

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON

University of London

EXAMINATION FOR INTERNAL STUDENTS

For The Following Qualification:–

M.A.

M.A. English Language (Modern): Topics in Modern English Linguistics

COURSE CODE : ENGLMA03

DATE : 05-MAY-05

TIME : 10.00

TIME ALLOWED : 3 Hours

MA in English Language (Modern) 2005

Topics in Modern English Linguistics

Answer three questions, two from one section and one from another section.

Begin each section in a new answer book.

Do not use substantially the same material in more than one answer, whether on this paper or in other parts of the examination.

SECTION A: English Transformational Syntax

1. "Theta Theory is the theory concerned with how predicates assign thematic roles to their arguments." (Napoli) Discuss.
2. Describe the structure of the verb phrase in the Chomskyan model of syntax.
3. Give a detailed account of the treatment of the passive construction in transformational grammar.
4. Write short notes on any *two* of the following, illustrating your answers with examples.
 - a. *do so*-replacement
 - b. PRO
 - c. the Subjacency Condition
 - d. Complementiser Phrase

SECTION B: Logic and Meaning A and B

1. Using your own examples, illustrate the distinction between 'sentence meaning' and 'speaker meaning'. Look at the example in (i) below. In what way does the linguistically-encoded content of an utterance of (i) underdetermine the proposition the speaker is expressing?
 - (i) He remembered the bat in the garden shed.
2. What was the main motivation behind Austin's speech-act theory? Using examples of your own, explain what is meant by 'locutionary act', 'illocutionary act' and 'perlocutionary act'. Can the same locutionary act be used to perform different illocutionary acts?

3. Answer parts (a) and (b):
- (a) Using examples of your own, illustrate the distinction made by Grice between natural meaning and non-natural meaning. Your answer should include two of the tests Grice used to distinguish these notions.
- (b) Grice agreed that cases of 'showing' were cases of overt intentional communication, but he did not regard them as cases of non-natural meaning. Why?
4. Answer parts (a), (b), (c) and (d) [note: parts (c) and (d) follow on page 3]:
- (a) Give a definition of semantic compositionality. Explain why it is thought to be necessary that semantic theories are compositional.
- (b) Consider the vocabulary, syntax, and semantics below for a fragment of English. Explain how the syntactic and semantic rules given guarantee semantic compositionality.

Vocabulary:

Homer, Bart, Mr. Burns, sings, dances, adores, loathes, and, or, it is not the case that

Syntax:

- 1) $S \rightarrow N VP$
- 2) $S \rightarrow S \text{ conj } S$
- 3) $S \rightarrow \text{neg } S$
- 4) $VP \rightarrow V_i N$
- 5) $VP \rightarrow V_i$
- 6) $N \rightarrow \text{Homer, Bart, Mr. Burns}$
- 7) $V_i \rightarrow \text{sings, dances}$
- 8) $V_i \rightarrow \text{adores, loathes}$
- 9) $\text{conj} \rightarrow \text{and, or}$
- 10) $\text{neg} \rightarrow \text{it is not the case that}$

Denotations of lexical items

(NB: entities in brackets on the left-hand side are lexical items; entities on the right-hand side are individuals, sets of individuals, sets of ordered pairs of individuals, or functions.)

[[Homer]] = Homer

[[Bart]] = Bart

[[Mr. Burns]] = Mr. Burns

[[sings]] = {x: x sings}

[[dances]] = {x: x dances}

[[adores]] = {<x,y>: x adores y}

[[loathes]] = {<x,y>: x loathes y}

[[and]] =
$$\begin{bmatrix} \langle 1, 1 \rangle \rightarrow 1 \\ \langle 1, 0 \rangle \rightarrow 0 \\ \langle 0, 1 \rangle \rightarrow 0 \\ \langle 0, 0 \rangle \rightarrow 0 \end{bmatrix}$$

[[or]] =
$$\begin{bmatrix} \langle 1, 1 \rangle \rightarrow 1 \\ \langle 1, 0 \rangle \rightarrow 1 \\ \langle 0, 1 \rangle \rightarrow 1 \\ \langle 0, 0 \rangle \rightarrow 0 \end{bmatrix}$$

[[not]] =
$$\begin{bmatrix} 1 \rightarrow 0 \\ 0 \rightarrow 1 \end{bmatrix}$$

Semantic rules

1. If A is a non-branching node and α is A's daughter, then $[[A]] = [[\alpha]]$
2. $[[S N VP]] = 1$ iff $[[N]] \in [[VP]]$
3. $[[VP \forall t N]] = \{x: \langle x, [[N]] \rangle \in [[\forall t]]\}$
4. $[[S S_1 \text{ conj } S_2]] = [[\text{conj}]] (\langle [[S_1]], [[S_2]] \rangle)$
5. $[[S \text{ neg } S]] = [[\text{neg}]] ([[S]])$

(c) Using the vocabulary, syntax and semantics given, draw a labelled syntactic tree for sentence (i) below and then derive its truth conditions.

(i) Bart adores Homer and Homer loathes Bart

(d) Given the information below and the truth-conditions you derived in (b), state the truth-value of sentence (i) above, showing how it is derived from the semantic values of its components.

$\langle x, y \rangle: x \text{ adores } y = \{ \langle \text{Homer, Bart} \rangle, \langle \text{Bart, Homer} \rangle, \langle \text{Mr. Burns, Bart} \rangle, \langle \text{Mr. Burns, Mr. Burns} \rangle \}$

$\langle x, y \rangle: x \text{ loathes } y = \{ \langle \text{Homer, Mr. Burns} \rangle \}$

5. Answer parts (a), (b), (c) and (d):

(a) (i) Define the notion of 'logically valid argument'.
 (ii) Give an example, in English, of a logically valid argument which could be shown to be valid using the rule of modus tollens (MTT). Give a translation of the argument into propositional logic, with a key stating what each variable stands for.

(b) Construct truth tables for each of the following formulae of propositional logic. In each case, say whether the formula is a tautology, a contradiction or a contingency.

(i) $\neg (P \vee \neg P) \rightarrow (P \wedge Q)$

(ii) $(R \wedge S) \wedge (S \wedge \neg R)$

(iii) $(P \rightarrow P) \rightarrow P$

(c) Construct truth tables for the following arguments. In each case say whether the argument is valid or not.

(i) $P \vdash P$

(ii) $(P \vee Q), (Q \vee \neg R) \vdash \neg P$

(d) Give syntactic proofs for each of the following arguments.

(i) $(\neg(P \wedge R) \rightarrow \neg\neg Q), (R \rightarrow S), Q \vdash (S \wedge P)$

(ii) $((P \wedge Q) \wedge S), (P \rightarrow (R \rightarrow T)), R \vdash T$

SECTION C: English Accents and Dialects

1. Large cities often exert considerable linguistic influence on their surrounding regions. Discuss this with reference to English pronunciation in the southeast of England.
2. “A person’s accent is one of the marks of social identity – social class, age, and sexuality” (Coggle). Discuss and illustrate this claim.
3. What are the main phonetic and phonological differences between British and American English? How important are they from the point of view of the learner of English as a second or foreign language?

SECTION D: Methodology and Corpus Linguistics

1. “All too often the data in linguistic books and articles are dubious, which in turn casts doubts on the analyses. Since analyses usually build on the results of previous analyses, the effect of one set of dubious data left unquestioned can have far-reaching repercussions that are not easily perceived.” (Greenbaum, 1977)

Does the corpus-based approach to linguistics solve the problem of ‘dubious data’?

2. Discuss the notion of ‘representativeness’ in corpus design.
3. Compare the use of corpora and elicitation tests in linguistic research.