

Description of Exam #2

Distributed in discussion section on Friday, November 10.

The second exam in this course will be given in class (usual time and location) on Monday, November 13. You will have the entire class period to complete the exam. This exam will be identical in format to the previous exam, except that the multiple choice questions will have four rather than five choices. Bring a sharpened #2 pencil with an eraser.

What to study

The exam will test your knowledge of material in the lectures, discussion sections, and reading assignments from lectures 10 through 17, inclusive. That includes pp. 43-68 in the course pack, substituting the handouts distributed in class for the course pack notes on lectures 14 and 15. It also includes the following reading assignments: the required parts of the Eckert article, the PBS reading assignment on AAVE for lecture 13, the second half of Pinker chapter 8 for lecture 14 (pp. 105-106 in the course pack), “How should reading be taught?” for lecture 16, and pp. 44-57 of Pinker for lecture 17 (no course pack notes on this one). In addition, you are responsible for material taught in discussion sections during this period, such as the meaning of “isogloss” and “portmanteau word” or negative agreement (negative concord) in AAVE. You are ***NOT*** responsible for the following *specific* items, which were skipped in the lectures. (You are responsible for everything else on these pages; it’s only these specific questions I’m not going to test you on.)

p. 44 (in course pack) “Should children be taught...”

p. 52 “Where did AAVE come from?”

p. 53 “How is AAVE similar...” and “What was the Ebonics controversy...”

p. 59 of substitute notes for lecture 15, all of “The history of English and English history”

p. 66 — the whole page.

p. 68 “What’s the truth about...” and “There is often a relationship...”

Remember that you can review the PowerPoint presentations at the course website, <http://courses.umass.edu/ling101s>. Your TA also has a website, linked from the course website, where you can find additional materials from the discussion sections.

Essays

The essay portion of the exam will consist of three questions. Each essay should be one well-structured, clearly written paragraph that includes evidence (examples) and arguments (reasoning). On the first exam, some students lost points because they wrote very brief paragraphs that were skimpy in evidence and arguments. Since we are giving you the questions in advance, we expect you to put serious effort into thinking about your answers before the exam. Your answers don’t need to be lengthy, but they should be thorough.

Here are eight possible essay questions. Three of them will appear on the exam. The other five will probably emerge in one or two multiple choice questions each.

- (1) Explain, with examples, the term *standard dialect*. Make sure that your explanation addresses the supposed “superiority” of the standard dialect and a reason why a particular dialect might be picked as the standard. (Lecture 10.)
- (2) Describe, with an example of each, the three ways in which dialects can differ from one another. (Lecture 11.)
- (3) Explain, with at least two examples discussed in class or the readings, how a person’s attitude can affect the dialect that he/she speaks. (Lecture 12.)

- (4) Describe, with an example of each, the four basic aspects of African American Vernacular English. (Lecture 13.)
- (5) Describe, with an example of each, the four types of vocabulary change. (Lecture 14.)
- (6) Explain, with at least three examples, how we draw inferences about the location and culture of the Proto-Indo-European people. (Lecture 15.)
- (7) What are the Whole Language and Phonics methods of teaching reading? What evidence has been presented by supporters of the Phonics method? (Lecture 16.)
- (8) Explain the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis. Your answer should include discussion of one of Whorf's examples as well as Pinker's critique of that example. (Lecture 17.)

Multiple-choice questions

Certain kinds of multiple choice questions proved especially difficult on the first exam. Here are some examples:

- (1) Which of the following statements about the honeybee dance language is *false*?
 - A. The dance language is completely instinctive
 - B. "Orphan" bees know the language immediately when they are introduced to a hive.
 - C. Austrian bees introduced to an Italian hive can learn the Italian bees' "dialect".
 - D. Hybrids of Austrian and Italian bees will use the "dialect" of the parent they most closely resemble.
 - E. In the Italian "dialect", the sickle dance is used for food sources at intermediate distances.

The common mistake here is failing to read the question and answers *carefully*. The question asks you to identify a *false* statement. Responses A, B, and D are all consistent with one another, so it is unlikely that any one of them is false. This leaves C, which is inconsistent with D, and E, which is irrelevant.
- (2) Every human group on earth has a language. In your textbook, Pinker says that this fact alone is not enough to prove that human language is an instinct. What reason does he give for saying this?
 - A. Parents everywhere teach language to their children.
 - B. Children learn to talk at about the same age in every human group.
 - C. Language is so useful that resourceful people could have invented it many times in human history.
 - D. Humans everywhere got the idea of language from observing natural animal communication systems in their environment.
 - E. Modern humans inherited language from Neanderthals.

This question comes right out of the course pack, page 101. You are responsible for material in the readings as well as the lectures.

- (3) Which of the following statements is true?
 - A. Bat wings and bird wings are analogous traits. Bat wings and human hands are homologous traits.
 - B. Bat wings and bird wings are homologous traits. Bat wings and human hands are analogous traits.
 - C. Vervet monkey alarm calls and human language are homologous traits.
 - D. Vervet monkey alarm calls and human language are *not* homologous traits.
 - E. Both A and D.

You could expect that there would be a question on the exam about analogous and homologous traits. The wings and hands examples are right out of the lecture, so you should know that A is true. But A might not be the best answer, because of option E. Pay attention to options like this, since they were a source of many errors.