LINGUISTICS ADMISSIONS ASSESSMENT

CONTENT SPECIFICATION

2019

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 assessment will take two hours and consists of two sections:

Section 1

Section 1 is an assessment of candidates' reading skills, including their ability to read critically, understand main ideas in texts, analyse detail and grasp implicit meaning.

Section 1 is in multiple-choice format. 1 hour is allowed for this section of the assessment.

Section 2

For Section 2, candidates are required to answer questions in three parts. This section 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.

1 hour is allowed for this section of the assessment.

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

Section 1

Section 1 of the Linguistics Admissions Assessment assesses the ability to understand and draw meaning from texts in a multiple-choice format. This section of the assessment is not subject-specific, and texts included will be on a variety of topics and may be drawn from a range of sources.

All academic subjects require the ability to critically read a variety of sometimes challenging texts for meaning. Specifically, the tasks in Section 1 focus on identifying the way in which the texts are structured, the main ideas being presented, and the way in which these are supported and developed.

Section 1 consists of four tasks, based around text excerpts. Each task will have a set of multiple-choice questions with four options. Questions will not require specialist knowledge or any information beyond what is contained within the texts.

There are specimen questions for Section 1 in the Appendix of this document.

Content

Each task will use recently written texts, from authentic sources, in English. Sources may include works of non-fiction (at a relatively high level conceptually and linguistically but which do not assume specialist subject knowledge), newspapers, general interest magazines, book reviews, abstracts written for research papers or journal articles, and professional websites. Texts will not depend on the understanding of specific aspects of British culture.

Questions will require candidates to:

- look at the main ideas and focus of a text;

- analyse the detail and distinguish opinions and attitudes presented in the text;

- determine the writer's purpose in writing the text, including consideration of intended audience;

- extract implications and implicitly stated elements of the text;

- draw comparisons and contrasts within a text or between different texts.

For all tasks, the emphasis is on identification of opinion, attitude, purpose and inferred meaning rather than the retrieval of directly stated factual details. Questions may also focus on elements of text organisation which support meaning, such as the use of exemplification and comparison.

Format

Section 1 consists of four tasks. **Candidates will be required to answer all questions in all of the tasks.** Each task will consist of one or more text excerpts and a set of four-option multiple-choice questions. There will be no overlap between tasks. Answers to questions will not depend on other questions.

Task 1: Understanding Short Texts

Questions in this task are on two short abstracts, or reviews on a common topic. Texts will be no more than 200 words each. The task assesses a candidate's ability to identify, compare and contrast features of two different texts. The candidate's understanding of the two texts is tested through discrete questions aiming to cover a wide range of focuses with the emphasis on identification of opinion, attitude, purpose and inferred meaning rather than the retrieval of directly stated factual details. Questions may also focus on elements of text organisation which support meaning, such as the use of exemplification, comparison and reference.

Task 2: Multiple-Matching

Questions in this task are on four short extracts, either from four different writers on the same theme or four extracts from the same source. Extracts will be no more than 200 words each. This task requires candidates to locate a text where a particular idea is expressed, discounting ideas in other texts which may appear similar but do not reflect the whole of the question accurately. Each question requires the candidates to scan the four texts to locate the area of text which appears to contain the answer, and then to read this carefully to check that it is the correct answer.

Task 3: Understanding Extended Text

Questions in this task are on one extended text (of no more than 1000 words). The task assesses the understanding of a longer stretch of academic text which may include argument, supported claims, and reference to previous work and ideas in a particular field.

Task 4: Understanding Extended Text

Like Task 3, Task 4 tests the understanding of a longer stretch of academic text (in this case, of up to 1200 words) which may include argument, supported claims, and reference to previous work and ideas in a particular field.

Scoring

All questions are worth 1 mark. Marks are not deducted for incorrect answers, so candidates are advised to answer all questions.

Section 2

For Section 2 of the Linguistics Admissions Assessment, 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.

Section 2 assesses candidates' ability to:
- think analytically and logically
- select and use evidence appropriately
- demonstrate skills of quantitative analysis and interpretation
- produce coherent arguments
- address a question directly and clearly
- write with clarity and precision under time pressure

One hour is allowed.

APPENDIX: SPECIMEN QUESTIONS

Section 1

Task 1

Read the two abstracts below, which give summaries of two academic articles relating to cities and urban development. For questions 1 – 6, choose the answer (A, B, C or D) which you think fits best according to the texts.

ABSTRACT ONE

Retrofitting cities: Local governance in Sydney, Australia
Robyn Dowling, Pauline McGuirk, Harriet Bulkeley
Transforming cities to a lower carbon future is a key challenge of contemporary urban governance. Retrofitting the city – or modifying existing urban infrastructures, buildings and daily life to suit different energy sources and expectations of energy consumption – is essential to this transformation. In urban studies, little focus has been applied to the shape and character of urban governance frameworks and mechanisms required to successfully retrofit cities. In this paper we address this lacuna by exploring the logics, practices and dynamics of retrofitting governance in the Australian city. Using a governmentality perspective, the paper identifies the involvements of different scales of government in retrofitting policies and mechanisms and connections between them. Based on our survey of carbon reduction initiatives involving government, business and community actors across Australia's cities, we outline the types of retrofitting solutions being proposed and enacted. Focussing on initiatives from Sydney, Australia's largest city, the paper documents four key techniques through which retrofitting is being governed – self-governing, holistic, facilitative and educative. The findings indicate that governance gaps remain in attending to the daily life of technologies and the materiality of daily life.

ABSTRACT TWO

Critical research on eco-cities? A walk through the Sino-Singapore Tianjin Eco-City, China
Federico Caprotti
This article uses the narrative tool of a walk through Tianjin Eco-City, China, as an entry point in raising and discussing key questions in contemporary eco-city research. Eco-city projects are becoming increasingly prevalent in policy and political-economic discourses in a variety of locations as new urban spaces where blueprints for low carbon economies can be trialled. In light of this, the article highlights the necessity of, firstly, considering scale when analyzing eco-city 'futures'. Secondly, the article argues for the need to interrogate eco-cities' definitions, as well as their evaluation, performance and monitoring frameworks, as this will aid in critical analyses of the marketing and presentation of actually built eco-city projects. Thirdly, the question of internal social resilience needs to be assessed: this is of crucial importance in light of the exclusive, gated nature of several flagship eco-city projects under construction at present. Lastly, the article argues that research on eco-city projects needs to consider not only high-tech, new urban environments, but also the low-paid workers who form what the article calls the 'new urban poor', forming large, often transient populations on the edges of flagship 'sustainable' urban projects worldwide.

1   According to Abstract One, what is the main aim of the article on retrofitting cities?

    A   to defend the idea of retrofitting

    B   to point out weaknesses in retrofitting technology

    C   to describe the technology required for retrofitting

    D   to look at methods of achieving retrofitting

2   Which word from Abstract One describes the theoretical framework used by the writers in their analysis of retrofitting in Sydney?

    A   'lacuna'

    B   'governmentality'

    C   'holistic'

    D   'materiality'

3   In Abstract One, the writers claim that one feature of their research is that

    A   they have engaged with an area representing a weakness in the field.

    B   they have proposed a way of integrating key techniques.

    C   they have identified potentially divisive underlying attitudes.

    D   they have employed a controversial methodology.

4   In Abstract Two, the writer says that eco-city projects are important because

    A   they show that low carbon economies are sustainable.

    B   they provide an opportunity for testing economic models.

    C   they offer new opportunities for disadvantaged groups.

    D   they encourage political involvement in environmental issues.

5   In Abstract Two, 'exclusive, gated nature' contrasts with

    A   'internal social resilience'.

    B   'new urban environments'.

    C   'new urban poor'.

    D   'projects under construction'.

6   Which abstract or abstracts refer to the physical experience of a particular city being used as a stylistic device?

    A   neither abstract

    B   both abstracts

    C   Abstract One only

    D   Abstract Two only

Key

1 D **2** B **3** A **4** B **5** C **6** D

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.

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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".

<u>The Tunen data</u>

a)   Aná   mònέ índì.
        3SG.PST money give
        '(S)he gave money.'

b)   Méndò   bònìàkà nέ.
        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   mònέ.
        3SG.PST give EMPH money
        '(S)he gave MONEY (specifically, as opposed to something else).'

e)   Mèná   nyá há mwέníf.
        1SG.PST drink only water
        'I drank only water.'

f)   Aná   kāfàm o   way   ōmbɛl.
        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 hǎ bònìàkà nɛ́ o way ōmbɛl.
   B. Aná nɛ́ ǎ bònìàkà o ōmbɛl.
   C. Aná nɛ́ hǎ bònìàkà o way ōmbɛl.
   D. Aná nɛ́ hǎ bònìàkà o ōmbɛl.

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.
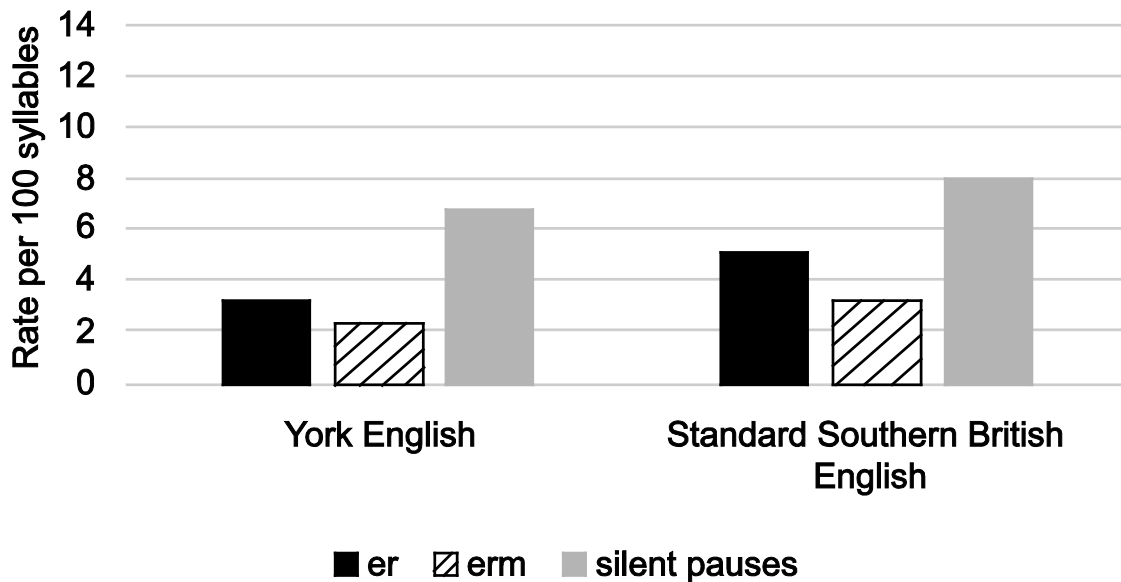
Figure 2. Rates of pausing by pause type for individual speakers of York English, labelled Y1, Y2, …, Y20.
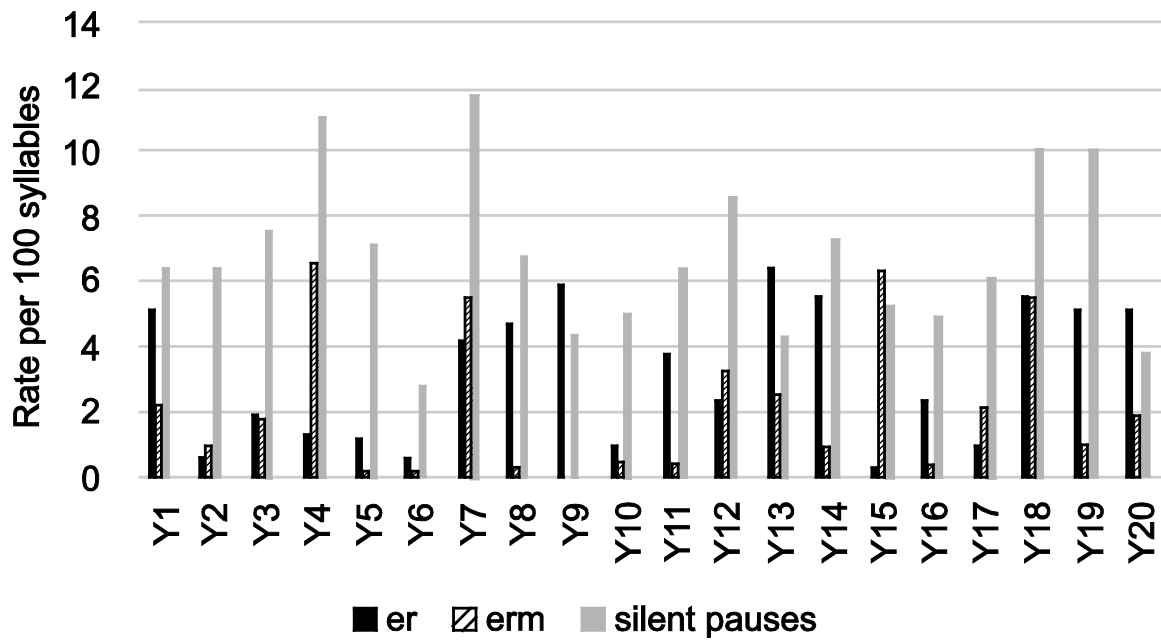
Figure 3. Rates of pausing by pause type for individual speakers of Standard Southern British English, labelled S1, S2, …, S20.
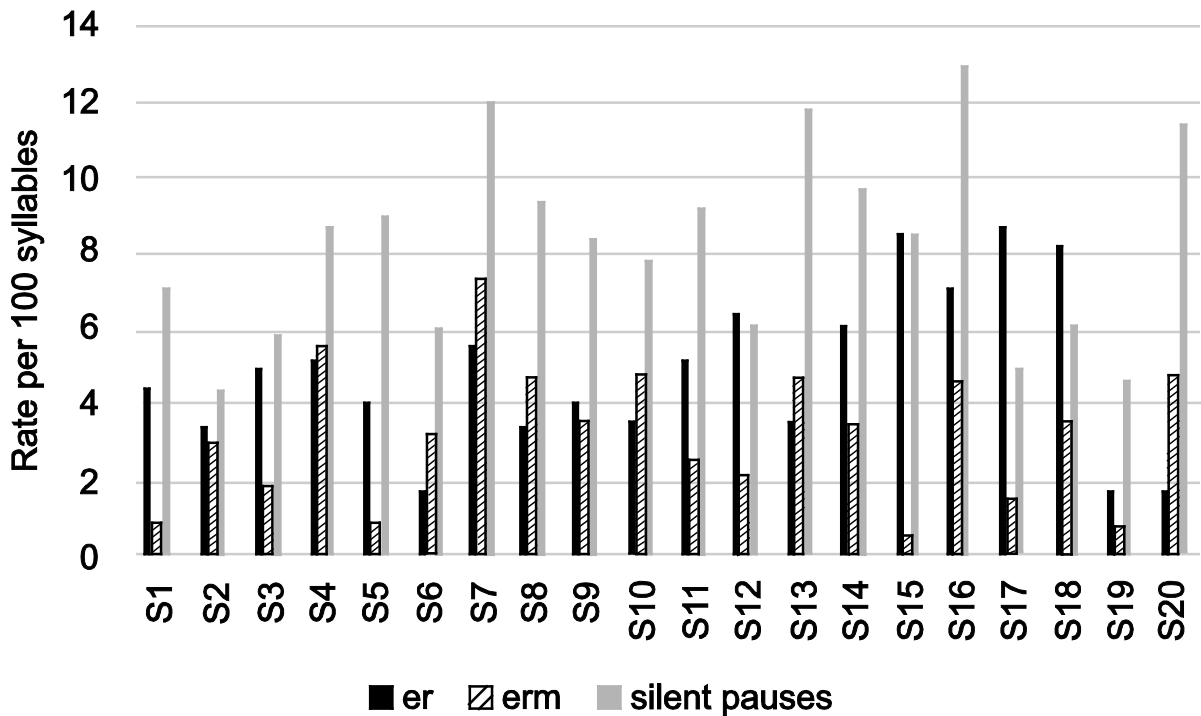
QUESTIONS:

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:

<u>Receptive aphasia</u>

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".

<u>Expressive aphasia</u>

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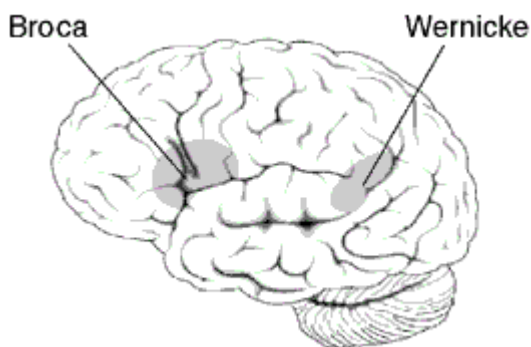
(Illustration taken from NIH publication 97-4257, http://www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/voice/aphasia.asp)

QUESTION:

What we can learn from studies of patients with language problems of these types by comparing the examples in i to iii? **[30 marks]**

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