LINGUISTICS ADMISSIONS ASSESSMENT

CONTENT SPECIFICATION

2017

LINGUISTICS ADMISSIONS ASSESSMENT
SAMPLE PAPER

INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES

This booklet contains three sections. Attempt to answer the questions in all three sections. Don't worry if you find you have little to say about some of the questions, or if you don't 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 assessment.

Aim to spend about 20 minutes on each section. Your answers will be marked on the assumption that you've divided your time roughly equally between the three sections.

Write your answers in the space provided on the paper. Please take care to write clearly. If you wish to write your notes on the paper, there's no need to cross them out.

Time allowed: this is a one-hour assessment.

Total marks: 90.

Your invigilator will let you know when you can start the assessment.

Section 1 [total value 30 marks]   (20 minutes)

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, ie 1 = first person, 'I/we'; 2 = second person, 'you' (singular and plural); 3 = third person, 'he/she/it/they'.

<u>The Tunen data</u>

a)   Anɑ́   mònɛ́ índì.
        3SG.PST money give
        '(S)he gave money.'

b)   Méndò   bònìàkà nɛ́.
        1SG.PRS yams   eat
        'I am eating yams.'

c)   Anɑ́   mùsɑ́ba bàt.
        3SG.PST   machete collect
        '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) Mὲná   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
'He arrived at his house.'

g) Aná   mwὲluku húli   way   'sòy.
3SG.PST palm.wine remove 3SG.POSS canoe
'He removed the palm-wine from his canoe.'

Questions

1. Which of the following sentences corresponds to the meaning 'I am eating only yams at his house (not anything else).'? [2 marks]
   A. Méndò há bònìàkà nέ o way ōmbɛl.
   B. Méndò nέ á bònìàkà o ōmbɛl.
   C. Méndò nέ há bònìàkà o way ōmbɛl.
   D. Méndò nέ há bònìàkà o ōmbɛl.

2. How would you say the following:
   A. 'I drank palm-wine.' [4 marks]

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   B. 'I collected the 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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Section 2 [total value 30 marks]   (20 minutes)

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, eg *er*, *ah* etc; 'erm' represents filled pauses consisting of a vowel sound followed by an 'm', eg *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.
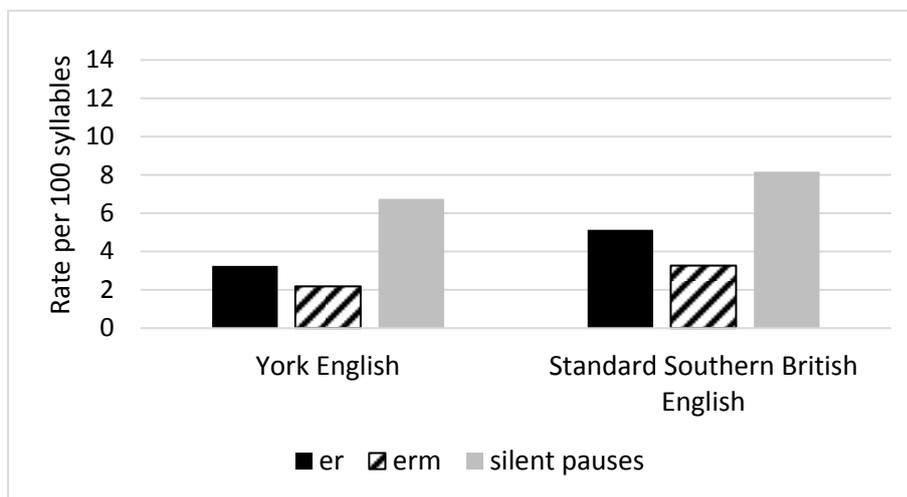

Figure 2. Rates of pausing by pause type for individual speakers of York English, labelled Y1, Y2, …, Y20.
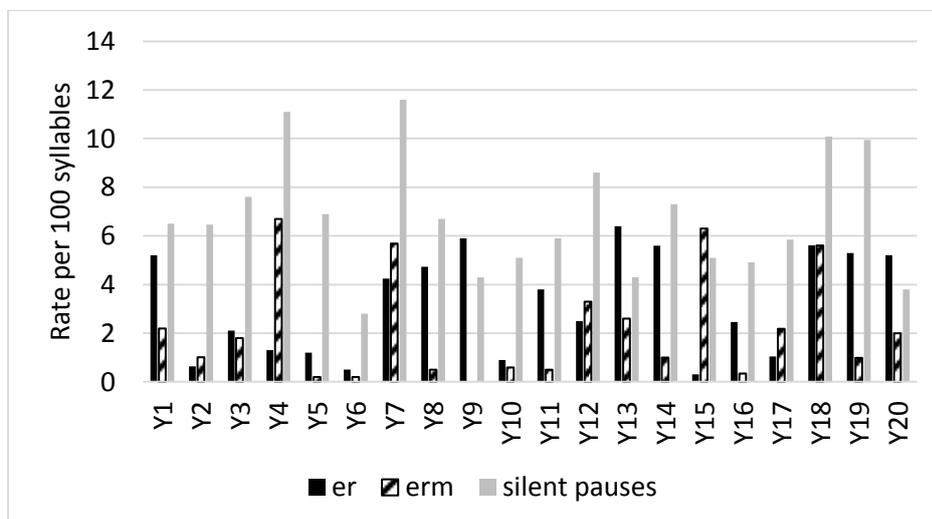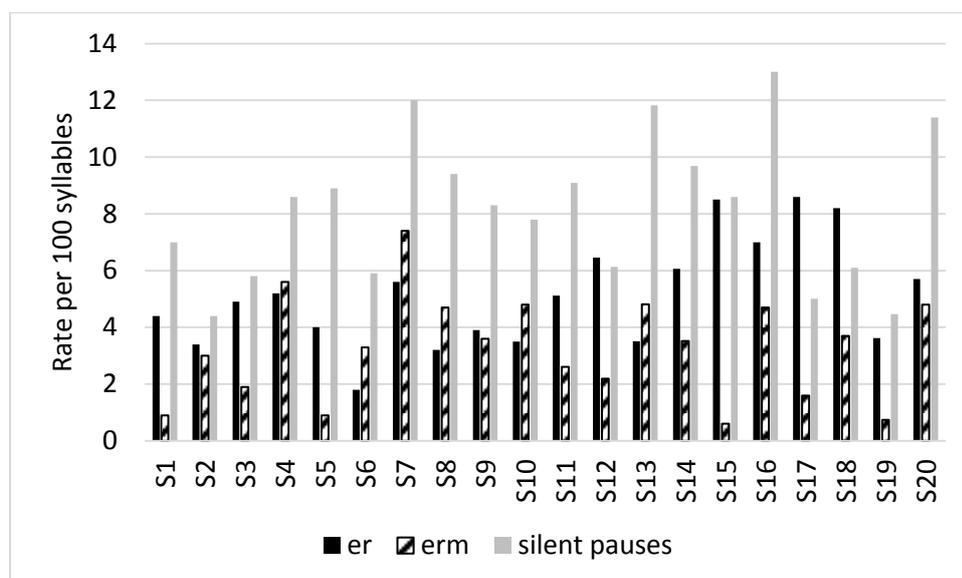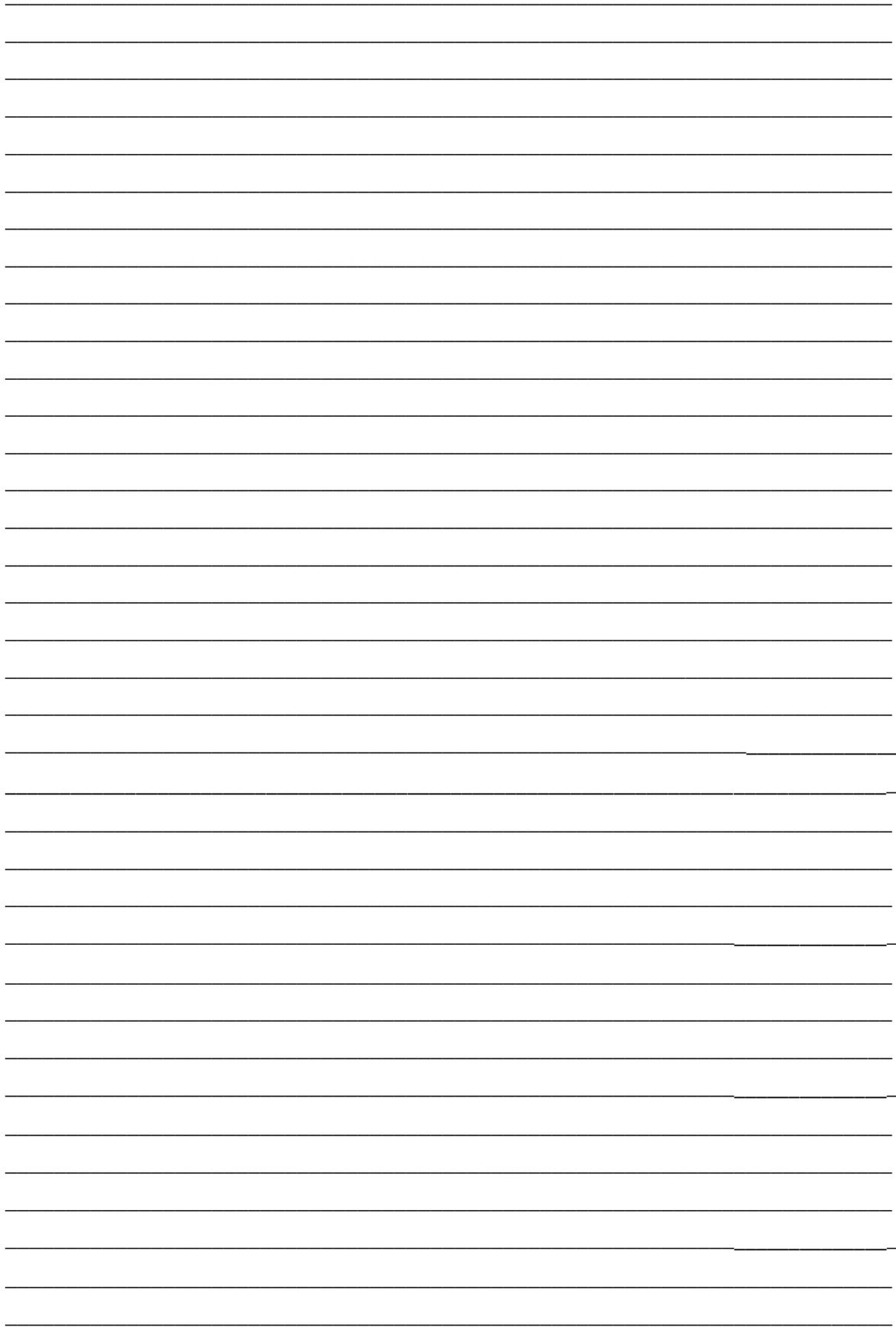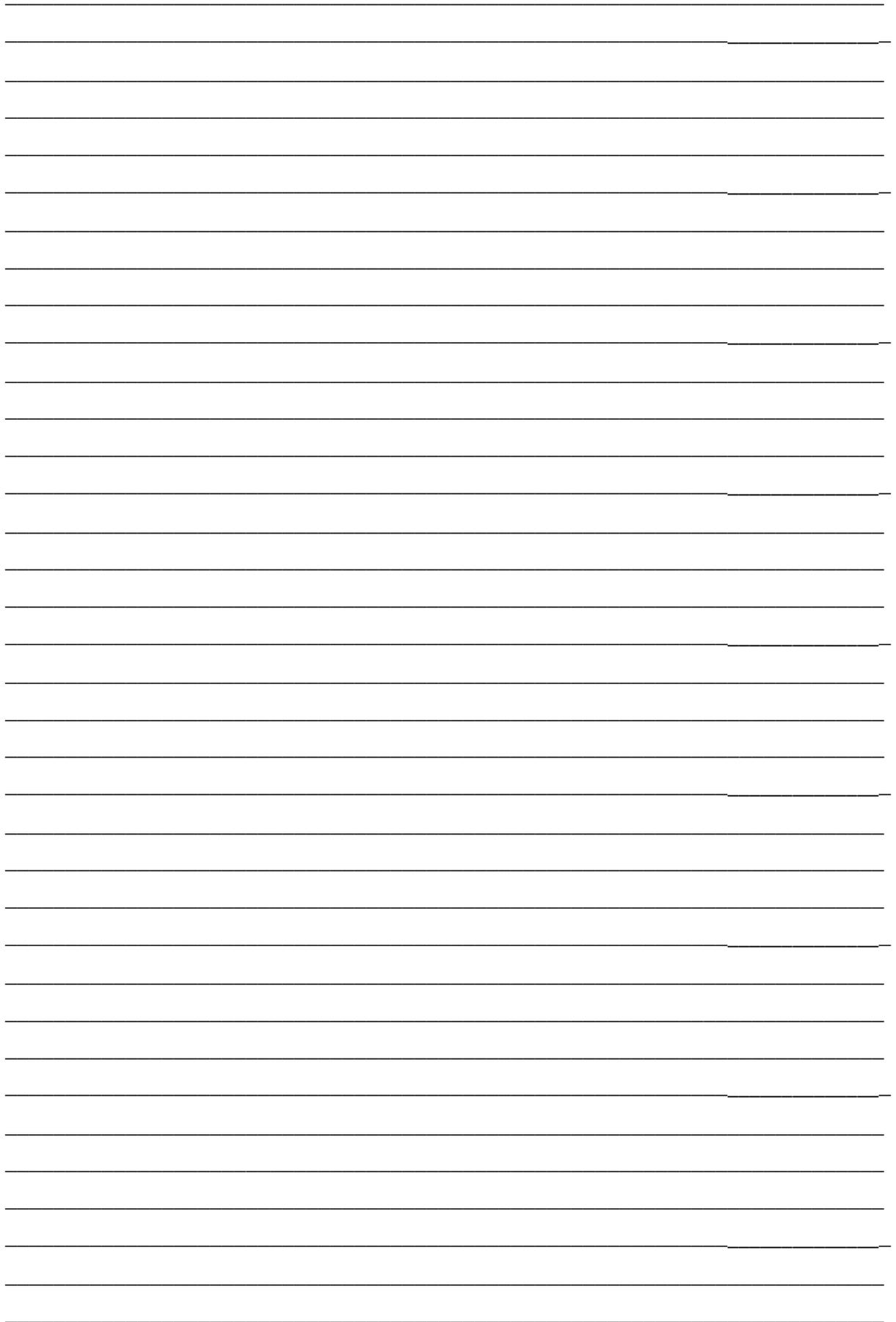
Figure 3. Rates of pausing by pause type for individual speakers of Standard Southern British English, labelled S1, S2, ..., S20.

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're 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're free to do this.) [8 marks]

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Section 3 [total value 30 marks]   (20 minutes)

Since the nineteenth century we have known that damage to certain areas of the brain causes different types of 'aphasias' or language impairments. For instance, 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: 'You know that smoodle pinkered and that I want to get him round and take care of him like you want before' while they intended to convey the meaning 'The dog needs to go out so I will take him for a walk'.

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

Aphasics with damage to Broca's area, by contrast, suffer from what is often called expressive aphasia, and they may say things like 'Walk dog' but mean 'I will take the dog for a walk', 'You take the dog for a walk' or even 'The dog walked out of the yard'. An utterance like 'Biscuit Susie' might mean any number of things, including 'The biscuits are Susie's', 'The biscuit is Susie's', or 'The biscuits were made by Susie'.

Write a brief essay in which you discuss what we can learn from studies of patients with language problems of these types by comparing these examples. Your essay should have a clear structure.

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LINGUISTICS ADMISSIONS ASSESSMENT
SAMPLE PAPER – ANSWERS

Section 1

1. C
2. A. Méndò mʷə̀luku nyá.
3. B. Mὲnά way mùsába bàt o ōmbɛl.
4. Any two of:
   - Sentences start with the subject
   - It has distinct lexical/content verbs and auxiliaries (or verbal units expressing tense/aspect and agreement/non-lexical meanings)
   - It has prepositions
   - It has possessives (*way*)
   - It marks 'only' meanings (exclusivity) by placing the word meaning 'only' in front of the relevant noun (phrase)/element
   - It has (noun-noun) compounds (eg *palm wine*)
5. Any two of:
   - It has variable word order: sometimes SVO and sometimes SOV, depending on whether the object is focused/emphasized/specially marked
   - It doesn't have pronouns distinct from tense/aspect marking/the pronoun meanings are combined with the tense/aspect meanings; students who know languages like Spanish, Italian and Portuguese might pick up that this parallels the null-subject phenomenon in these languages
   - It permits initial consonant clusters (syllable onsets – some students may know these terms) featuring nasal+glide/approximant combinations that are ruled out in English (they don't need to know the terms, although some might). Consonant clusters more generally don't seem to be permitted, though
   - It is a tone language

Section 2

1. B
2. D
3. A
4. The averages in Figure 1 show an overall pattern of er filled pauses being used more frequently than erm filled pauses in both accents.

   For the individual speaker data shown for York English in Figure 2, this pattern holds for 12 of the 20 speakers. One speaker uses no erm filled pauses at all, and 7 speakers use more erm than er.

   For the individual speaker data shown for SSBE in Figure 3, this pattern holds for 13 of the 20 speakers.

   In both accents, the relative proportions of er and erm filled pauses varies widely from one individual speaker to the next.
5. While taking averages can be a helpful way to summarise data, it can also obscure a lot of the detail, particularly if a wide range of individual differences is present. In the case of the present data sets, the averages in Figure 1 do broadly capture overall tendencies for these two groups of speakers, but reviewing the individuals' data shows that only a little over half of each group of speakers conforms to the pattern displayed by the group averages for both accent groups.

6. Graphing techniques which allow the range or spread of the data to be displayed would provide a more detailed way of summarising the pausing behaviour of these speakers. For example, a histogram or stem-and-leaf plot showing the frequency of occurrence of particular values along the range of possible values enables the researcher to visualise the spread of values occurring and which values are most popular. A box plot also enables the researcher to see the spread of the data and where the majority of the values are concentrated. Bars indicating the spread of the data could also be added to the averages shown on the bar graph.
[We do not expect applicants to use statistical terminology such as 'histogram', 'stem-and-leaf plot' or 'box plot', although some may be able to – what is important here is whether they are able to demonstrate that they have thought about the spread of the data and different ways that this might be visualised.]

Section 3

Key elements

- Language processing is distributed across different areas of the brain, not just one 'language area'
- Example 1: demonstrates that Wernicke's is primarily responsible for processing meaning because the syntax is intact
    - Correct word order: SVO (subject verb object) as in 'you know that smoodle pinkered'
    - Time (tense – some students might know this term) information present: -ed for past in 'pinkered'
    - Prepositions present: - of in 'take care of him'
However, despite correct syntax, sentences are nonsensical, ie contain little or no meaning → since Wernicke's was impaired, it can be concluded that this area plays a key role in processing meaning
- Example 2: demonstrates that Broca's is predominantly engaged in processing grammatical structure (syntax, morphology, in this example) because the patient is communicating some meaning through lexical words (nouns and verbs), but lacks the grammatical apparatus to allow the interlocutor to appropriately and unambiguously interpret the message.
    - No tense (past/present/future) markers are present (morphology – some students might know this term)
    - No grammatical (function) words (articles, prepositions etc)
    - No subject-verb agreement is present – there are no subjects and the verb isn't marked to show whether it's I/you or he/she because with the latter it would be 'walks'
    - It's unclear whether word order is correct as we don't know what exactly the patient wanted to say, if 'walk dog' means 'the dog walked out of the yard', then word order would be wrong
- Localised damage to brain areas can show how language is processed in the brain, and which areas are crucially involved in processing particular aspects of language
[Note that students shouldn't be penalised if they don't use terms like 'syntax' and 'tense' while they do make the correct observations.]

Some examples of possible elaborations.

- Tests in healthy populations are often insufficient to establish what is processed where as many factors play a role and meaning and structure are often intertwined. As becomes obvious in example 1, it is difficult to present structure without tapping into meaning, and as shown in example 2, it's difficult to express meaning without structure. This makes it difficult to test the anatomy that supports language processing in healthy subjects because multiple areas are involved at the same time. This is why brain damaged patients give the most reliable information on which brain areas do what.

- However, data of brain damaged patients also need to be treated carefully and with scepticism. Often more than just one area of the brain is affected in neurological damage and it's unclear what other conditions the patients suffer from. It can also happen that multiple 'language areas' are affected. In addition, the brain is adaptable and flexible so that in time, certain functions can be taken over by other brain areas.

- It could be the case that there are areas within those areas that are responsible for finer processing but because the patients had a larger area that was impaired we are missing this. Eg perhaps within Broca's there is an area that is responsible for tense, one for word order, one for prepositions etc. *[We know that this isn't the case but a student might reasonably assume this.]*

- Just looking at what patients produce naturally does not necessarily tell us the whole story. Does a patient with Broca's aphasia know for instance how to use prepositions? From the examples it's unclear so instead of just looking at output, patients would need to do more specifically targeted language tests for more specific conclusions to be reached.

- The shape and size of everyone's brain is slightly different so determining where exactly the same area is in somebody else is not easy, and this implies that pinpointing the precise location of activation for a specific task in an individual's brain is not straightforward (and therefore, there is a margin of error for data taken for a larger population, too).

LINGUISTICS ADMISSIONS ASSESSMENT
SAMPLE PAPER – MARKING CRITERIA

Section 1

1. 2 marks if correct.
2. 4 marks if fully correct, 1 point deducted for each error.
3. 4 marks if fully correct, 1 point deducted for each error.
4. Full marks for 2 fully correct generalisations; 5 marks if onlyone. Deduction of points if incomplete or infelicitously worded generalisation.
5. Full marks for 2 fully correct generalisations; 5 marks if onlyone. Deduction of points if incomplete or infelicitously worded generalisation.

Section 2

1. 2 marks if correct.
2. 2 marks if correct.
3. 2 marks if correct.
4. Full marks if 3 of 4 observations are made. 2 points deducted if only 2; 4 if only 1; further points deducted for poorly worded or incomplete point.
5. 4 marks for noting that summarisation can obscure a lot of the detail, 1 mark for each further relevant observation.
6. Marking criteria for question 6: quality of content [10 marks]
   Please consider:
   • Has the candidate addressed the question in the way demanded?
   • Have they used the evidence provided in the section appropriately?
   • Have they used their knowledge and opinions appropriately?
   • Have they organised their thoughts clearly?

Marks are awarded on a scale from 1 to 5:

Level 1 [2 marks] An answer that has some bearing on the question but which does not address the question in the way demanded, is incoherent or unfocussed.

Level 2 [4 marks] An answer that addresses some of the components of the question. The candidate may misconstrue or omit certain aspects of the answer.

Level 3 [6 marks] A reasonably comprehensive answer but an aspect of the argument may have been overlooked.

Level 4 [8 marks] A good answer with few weaknesses. ALL aspects of the question are addressed, and the components of the answer are expressed and arranged in a coherent way.

Level 5 [10 marks] An excellent answer with no significant weaknesses. ALL aspects of the question are addressed. Ideas are expressed in a clear and logical way, considering a breadth of relevant points.

An answer judged to be irrelevant, trivial, unintelligible or missing should be given 0 marks.

Section 3

I.   Quality of presentation [maximum total mark for presentation: 15]

In arriving at the mark, you should consider:

- Have they expressed themselves clearly using concise, compelling and correct English?

Marks are awarded on a scale from 1 to 3.

Level 1 [5 marks] Rather weak use of English:

- hesitant fluency/not easy to follow at times
- some flawed sentence structure/paragraphing
- limited range of vocabulary
- faulty grammar
- regular spelling/punctuation errors
- regular and frequent slips or errors

Level 2 [10 marks] Reasonably clear use of English. There may be some weakness in the effectiveness of the English:

- reasonably fluent/not difficult to read
- simple/unambiguous sentence structure
- fair range and appropriate use of vocabulary
- acceptable grammar
- reasonable spelling and punctuation
- some slips/errors

Level 3 [15 marks] Good use of English:

- fluent
- good sentence structure
- good use of vocabulary
- sound use of grammar
- good spelling and punctuation
- few slips or errors

Where candidates have crossed out sections or added information, the essay should be judged on the quality of the resulting use of English (ie crossed out text ignored, and inserted text read as if it were originally in place).

An essay that is judged to be below Level 1 on the scale will receive 0 marks for quality of presentation.

II.   Quality of content [maximum total mark for content: 15]

In arriving at the mark, you should consider:

- Has the candidate addressed the question in the way demanded?
- Have they organised their thoughts clearly?
- Have they used their general knowledge and opinions appropriately?

Marks are awarded on a scale from 1 to 5.

Level 1 [3 marks] An answer that has some bearing on the question but which does not address the question in the way demanded, is incoherent or unfocussed.

Level 2 [6 marks] An answer that addresses most of the components of the question and is arranged in a reasonably logical way. There may be significant elements of confusion in the argument. The candidate may misconstrue certain important aspects of the answer.

Level 3 [9 marks] A reasonably well-argued answer that addresses ALL aspects of the question, making reasonable use of the material provided and generating a reasonable argument. There may be some weakness in the force of the argument or the coherence of the ideas, or some aspect of the argument may have been overlooked.

Level 4 [12 marks] A good answer with few weaknesses. ALL aspects of the question are addressed, making good use of the material and generating a good argument. Ideas are expressed and arranged in a coherent way, leading to a good synthesis or conclusion.

Level 5 [15 marks] An excellent answer with no significant weaknesses. ALL aspects of the question are addressed, making excellent use of the material and generating an excellent argument. The argument is cogent. Ideas are expressed in a clear and logical way, considering a breadth of relevant points and leading to a compelling synthesis or conclusion.

An answer judged to be irrelevant, trivial, unintelligible or missing should be given 0 marks.