

2012 MA entrance exam

Introduction to Linguistics

1.1 [5%] Which of the following phonetic properties apply to the first segment in the English word “ten”? Which apply to the first segment in the Mandarin word 他?

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|--------------|----------------|----------------|
| a. Affricate | f. Labiodental | k. Sonorant |
| b. Alveolar | g. Nasal | l. Unaspirated |
| c. Aspirated | h. Obstruent | m. Velar |
| d. Bilabial | i. Palatal | n. Voiced |
| e. Fricative | j. Plosive | o. Voiceless |

1.2 [5%] Which of the above properties are phonological distinctive features of the first segment in the English word “ten”? Which are phonological distinctive features of the first segment in the Mandarin word 他? Justify your answers.

2.1 [5%] Give an example of a suprasegmental feature in Mandarin. Name a language, totally unrelated to Mandarin or English, that has the same suprasegmental feature.

2.2 [5%] Give an example of a suprasegmental feature in English. Name a language, totally unrelated to Mandarin or English, that has the same suprasegmental feature.

3.1 [4%] Give an example of a phonological rule in English.

3.2 [3%] Give an example of a phonological constraint in English.

3.3 [3%] What is the difference between a phonological rule and a phonological constraint?

4. [5%] Identify the thematic roles of the underlined nominals in sentences (1) and (2).

(1) 這篇文章讀起來很痛快。

(2) Tom expected us to finish the job.

5. [5%] Can a subject be a clause? If yes, write an example in either English or Chinese. If no, explain why not.

6. Consider the sentences in (1) and (2) below.

6.1 [5%] Draw a tree diagram for (1).

6.2 [5%] Explain why (2) is not grammatical.

(1) Bill bought a book secretly.

(2) *Bill bought secretly a book.

7. Consider the sentences in (1)-(3) below.

7.1 [6%] Give the argument structure and the thematic structure for example (1).

7.2 [6%] For each sentence in (2) and (3), describe which thematic role is being highlighted.

7.3 [8%] For each sentence in (2) and (3), give a preceding or following sentence that would make an appropriate discourse context for this highlighting.

(1) I leave my stamp collection to my youngest sister.

(2) My stamp collection I leave to my youngest sister.

(3) To my youngest sister I leave my stamp collection.

8. In one of the approaches to semantics, meaning is regarded as reference. That is, for *the whale*, its meaning is the animal referred to by this phrase.

8.1 [5%] Another approach to semantics regards meaning as sense. How is sense different from reference? Please give two pairs of examples to illustrate your answer.

8.2 [5%] Phrases such as *the unicorn*, *the French Emperor*, and *those dragons* pose a challenge to the reference approach to meaning. Explain. Suggest a way to respond to this challenge.

8.3 [5%] Words such as *love*, *patience*, *of*, and *on* pose another challenge to the reference approach to meaning. Explain. Suggest a way to respond to this challenge.

9. [10%] What is standard American English? What phonological and syntactic features characterize African American English? Illustrate your points with examples.

10. [5%] What is the Great Vowel Shift? How does it affect the modern English spelling system?