

**Linguistics Paper for
Applicants to the MPhil/PhD Programme of
the Department of Linguistics and Modern Languages, CUHK**

Instructions to candidates

Answer FOUR of the following questions. You are expected to be coherent, succinct and logical in writing your answers.

You are allowed three hours for this paper. You should stop writing when you have reached the time limit.

You must answer the questions in English. Examples of words and sentences from Chinese (Cantonese or Mandarin) may be written in Chinese characters or romanizations. For IPA symbols, please use the SIL IPA93 font set (attached with the paper, which you need to install on your computer if it is not already installed), or the modified version of it due to Professor Pan Wuyun.

You should work on this test paper alone without any help from others. Please write down the exact time when you begin to read the questions. You should sign the statement at this end of this page before submitting your answers.

Name of candidate: _____

Application number: _____

Time when you begin to read the questions: _____

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I, the undersigned, declare that I have answered the questions in this paper solely by myself, without consulting any other person, and without help from any other persons, within the three-hour time limit allotted.

Name: _____

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Part A (Compulsory)

1) The following two excerpts, from Chao Yuen-Ren and Noam Chomsky respectively, reflect contrasting views of language.

(i) "Language is a set of habits...Language is a convention, a tradition, a social institution, that has grown through the common living of a large number of people who carry on the tradition.....Language is learned, not inborn; it is handed on, not inherited."

-Chao Yuen-Ren (1966) *Language and Symbolic Systems*.

(ii) "To know a language, I am assuming, is to be in a certain mental state, which persists as a relatively steady component of transitory mental states. ...I assume further that to be in such a mental state is to have a certain mental structure consisting of a system of rules and principles that generate and relate mental representations of various types."

-Noam Chomsky (1980) *Rules and Representations*.

"Acquisition of language is something that happens to you; it's not something that you do. ..You don't learn to do it..you are just designed to do it at a certain time".

-Noam Chomsky (1988) *Language and Problems of Knowledge*.

(a) Discuss how the excerpts in (i) and (ii) reflect different views of language and linguistic competence.

(b) To what extent are these conceptions of language and linguistic competence applicable to other systems of communication such as creoles and sign languages?

Part B (Answer THREE out of four questions)

2. Bilingualism

Many children grow up with exposure to two languages from birth. They are regularly in contact with these languages. Bilingualism develops in the child as two grammars are constructed on the basis of dual input. Discuss how such children's development may differ from their monolingual counterparts, commenting on factors such as balance of input, frequency of exposure to language structures, rate of acquisition, trajectory of development and cross-linguistic influence.

3. Child Language Acquisition

3.1. The English sentences in (a)-(d) below illustrate a constraint on syntactic movement. Would you say adult speakers of English have knowledge of this

constraint? If yes, what might account for the origin of such knowledge (that is, is the constraint learned from experience, or is it part of the human biological endowment)? What do properties like this tell us about the nature of first language acquisition and the conditions under which it takes place?

- (a) John wants to hire Mary and Jane.
- (b) Who does John want to hire?
- (c) * Who does John want to hire Mary and ___?
- (d) * Who does John want to hire ___ and Mary?

3.2. Consider the Chinese counterparts to the English sentences above, given in (e)-(h) below. In contrast to the corresponding English sentences, all the Chinese sentences are grammatical. Would you say adult speakers of Chinese have knowledge of the properties illustrated by (e)-(h)? If yes, what might account for the origin of such knowledge? Would the Chinese facts pose problems for the analysis of English you have given for (a)-(d)? What do the Chinese facts tell us about the nature of first language acquisition and the conditions under which it takes place?

- (e) 张三想聘请玛丽和珍妮。
- (f) 张三想聘请谁?
- (g) 张三想聘请玛丽和谁?
- (h) 张三想聘请谁和玛丽?

4. Phonology & Phonetics

4.1. Examine the distribution of the four groups of consonants in Mandarin Chinese, as shown in the following table. The first group of consonants [tʃ tʃʰ ʧ] only co-occur with laminal front vowels [i, y]; whereas the other groups of consonants never co-occur with the front vowels. Given the complementary distribution of [tʃ tʃʰ ʧ] with other groups of consonants, how would you analyze the phonemic status of [tʃ tʃʰ ʧ] as part of a phonological system of Mandarin Chinese? Please elaborate on the assumptions of the phonological theory that you adopt.

	ɿ	ʅ	i	y	u
tʃ tʃʰ ʧ			寄气系	句去叙	
k kʰ x					孤苦呼
ts tsʰ s	自次寺				租粗苏
tʂ tʂʰ ʂ		志持试			朱出酥

- 4.2. The following transcriptions are hypothetical examples of British English ‘RP’ (received pronunciation) of ‘*I don’t suppose you could make it for eighteen hundred*’ in four different speech styles: citation form, careful, natural and casual. Discuss the connected speech processes you can identify. Can you suggest some factors which can affect speech production?

`aɪ | `dəʊnt | sə`pʰəʊz | `ju: | `kʰʊd | `meɪkʰ | `ɪt | `fə: | eɪ`tʰi:n | `hʌndɪəd ||

aɪ `dəʊntse `pʰəʊzjʊkʰʊd `meɪkʰɪtfə:ɪ eɪtʰi:n `hʌndɪəd || *CAREFUL*

ɛ `dəʊnspəʊzəxəb `meɪɪpfəɪ `eɪti:n `hʌndɪəd || *NATURAL*

`mɪspəʊzəxə `meɪɪ `fɪeɪtʰi:n `hʌndɪəd || *CASUAL*

5. Syntax

- 5.1. The following sentence is said to be three-way ambiguous. Discuss what causes the ambiguity and use relevant structural methods to demonstrate how to resolve the ambiguity.

John saw the lady in the library.

- 5.2. Observe the following sentences in Mandarin Chinese. The underscored verbs in (a) and (b), respectively, are said to be derivationally related. Discuss the relevant derivational operation(s) involved.

- (a) i. 媽媽把熱鷄湯盛在大花磁碗里。
 ii. 大花磁碗里盛着熱鷄湯。
 (b) i. 小梅把兩朵花繡在手帕上。
 ii. 手帕上繡着兩朵花。

Explain in what way the contrast in (c) below shows that the derivation observed in (a) and (b) is rule governed.

- (c) i. 小強把一輛自行車推在門外。
 ii. * 門外推著一輛自行車。

Elaborate on the relevant theories you adopt in your account.