the speaker by the infant indicates that the infant understands that a message is being conveyed, which in turn encourages the speaker to continue to adjust the speech with repetitions, exaggerated expressions, or other appropriate means in order to communicate more effectively. As the child grows, the caretaker continues to process the changes in the child’s unconscious cues and adapts speech directed at the child accordingly.

5► **13A** An important point to note is that the function covered by caretaker speech, that of assisting a child to acquire language in small and simple steps, is an unconsciously used but extremely important part of the process of language acquisition and as such is quite universal. **13B** Studying cultures where children do not acquire language through caretaker speech is difficult because such cultures are difficult to find. **13C** The question of why caretaker speech is universal is not clearly understood; instead, proponents on either side of the nature vs. nurture debate argue over whether caretaker speech is a natural function or a learned one. **13D** Those who believe that caretaker speech is a natural and inherent function in humans believe that it is human nature for children to acquire language and for those around them to encourage their language acquisition naturally; the presence of a child is itself a natural stimulus that increases the rate of caretaker speech among those present. In contrast, those who believe that caretaker speech develops through nurturing rather than nature argue that a person who is attempting to communicate with a child will learn by trying out different ways of communicating to determine which is the most effective from the reactions to the communication attempts; a parent might, for example, learn to use speech with exaggerated inflections with a small child because the exaggerated inflections do a better job of attracting the child's attention than do more subtle inflections. Whether caretaker speech results from nature or nurture, it does play an important and universal role in child language acquisition.

1. According to paragraph 1, children over the age of three
 - (A) learn little language from those around them
 - (B) are no longer influenced by the language of their parents
 - (C) are influenced more and more by those closer to their own age
 - (D) first begin to respond to caretaker speech

2. The word "modeling" in paragraph 1 could best be replaced by
 - (A) demonstrating
 - (B) mimicking
 - (C) building
 - (D) designing

3. Which of the sentences below best expresses the essential information in the highlighted sentence in paragraph 2? *Incorrect* choices change the meaning in important ways or leave out essential information.

- (A) Most people are quite aware of the use of caretaker speech because of thorough study and research about it.
- (B) The unconscious use of caretaker speech involves a reduction in the complexity of language, while the conscious use of caretaker speech involves an increase in complexity.
- (C) Young children tend to use caretaker speech quite unconsciously in order to reduce the complexity of their thoughts to language that they can express.
- (D) People generally seem to be able to adapt their language to the level of a child's language without thinking consciously about it.

4. The word "It" in paragraph 2 refers to

- (A) caretaker speech
- (B) a higher-pitched voice
- (C) essential information
- (D) baby talk

5. Look at the four squares [■] that indicate where the following sentence could be added to paragraph 2.

Examples of these are expressions such as "Say bye-bye" or "Where's da-da?"

Where would the sentence best fit? Click on a square [■] to add the sentence to the passage.

6. All of the following are mentioned in paragraph 3 as characteristics of caretaker speech EXCEPT

- (A) overemphasized inflections
- (B) the use of rhyming sounds
- (C) the tendency to repeat oneself
- (D) the use of easier words and structures

7. It is indicated in paragraph 3 that parents tend to

- (A) speak in basically the same way to a one-year-old and a three-year-old
- (B) use language that is far above the language level of a child
- (C) speak in a progressively less complex way as a child matures
- (D) modify their speech according to the language development of a child

8. The word "processed" in paragraph 4 could best be replaced by

- (A) advanced
- (B) developed
- (C) figured out
- (D) proceeded

9. Which of the sentences below best expresses the essential information in the highlighted sentence in paragraph 4? *Incorrect* choices change the meaning in important ways or leave out essential information.

- (A) The caretaker uses his own gaze to adjust the level of speech in order to help the infant understand better.
- (B) Infants communicate through exaggerated facial expressions, which are understood and adjusted to by the speaker to communicate more clearly.
- (C) Even though the infant looks intently at the speaker, the infant cannot usually understand that a message is being shared between the speaker and infant.
- (D) By interpreting the way an infant is looking at the person speaking, caretaker speech can be modified to make it clearer to the infant.

10. The word "that" in paragraph 5 refers to

- (A) an important point
- (B) the function
- (C) caretaker speech
- (D) a child's reading skills

11. According to paragraph 5, it is NOT expected that someone who believes in nurture over nature

- (A) would believe that caretaker speech is more of a learned style of language than a natural one
- (B) would use different styles of caretaker speech with children in response to what is working best
- (C) would learn to use different styles of caretaker speech with different children
- (D) would use less caretaker speech than do those who believe in nature over nurture

12. The phrase "trying out" in paragraph 5 is closest in meaning to

- (A) experimenting with
- (B) bringing about
- (C) throwing away
- (D) taking over

13. Look at the four squares [■] that indicate where the following sentence could be added to paragraph 5.

It is not merely a device used by English-speaking parents.

Where would the sentence best fit? Click on a square [■] to add the sentence to the passage.