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. The assessment is designed to assess candidates' ability to reason and infer in response to linguistic data and to demonstrate understanding and interpretation skills in response to quantitative information.

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

Sample Linguistics Admissions Assessment Paper

Linguistics written assessment

This assessment consists of **three parts**, which should each take about 20 minutes. You will have **60 Minutes** to complete this test. If you have been granted extra time to complete the assessment, then please refer to the timing provided to you by the College assessing your application.

You are NOT allowed to communicate with anyone or use any resources (dictionaries, books, the internet, etc) during the test: you do not need anything apart from the information provided in the paper to formulate your answers.

The assessment contains three parts with a number of data questions. Each part is worth 30 marks, giving a 90-mark maximum for the overall written test.

Please type up your answers in a format readable in MS Word and be clear about the questions they relate to, and save your answer with the file name UCAS number_College_Surname_First Name. Your invigilator will provide instructions about how to return it.

If you experience any difficulty during the assessment, either technical or personal, you should report this to the invigilator as soon as possible for taking into proper consideration.

PART 1 [total value 30 marks] **(suggested time: 20 minutes)**

Consider the following data from Ndigon, a constructed language. The middle line contains translations of some key content (lexical) items plus some untranslated items, and the final line offers an English translation of the sentence as a whole.

A. Galungo-eh tel mdola mbego-no chango-ba.
   teacher   old   dog   see
   'My old teacher saw a dog.'

B. Mbego-no gul trondo-bit.
   dog   bark
   'The dog will bark.'

C. Ndeli-eh gul milgo grum-no mbangi fondi-lo-ba.
   cat   patient milk   not   drink
   'The patient cat did not drink milk.'

D. Ndeli-no tel levinsi ngumni-ba ti?
   cat   today sleep
   'Has my cat slept today?'

E. Mbego-eh gel ngoku   ndeli-no tel troldi ndonge-bit ti?
   dog   naughty cat-   again chase
   'Will your naughty dog chase my cat again?'

F. Mbego-eh gul ndeli-go-no mbangi ndonge-lo-ba.
   dog   cat-   not   chase
   'The dog has not chased cats.'

<u>Note</u>: It is not necessary to use grammatical terminology in giving your answers; accurate descriptions of the patterns in the data will be given full credit.

Question 1
Based on the above data, what do the following Ndigon forms mean:
a. *gul*   [1 mark]
b. *gel*   [1 mark]
c. *-ba*   [1 mark]

Question 2
How would a Ndigon speaker express the subject noun phrase given in English in the following sentences?

a. [*My patient teacher*] troldi ngumni-ba.   [2 marks]
b. [*The naughty cats*] mbego-no mdola ndonge-bit.   [3 marks]

Question 3

Give the full English translation for each of the sentences in Questions 2a and 2b.   [3 marks]

Question 4

Describe three respects in which Ndigon differs from English in respect of how it structures noun phrases, and one way in which the two languages behave similarly. Use examples from the data to support your claims.   [8 marks]

Question 5

Complete the following:

In terms of the ordering of Subject, Verb and Object, Ndigon is SIMILAR/DIFFERENT [*delete the one that doesn't apply*] to English because ....   [3   marks]

Question 6

a. How would a Ndigon speaker say 'The dog will not bark.' (i.e. the negated version of example (b) above)?   [2 marks]

b. Describe two differences that this sentence reveals between Ndigon and English, and one similarity. Do not repeat points you have previously noted.   [6 marks]

PART 2 [total value 30 marks] (suggested time: 20 minutes)

The pronunciation of 't' sounds frequently exhibits variation in different accents of English. Among the different ways a 't' can be pronounced are those shown in the table below:

plosive	'prototypical' 't' involving the tongue tip making a closure at the front-end of the roof of the mouth which is then released
glottal stop	e.g. the way the 't' in *butter* is pronounced in Cockney English
fricative	with hissy sound a bit like an 's'
affricate	with full closure of the 't' followed by 's' ('ts')
tap	a rapid single tapping action of the tongue, e.g. the way 't' is pronounced in *water* by many speakers of American English

The details of the terminology above are not important for this task – we are more interested in how you analyse the graphs that follow and think about the information they contain.

The graphs you will analyse relate to a fictional study of 't' in Australian English in which the speech of 12 female and 12 male speakers living in the same town were recorded. (All 24 speakers self-identified as either male or female.) The speakers read word-lists including several repetitions of each of the words *hat*, *hit*, *het*, *hot*, *hut* and *hatter*.

Figure 1. Productions of 't' in _hat_ and _hatter_ showing the distribution of variants by percentage for the group of 24 speakers.
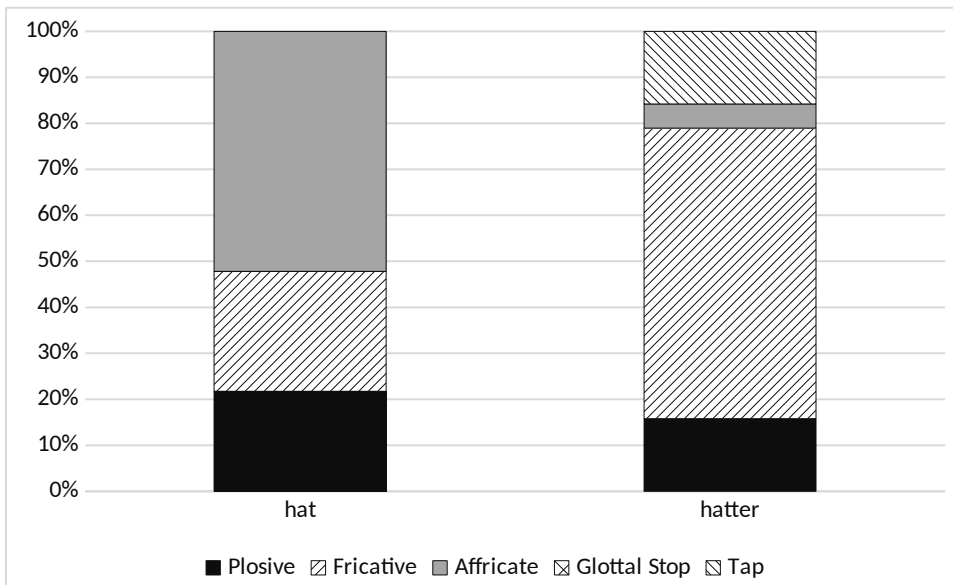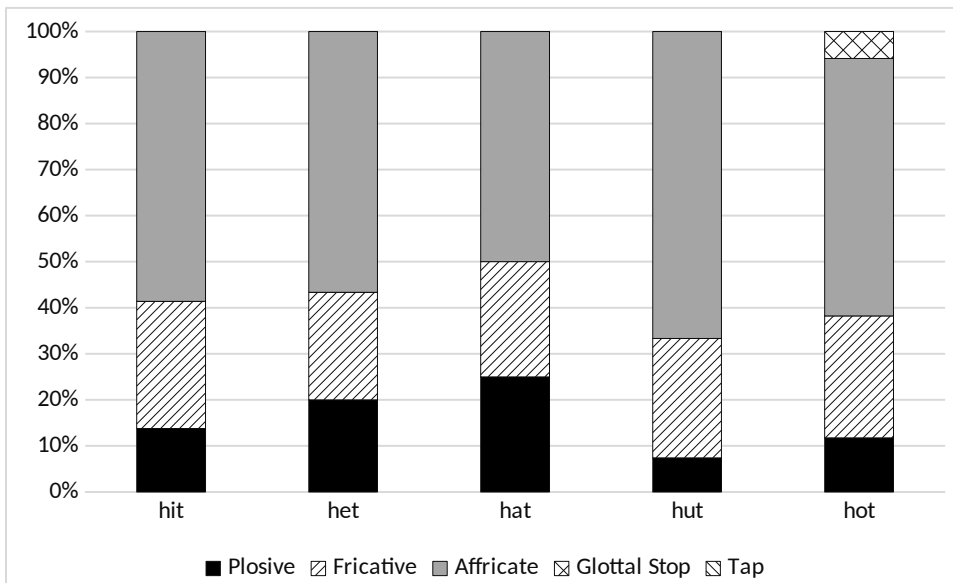

Figure 2. Productions of 't' in _hit, het, hat, hut_ and _hot_ showing the distribution of variants by percentage for the group of 24 speakers.

Question 1

Looking at Figure 1, which of the following statements is <u>true</u>?   [2 marks]

    A. The plosive variant of 't' is the least frequently used variant for both *hat* and *hatter*.

    B. For *hat*, 't' is produced as a plosive least often, while for *hatter* 't' is produced as a tap least often.

    C. For *hat*, 't' is produced as an affricate most often while for *hatter* 't' is produced as a fricative most often.

    D. The fricative variant of 't' is the most frequently used variant for both *hat* and *hatter*.

Question 2

Which variant of 't' appears in production of *hatter*, but does not appear for *hat*?   [1 mark]

    G. Plosive

    H. Fricative

    I. Affricate

    J. Glottal stop

    K. Tap

Question 3

Figure 1 compares pronunciation of the 't' sound in *hat* with that in *hatter*, while Figure 2 compares pronunciation of the 't' sounds in *hit, het, hat, hut* and *hot*, but not *hatter*. What does comparing *hat* and *hatter* allow us to investigate with respect to production of 't'?   [2 marks]

Question 4

What does comparing *hit, het, hat, hut* and *hot*, as in Figure 2, allow us to investigate with respect to production of 't'?   [2 marks]

Question 5

Why would simply comparing the 't' sound in *hatter* against the 't' sound in the whole group of *h_t* words be unsatisfactory? What additional words (or nonsense words) should the researcher elicit from speakers to produce a dataset which would enable a more complete study of the questions addressed in Figure 1 and Figure 2? Explain your answer.   [3 marks]
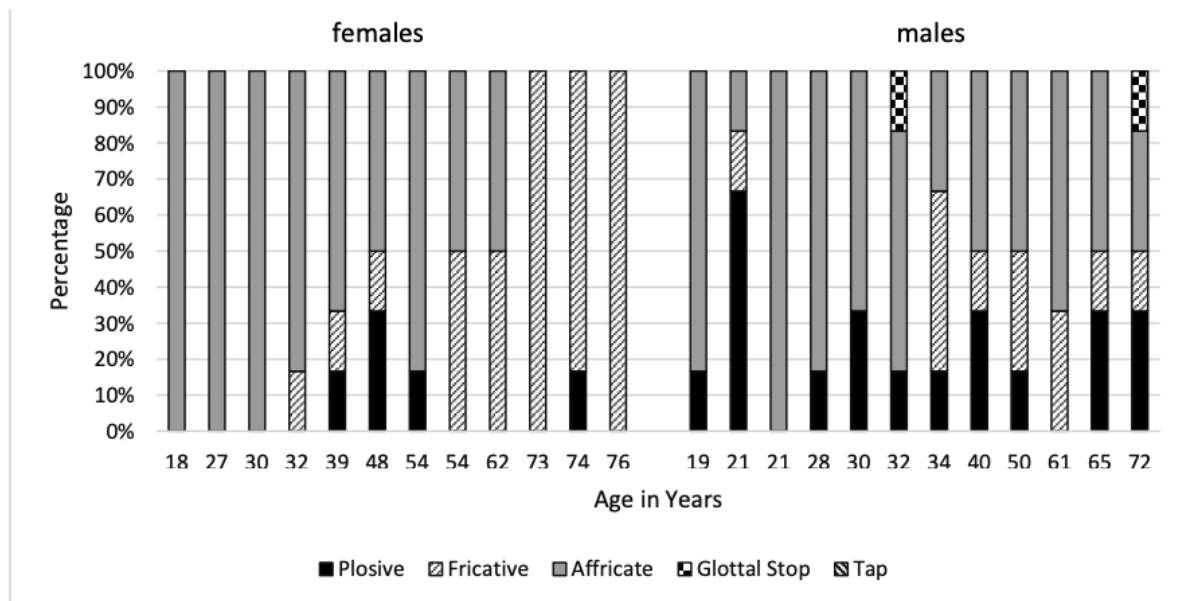
Question 6

Looking at Figure 2, which of the following statements is <u>false</u>?   [2 marks]

    A. For *hit*, no glottal stops were produced.

    B. *Hut* exhibits the greatest percentage of affricate variants of all five words.

    C. *Hot* is the only word showing glottal stop productions.

    D. Plosives were produced more frequently than fricatives for the word *hot*.

    E. *Hit* and *hut* show a similar proportioning of the variants of 't' produced, with plosives occurring least frequently, then fricatives, then affricates.

    F. For *het* the most frequent variant was the affricate.

Question 7

What do you conclude about linguistic factors affecting 't' production when comparing Figures 1 and 2?   [2 marks]

Figure 3. Productions of 't' across the different *h_t* contexts, showing the percentage of each variant produced by each individual speaker. Females are on the left, males on the right. Within each sex group, the results are presented by age, increasing along the horizontal axis.

Question 8
Figure 3 shows the dataset broken down by the performance of each individual speaker.
a. To what extent are the patterns shown in Figure 2 mirrored by the results for individual speakers?
[2 marks]
b. Do you have enough information in the two graphs given to answer this question satisfactorily? If not, what further information would allow you to give a more nuanced answer?   [1 mark]

Question 9
Which variant(s) is/are the most frequently occurring in *h_t* word for female speakers?   [1 mark]
      A. Plosive
      B. Fricative
      C. Affricate
      D. Glottal stop
      E. Tap

Question 10
Which variant(s) is/are the least frequently occurring in *h_t* words for female speakers? [1 mark]
      A. Plosive
      B. Fricative
      C. Affricate
      D. Glottal stop
      E. Tap

Question 11
Which variant(s) is/are the most frequently occurring in *h_t* words for male speakers?   [1 mark]
      A. Plosive
      B. Fricative
      C. Affricate
      D. Glottal stop
      E. Tap

Question 12

Which variant(s) is/are the least frequently occurring in *h_t* words for male speakers?   [1 mark]

    A. Plosive

    B. Fricative

    C. Affricate

    D. Glottal stop

    E. Tap

Question 13

What age-related patterns in 't' production does Figure 3 highlight? Are these different for males and females, and if so, how?   [4 marks]

Question 14

What hypotheses about a sound change in progress (alteration in the way(s) a sound like 't' is pronounced, taking place over time) could you form for these data?   [2 marks]

Question 15

What further data would you recommend be collected in order to test how reliable the age and gender patterns seen in Figure 3 are?   [3 marks]

PART 3 [total value 30 marks] (suggested time: 20 minutes)

Consider the data below from Iphosa, a fictitious language, and then answer the questions that follow.

The intermediate ("gloss") lines contain the following abbreviations/terms:

m   – masculine gender marker
indef – indefinite marker
prog – progressive marker, marking the fact that an action is still underway and has not been completed
non-past – tense marker, signifying a tense other than the past (e.g. present or future)
f – feminine gender marker
def - definite marker
q - question marker
past - tense marker, signifying the past tense
compl - completive marker, marking the fact that an action has been completed

The Iphosa data

(a)   Trem- o gum- o tsilt- o- em   warg-im-   ad   mbon-a- ung li.
       little - m   light- m   mouse- m - indef run-   prog- non-past clock- f- def   up
       'A little white mouse is running up the clock.'

(b)   Aphi   tsilt-   o- ung warg-im-   ad-   ko?
       why   mouse- m- def   run - prog-non-past-q
       'Why is the mouse running?'

(c)   Do brug-a   tsim-a shom- a-em   vorl-in.
       he big- f   dark-f cat-   f- indef   see- past
       'He saw a big black cat.'

(d)   Shom-a- ung amb- o trilm-   o tsilt-   o- ung dink- fon- in-   ko?
       cat-   f - def def - m scared- m mouse- m -def catch- compl-past- q
       'Did the cat catch the scared mouse?'

(e)   Ton. Mbong-o tsim- o blaf- o- em   amb-a shom- a- ung   warg-sint- in.
       no   angry- m dark- m dog- m-indef def- f cat-   f - def   run- after- past
       'No. An angry brown dog chased the cat.'

(f)   Amb-o tsump-   o blaf- o-ung shom-a- ung warg-pom-fon- in.
       def - m naughty- m dog- m- def cat- f - def run- flat- compl-past
       'The naughty dog exhausted the cat.'

(g)   Amb-a pom-a shom-a-ung   mbat- o-em   lung   pring-in.
       def - f flat- f cat-   f def stove- m-indef   under hide- past
       'The tired cat hid under a stove.'

Question 1.

Which of the following sentences corresponds to the meaning 'The naughty big brown dog is chasing a cat'?

A.   Amb-o tsump-o brug-o tsim-o blaf-o-ung warg-sint-im-ad shom-a-em.
B.   Amb-o tsump-o brug-o tsim-o blaf-o shom-a-em warg-sint-im-ad.
C.   Tsump-o brug-o tsim-o blaf-o-em shom-a-em warg-sint-im-ad.
D.   Amb-o tsump-o brug-o tsim-o blaf-o-ung shom-a-em warg-sint-im-ad.   [2 marks]

Question 2.

How would an Iphosa speaker say the following:

    A. 'Why did the tired brown mouse run up the black stove?'   [4 marks]

    B. 'The angry cat is hiding under a clock.'   [4 marks]

Question 3.   **[8 marks]**

Identify and describe two respects in which Iphosa shares grammatical properties with English. Use the specific data given above to motivate your answer, and cite appropriate examples from English. NB: Use of correct grammatical terminology is not what is being tested here; your ability to spot parallels between Iphosa and English is. Describe parallels where you are uncertain about terminology, and exploit the fact that your answer should contain examples from English that demonstrate the parallels you have identified.

Question 4.   **[12 marks]**

Identify and describe four respects in which Iphosa differs from English. Use the specific data given above to motivate your answer, and cite appropriate examples from English; as above.