UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

LINGUISTICS ADMISSIONS ASSESSMENT

DECEMBER 2017 **60 minutes**

[cover page]

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 section. Your answers will be marked on the assumption that you have divided your time roughly equally between the 3 sections.

SECTION 1 (total value 30 marks) **(20 mins)**

Consider the data below from Anastule, a fictitious language, and then answer the questions that follow. The intermediate ("gloss") lines contain the following abbreviations:

2SG	second person singular (= 'you')	PAST	past tense
3SG	third person singular (= 'he, she, it')	FUT	future tense
3PL	third person plural (= 'they')	INFIN	infinitive (e.g. 'to read'/'to eat')
PL	plural	NEG	negative marker
DEF	definite marker (= 'the')	POSS	possessive marker (marks 'one's own')
ASP	aspectual marker (conveys that the action has been completed and is not ongoing)		
INTER	interrogative marker (to indicate that it is a question)		
MOD	mood (conveys how the action should be interpreted, i.e., as a wish, a command, an uncertainty, a probability, a fact)		

The Anastule data

(a) to petuni ta tolumb-a e-kalamitse-s-i
DEF wolf DEF sheep-PL PAST-eat-ASP-3SG
'The wolf ate the sheep.'

(b) ta tolumb-a xasilia e-kalamitsev-an sa paxta
DEF sheep-PL grass PAST-eat-3PL in-DEF forest
'The sheep were eating grass in the forest.'

(c) ta petuni-a uts e-lores-an kalamitse-s-ene ta tolumb-a
DEF wolf-PL NEG PAST-can-3PL eat-ASP-INFIN DEF sheep-PL
'The wolves couldn't eat the sheep.'

(d) kats ton pedan-at uts e-palalo-s-i?
who DEF child-POSS NEG PAST-love-ASP-3SG
'Who doesn't love their (own) child?'

(e) dolma pedan ti kuta-t xen ta-palalo-s-i?
what child DEF mother-POSS NEG-MOD FUT-love-ASP-3SG
'What child will not love their (own) mother?'

(f) i kuta pul pedan-a en apido e-ruk-s-i
DEF mother all child-PL an apple PAST-give-ASP-3SG
'The mother gave an apple to all the children.'

(g) apid-a se pul pedan-a ruk-is li?
apple-PL to all child-PL give-2SG INTER
'Do you give apples to all the children?'

QUESTIONS

1. Which of the following sentences corresponds to the meaning 'Which wolves won't love to eat all the sheep in the forest?'

A. Dolma petunia xen tapalalosan kalamitsesene pul tolumba sa paxta?
B. Dolma petunia uts epalalonan kalamitsesene pul tolumba sa paxta?
C. Dolma petunia uts epalalonan pul tolumba kalamitsesene sa paxta?
D. Dolma petunia xen taepalalosan kalamitsesene pul tolumba sa paxta? [2 marks]

2. How would an Anastule speaker say the following:

A. 'You did not give all the grass to the sheep!'

_____

_____

[4 marks]

B. 'Who ate what in the forest?

_____

_____

[4 marks]

3. Identify and describe three respects in which Anastule 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 Anastule 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.

[10 marks]

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

[10 marks]

SECTION 2 (total value 30 marks) **(20 mins)**

Language typologists study the distribution of linguistic patterns across the world's languages. Languages vary according to the usual order that particular combinations of words appear in. In some languages, adjectives normally precede the noun (*white cat*), while in other languages they normally follow (*cat white*). The same possibilities are available for demonstratives, words such as *this* or *that*. In English, demonstratives precede their nouns (*this cat*), while in many other languages, they follow (*cat this*). Using these two patterns, there are therefore four possible types of language:

AdjN & DemN	white cat & this cat
AdjN & NDem	white cat & cat this
NAdj & DemN	cat white & this cat
AdjN & NDem	cat white & cat this

English has the orders *white cat* and *this cat*, so would be categorized as AdjN & DemN.

Figure 1 shows the distribution of these patterns in a sample of 952 languages where the order could be unambiguously determined across six different regions of the world. Eurasia consists of Europe and Asia. Papunesia consists of the islands of the Pacific and parts of Indonesia.

Look at the data in Figure 1 and answer the questions below.

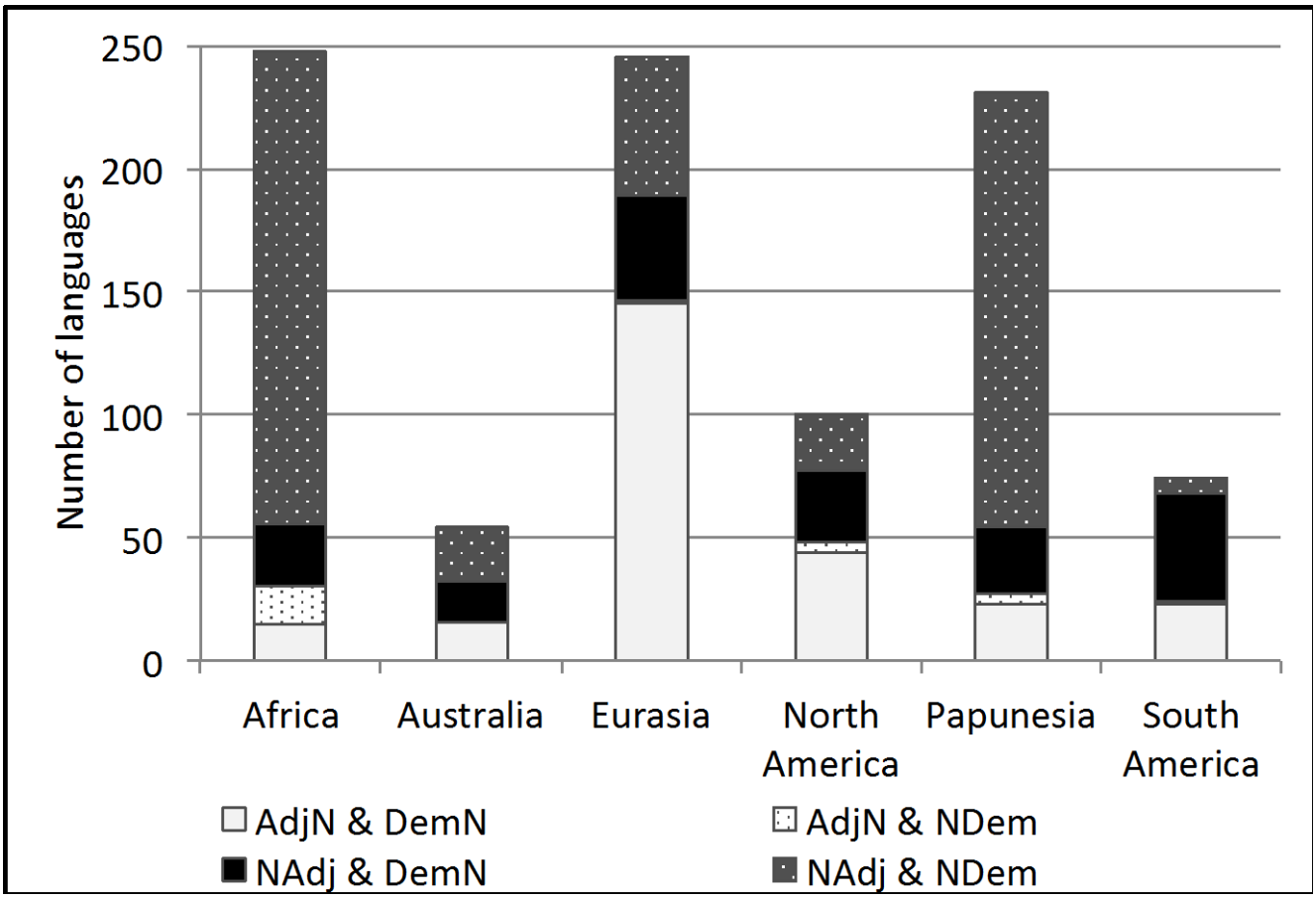

Figure 1. Frequency of different orders of adjective and noun (*white cat*) and demonstrative and noun (*this cat*) in the world's language (data from the World Atlas of Language Structures).

QUESTIONS
For questions 1–5 below, circle the correct answer.

1. For the two features shown here: [2 marks]
   A. Most languages of the world have the same word order as English.
   B. Languages like English are the majority in most regions of the world.
   C. Languages like English are the majority only in Eurasia.
   D. Lanuages like English are a minority in all regions of the world.

2. Which of the following statements is true? [2 marks]
   A. In most regions, there is one word-order combination used by the majority of languages.
   B. The same word-order combination is the most frequent in only two regions.
   C. Every word-order combination is the most frequent in at least one region.
   D. No word-order combination forms the majority in more than one region.

3. Which of the following statements is true? [2 marks]
   A. A higher proportion of languages are NAdj & DemN in Eurasia than in North America.
   B. A higher proportion of languages are AdjN & NDem in Eurasia than in Africa.
   C. A higher proportion of languages are NAdj & NDem in Africa than in Australia.
   D. A higher proportion of languages are AdjN & DemN in Australia than in Papunesia.

4. The order AdjN & DemN places N consistently last; the order NAdj & NDem places N consistently first. Which of the following statements is true? [2 marks]
   A. Word orders where N is consistently either first or last form the majority in all regions.
   B. Word orders where N is consistently either first or last form the majority in two regions.
   C. Word orders where N is consistently either first or last do not form the majority in any region.
   D. Word orders where N is consistently either first or last form the majority in all but one region.

5. Which of the following statements is true? [2 marks]
   A. Under 10% of the world's languages are AdjN & DemN.
   B. The commonest language type is AdjN & DemN.
   C. Over 70% of the world's languages are NAdj & NDem.
   D. Under 5% of the world's languages are AdjN & NDem.

6. What are the two commonest language types in Figure 1? How does their frequency vary from region to region? Are these types commonest in all regions? [8 marks]

7. No single region provides a good reflection of the overall worldwide pattern. Suggest two reasons why the patterns found within a single region might show less diversity than the overall worldwide pattern. [6 marks]

8. Now consider numerals like *two* or *three*. In some languages, like English, numerals precede nouns (NumN) (*two cats*), while in others they follow (NNum) (*cats two*). If a linguist collected data for the same languages as in Figure 1, which of these patterns do you think would be commonest in Africa and which in Eurasia? Give two reasons in support of your answer.

[6 marks]

SECTION 3 (total value 30 marks) **(20 mins)**

According to some linguists, the meaning of a word is the same thing as a concept or idea that the word stands for and that speakers have in mind when they use the word.

Write a brief essay in which you explore the strengths and weaknesses of identifying *word meaning* with a *concept*, *idea*, or *representation in the mind* that speakers have while communicating. While doing so, give examples of words that are easy and words that are difficult to associate with such entities in the mind. Can you think of any generalizations? Finally, can you think of any other ways of describing what the *meaning of a word* is, without referring to what is in the human mind/brain?

You should aim to produce an appropriately focused, clearly expressed, coherently structured, and suitably illustrated short essay to address these questions. Give examples to illustrate your arguments.

There is no need to use any technical terminology or refer to existing theories of word meaning. The objective is merely to show how you think about such abstract questions about language and how you justify your views.

[30 marks]