



LINGUISTICS ADMISSIONS ASSESSMENT  
CONTENT SPECIFICATION

## Overview

The purpose of the Linguistics Admissions Assessment is to determine a candidate's potential to achieve in an academically demanding undergraduate degree course. The assessment is designed to be challenging, in order to differentiate effectively between able applicants, including those who may have achieved the highest possible grades in school examinations.

The total time for the Linguistics assessment is one hour.

Candidates are required to answer questions in three parts. The subject matter in all three parts does not assume prior knowledge of linguistic theory nor prior knowledge of particular languages. Part 1 is a structured analysis of language data. Part 2 is an analysis of quantitative data. Part 3 is a short essay. The assessment is designed to assess candidates' ability to reason and infer in response to linguistic data, to demonstrate understanding and interpretation skills in response to quantitative information and to write with clarity and precision, producing a coherent argument under time pressure.

Dictionaries may **not** be used in any part of this assessment.

## APPENDIX: SPECIMEN QUESTIONS

### INFORMATION FOR CANDIDATES

Do not worry if you find you have little to say about some of the questions, or if you do not have technical terms for the features you wish to describe. How you go about finding answers and how you prioritise your time in producing the answers is more important to us than seeing a complete answer for each question in the test. Aim to spend about 20 minutes on each part. Your answers will be marked on the assumption that you have divided your time roughly equally between the 3 parts.

#### **PART 1 (total value 30 marks)**

**(20 mins)**

The following examples are from Tunen, a Bantu language spoken in Cameroon.

- The intermediate (“gloss”) lines contain the following abbreviations:

EMPH – emphatic

LOC – locative (marks location)

POSS – possessive (marks ownership)

PRS - present

PST – past

SG – singular

- Numbers correspond to persons, i.e. 1 = first person, “I/we”; 2 = second person, “you (singular & plural)”; 3 = third person, “he/she/it/they”.

#### The Tunen data

- a) Aná mòné índì.  
3SG.PST money give  
'(S)he gave money.'
- b) Méndò bòniàkà né.  
1SG.PRS yams eat  
'I am eating yams.'
- c) Aná mùsába bàt.  
3SG.PST machete collect  
'(S)he collected the machete.'
- d) Aná índì á mòné.  
3SG.PST give EMPH money  
'(S)he gave MONEY (specifically, as opposed to something else).'
- e) Mèná nyá há mwéníf.  
1SG.PST drink only water  
'I drank only water.'
- f) Aná kǎfàm o way òmbèl.  
3SG.PST arrive LOC 3SG.POSS house  
'(S)he arrived at his/her house.'
- g) Aná mwèluku húli way 'sòy.  
3SG.PST palm.wine remove 3SG.POSS canoe  
'(S)he removed the palm-wine from his/her canoe.'

**QUESTIONS:**

1. Which of the following sentences corresponds to the meaning “She ate only yams at his house (not anything else).”:  
[2 marks]

Circle the correct answer.

- A. Aná há bònìàkà né o way òmbel.
- B. Aná né á bònìàkà o òmbel.
- C. Aná né há bònìàkà o way òmbel.
- D. Aná né há bònìàkà o òmbel.

2. How would you say the following:

- A. ‘I am drinking palm-wine.’ [4 marks]

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- B. ‘I collected his machete at the house.’ [4 marks]

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3. Identify two respects in which Tunen shares grammatical properties with English. [10 marks]

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4. Identify two respects in which Tunen differs from English [10 marks]

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**PART 2 (total value 30 marks)**

**(20 mins)**

Speech scientists and researchers in phonetics are interested in speakers' pausing behaviour because it can help us to understand how speech is planned and executed. The data presented in Figures 1-3 were collected to investigate whether pausing behaviour differs across two accents of English, York English and Standard Southern British English (SSBE). "er" represents filled pauses consisting of a vowel sound, e.g. *er*, *ah*, etc. "erm" represents filled pauses consisting of a vowel sound followed by an "m", e.g. *erm*, *um*, etc. Silent pauses are defined as a period of silence lasting more than 200 milliseconds occurring within a speaker's utterance. The number of occurrences of each type of pause was measured per 100 syllables of speech for a group of 20 speakers of York English, and for a group of 20 speakers of SSBE. Averages across the results for the 20 speakers of each accent are given in Figure 1. The rates of filled and silent pauses produced by each individual speaker of York English and by each individual speaker of SSBE are given in Figures 2 and 3 respectively.

Figure 1. Average rates of pausing by pause type for 20 speakers of York English and 20 speakers of Standard Southern British English.

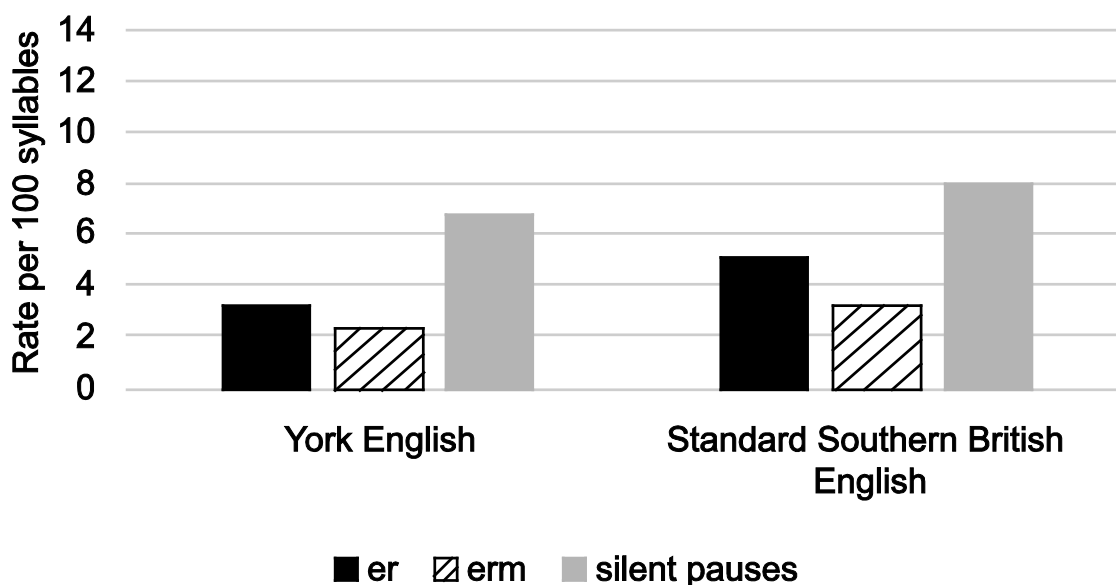


Figure 2. Rates of pausing by pause type for individual speakers of York English, labelled Y1, Y2, ..., Y20.

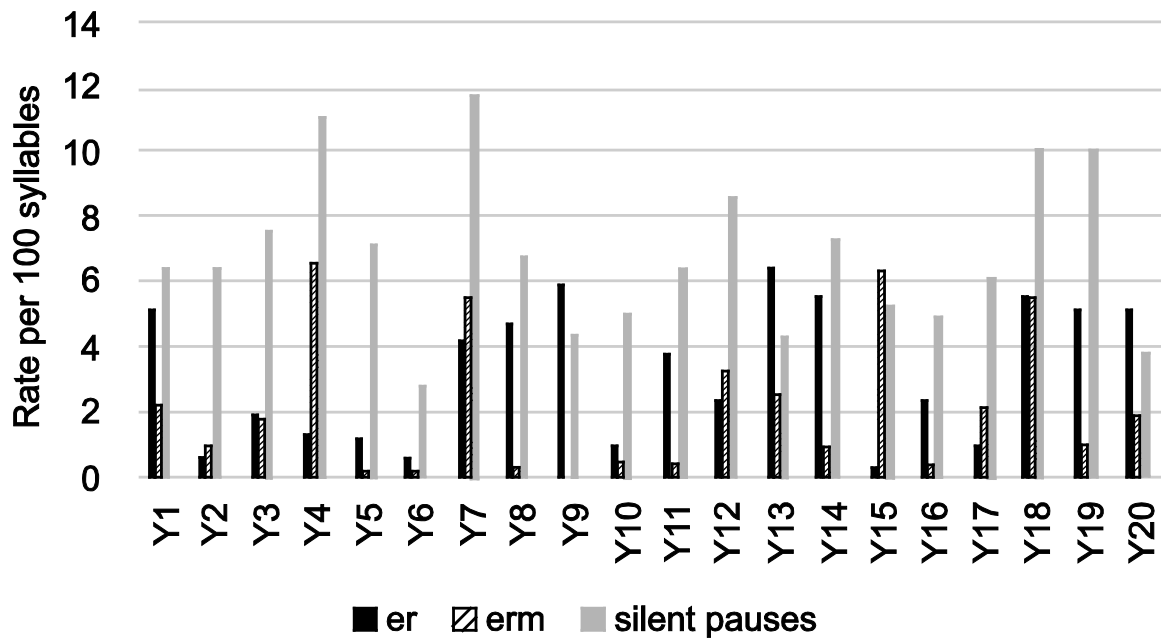
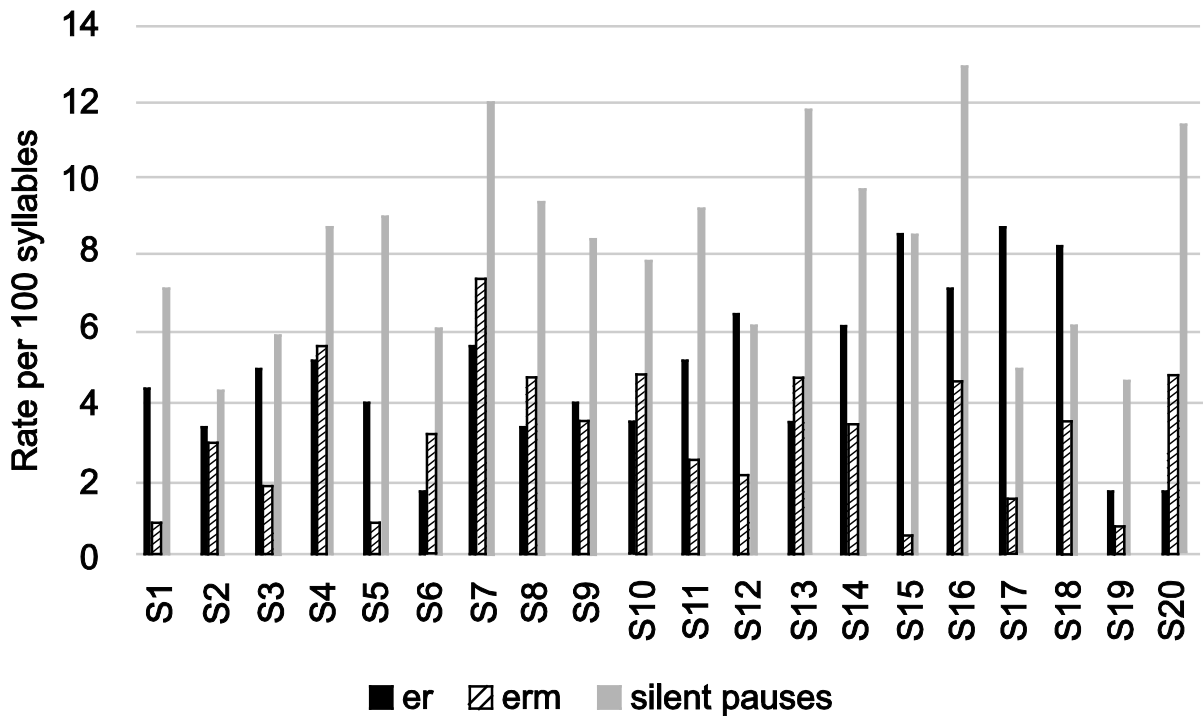


Figure 3. Rates of pausing by pause type for individual speakers of Standard Southern British English, labelled S1, S2, ..., S20.



**QUESTIONS:**

**For questions 1-3 below, circle the correct answer.**

1. Which one of the following statements is correct? [2 marks]

- A. Comparing the two accents, filled pauses occur most often in SSBE and silent pauses occur most often in York English.
- B. SSBE exhibits the greater use of both filled pauses and silent pauses for the two accents.
- C. York English shows the most frequent use of filled pauses and SSBE shows the most frequent use of silent pauses.
- D. York English is the accent which exhibits the most filled pauses and the most silent pauses.

2. Which one of the following statements is correct? [2 marks]

- A. The type of filled pause speakers prefer in both accents is “erm”.
- B. Of the filled pause types, York English speakers use “er” and SSBE speakers use “erm” most often.
- C. York English speakers use “er” less frequently than “erm” and SSBE speakers use “erm” less frequently than “er”.
- D. In both York English and SSBE “er” is more popular than “erm”.

3. Which one of the following statements is correct? [2 marks]

- A. In York English, silent pauses are preferred over filled pauses, while in SSBE filled pauses are preferred over silent pauses.
- B. Silent pauses are used more frequently than filled pauses in both accents.
- C. Silent pauses are more popular than filled pauses in York English and the reverse is true for SSBE.
- D. In SSBE and York English, filled pauses are used more often than silent pauses.

4. To what extent is this pattern shown by the averages in Figure 1 mirrored by the results for the individual speakers of each accent shown in Figures 2 and 3? [8 marks]

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5. Evaluate the use of averages when they are applied to data of this kind. (If you prefer to use diagrams in your answer, you are free to do this.) [8 marks]

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6. What other strategies might a researcher use to represent the pausing behaviour of the groups of speakers shown in Figures 2 and 3 and why? (If you prefer to use diagrams in your answer, you are free to do this.) [8 marks]

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**PART 3 (total value 30 marks)**

**(20 mins)**

Please read the information below carefully, and then answer the question in the space provided. In your answer, compare the examples that are given and refer to them in your discussion. The discussion should be short, coherent, and with a clear structure.

Since the 19th century we have known that damage to certain areas of the brain causes different types of 'aphasias' or language impairments:

Receptive aphasia

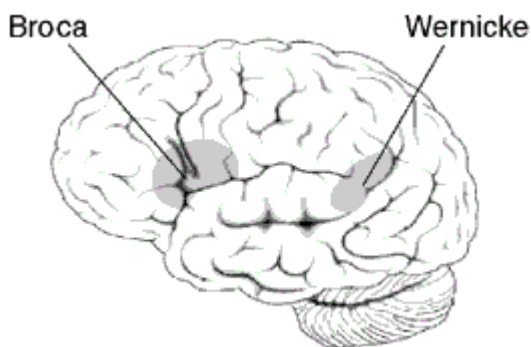
Individuals with neurological damage to Wernicke's area often suffer from what is called 'receptive aphasia', because the patient is unable to understand language in its written or spoken form, and (s)he cannot express thoughts meaningfully using language. Receptive aphasics may say things like:

- i. "You know that smoodle pinkered and that I want to get him round and take care of him like you want before" but intended to say "The dog needs to go out so I will take him for a walk".

Expressive aphasia

Aphasics with damage to Broca's area, by contrast, suffer from what is often called 'expressive aphasia'. They may say things like

- ii. "Walk dog" which could mean, for instance, "I will take the dog for a walk", "You take the dog for a walk" or even "The dog walked out of the yard".
- iii. "Biscuit Susie" which could mean, for instance, "The biscuits are Susie's", "The biscuit is Susie's", or "The biscuits were made by Susie".



(Illustration taken from NIH publication 97-4257, <http://www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/voice/aphasia.asp>)



