

Final Exam: English Grammar and Meaning

Rules

You may (and are strongly advised to) do this exam in groups.

Submit a group answer; everybody gets the same grade.

Maximum size of group is 3 (see me for exceptions).

All answers are to be wordprocessed (leave space for hand-drawn diagrams and special characters, if needed).

Exam answers are due **in class** Tuesday, December 9th, the last class of the term.

Observe the page limits religiously.

Be concise and precise.

Use terminology correctly when it is needed, and give examples when they are needed.

Don't bullshit.

1. Read "The Logic of Politeness; or, Minding Your P's and Q's", by Robin T. Lakoff. In a short essay, discuss your ideas about politeness as a pragmatic phenomenon, in contrast to (or collaboration with) Grice's Maxims and the Cooperative Principle.
Max. 2 pages.
 2. Read the 1899 London Matriculation Exam on the next page. Write a short essay comparing your educational experience(s) of the English language, especially grammar, with those apparently presupposed by the people who set this exam, and their students. What differences do you see, why do you think they happened, and what effects have they had? Is it possible to change back? Is it desirable?
Max. 4 pages.
- 3-7.** Solve the problems on
- Backwards Pronominalization,
 - Niching,
 - The NPI Squish,
 - Sloppy ID,
- and ● *Lack*, et al.
- on the following pages.

*Selamat Hari Raya, Festive Thanksgiving,
Happy Hanukkah, God Yul, Merry Christmas,
Happy Kwanzaa, and Feliz Año Nuevo.*

The English language paper which was set as part of the London Matriculation examination for senior pupils in June 1899. (from *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language*, p.192)

N.B. CANDIDATES MUST NOT BREAK UP THEIR ANSWERS INTO SCATTERED PIECES. GREAT IMPORTANCE WILL BE ATTACHED TO CLEARNESS AND ACCURACY OF EXPRESSION AND STYLE.

I. – LANGUAGE

(Not more than seven of these ten questions are to be attempted)

1. Explain carefully what is meant by the term “grammar.”
Give the chief divisions of “grammar,” with definitions and examples.
2. Comment on the following statements:
 - a) “To reform Modern English spelling would be to destroy the life-history of many of our words.”
 - b) “The spelling of Modern English is little better than a chaos.”
3. At what periods, and under what conditions, have Latin words been introduced into English directly or indirectly? Give examples.
4. Derive and explain: *Matriculate, parliament, isle, alderman, mayor, cricket*; and mention some derivatives from and some cognates with these words.
5. What is meant by “relative pronouns”? Differentiate the uses of the relative pronouns in Modern English, giving instances of each.
6. Write notes on the following words:
worse, nearer, but, it, songstress, riches, alms, ye, first, Wednesday.
7. Classify adverbs, according to their origin and formation, with examples.
8. How are (i) infinitives, and (ii) participles distinguished from other parts of verbs? Write down and discuss six sentences illustrating the various uses of (i) the Infinitive and (ii) the Present Participle.
9. What is meant by “defective verbs”? Discuss the conjugation of any three.
10. “To make a revolution every day is the nature of the sun, because of that necessary course which God hath ordained it, from which it cannot swerve but by a faculty from that voice which first did give it motion.”
 - (i) analyse this sentence;
 - (ii) underline the words of Latin origin.

3.

Personal pronouns like *he*, *she*, *him*, etc. are said to be **coreferential** to some noun in the discourse. This noun is called the **antecedent** of the pronoun, from a Latin word that means *to go before*, since normally the antecedent precedes the pronoun if it occurs in the same sentence with it. In the first sentence below, *Bill* and *he* can refer to the same person (this is symbolized by the subscript index *i*), while in the second sentence, they can't:

Bill_i told me he_i was thinking of dropping the course.

**He_i told me Bill_i was thinking of dropping the course*

However, in certain circumstances, it is possible for a pronoun to precede its antecedent in the same sentence:

After Bill_i took the first exam he_i dropped the course.

After he_i took the first exam Bill_i dropped the course.

Bill_i dropped the course after he_i took the first exam.

* *He_i dropped the course after Bill_i took the first exam.*

What are those circumstances?

Give lots of other examples to demonstrate that your generalization is correct.

Maximum 1 page.

4.

•₁ *The* •₂ *old* •₃ *man* •₄ *has* •₅ *been* •₆ *brushing* •₇ *his* •₈ *teeth* •₉.

The numbered ‘•’ symbols in the sentence above indicate ‘niches’ in a sentence where something might be added. In particular, adverbs, prepositional phrases, adverbial noun phrases, and subordinate clauses can occupy several different niches:

The old man has been brushing his teeth carefully.
?The old man has been brushing carefully his teeth.
The old man has been carefully brushing his teeth.
The old man has carefully been brushing his teeth.
?The old man carefully has been brushing his teeth.
Carefully, the old man has been brushing his teeth.
The old man has been brushing his teeth with care.
The old man has been brushing his teeth every day.
The old man has been brushing his teeth since I arrived.

... but not **all** niches:

**The old man has been since I arrived brushing his teeth.*
**The old man has with care been brushing his teeth.*

Some of these niches seem **much** worse than others for adverbials:

***The old carefully man has been brushing his teeth.*
***The old man has been brushing his carefully teeth.*

Using these and other sentences as data, find what the constraints are on niching two different kinds of adverbial constituents:

1. Prepositional phrases: *on Wednesday(s)*, *with care*, *for a long time*, *in that way*, etc.
2. Noun phrases used as adverbs: *every day*, *Wednesday(s)*, *that way*, etc.

You will find that some niches are just fine, others are maybe a little worse, others still are ungrammatical, and some are spectacularly bad.

What’s wrong with the niches that are **really** bad?

There’s a simple answer that can be stated simply. Do so.

State where in a sentence an adverbial of each kind may occur, in terms of the structure of the sentence (since sentences vary in length, numbers obviously won’t work for this purpose).

Give **lots** of examples – you need ungrammatical examples for any restrictions that you claim exist for a given class. Is there any conclusion that one might draw from the pattern you’ve found that could explain it?

Maximum 2 pages.

5. Below are 42 sentences constructed using the 6 negative triggers **whether, would rather, seldom, not, too, and only**, and the 7 negative polarity items **any more, ever, in weeks, take long, at all, yet, and until** (w/ punctual verb). Not all are grammatical; is there any pattern?

HINT: Try using a 6-by-7 grid. Maximum 1 page.

- 1) *He's seldom ever eaten a mango.*
- 2) * *He would rather listen to Bach than The Beatles any more.*
- 3) * *Only Bill thinks it'll take long.*
- 4) *He hasn't slept at all.*
- 5) * *We want to find out whether they arrived until noon.*
- 6) * *He'd rather watch TV than finish it yet.*
- 7) ? *He's seldom been here in weeks.*
- 8) *He's been too nervous to sleep at all.*
- 9) *He has not ever eaten a mango.*
- 10) *He seldom sleeps during the day at all.*
- 11) *Only Bill has ever eaten a mango.*
- 12) *We have to find out whether they've finished yet.*
- 13) ? *He would rather pace the room than sleep at all.*
- 14) *It seldom takes long.*
- 15) *They didn't arrive until noon.*
- 16) *I need to know whether he has slept at all.*
- 17) * *Only Bill arrived until noon.*
- 18) *Tell me whether he's ever eaten a mango.*
- 19) ? *Only Bill got to sleep at all.*
- 20) *Bill doesn't buy his suits there any more.*
- 21) * *Only Bill has been home in weeks.*
- 22) *They haven't finished the paper yet.*
- 23) * *He's been too angry to see her in weeks.*
- 24) *He would rather go hungry than ever eat a mango.*
- 25) *He is seldom finished yet at this time of day.*
- 26) *He's too picky to ever eat a mango.*
- 27) * *They would rather be late than arrive until noon.*
- 28) *He's too lazy to have finished yet.*
- 29) *He hasn't been home in weeks.*
- 30) * *We have to find out whether he's been home in weeks.*
- 31) ? *Only Bill has finished yet.*
- 32) *He seldom buys his suits here any more.*
- 33) *He's too poor to buy his suits there any more.*
- 34) *We have to find out whether he buy his suits there any more.*
- 35) ? *Only Bill buys his suits there any more.*
- 36) *This procedure won't take long to do.*
- 37) *It's too simple to take long.*
- 38) *We need to know whether it will take long.*
- 39) * *He would rather forget about it than take long.*
- 40) *He seldom arrives until noon.*
- 41) ? *He's too slow to arrive until noon.*
- 42) * *She would rather flunk than study in weeks.*

6.

A. Conjoined clauses that differ only in their subjects can be reduced by a rule called *So/Neither-Tag Formation*:

*Bill passed the test and Mike passed the test. →
Bill passed the test and so did Mike.*

*Bill passed the test and Mike passed the test the next day. →
Bill passed the test and so did Mike the next day.*

*Bill passed the test and the next day Mike passed the test. →
Bill passed the test and the next day so did Mike.*

*Bill is sick and Mike is sick. →
Bill is sick and so is Mike.*

*Bill can do 100 pushups and Mike can do 100 pushups. →
Bill can do 100 pushups and so can Mike.*

*Bill has seen the news and Mike has seen the news. →
Bill has seen the news and so has Mike.*

*Bill hasn't seen the news and Mike hasn't seen the news. →
Bill hasn't seen the news and neither has Mike.*

Describe how the rule operates.

Give other examples to demonstrate that your description is correct.

HINT: Review Tag-Question Formation and its step-by-step description.

Maximum 1 page.

B. *So/Neither-Tag Formation* can occasionally produce some ambiguity about what the reduced clause means:

Bill called his mother and so did Mary.

Bill kissed his wife and so did Mary.

Bill called his mother and so did Mike.

Bill kissed his wife and so did Mike.

Bill broke his arm and so did Mary.

Bill broke his arm and so did Mike.

Bill painted a picture of himself and so did Mary.

Bill painted a picture of himself and so did Mike.

Discuss this phenomenon (which is known as 'Sloppy ID'), explaining exactly what the ambiguities are and why they arise. Give other examples of the same phenomenon.

Maximum 1 page.

7. Consider the four predicates *lack*, *be missing*, *be without*, and *not have*. They all can occur contexts in which they are near-synonyms. However, they also occur in contexts in which they **don't** mean the same thing, and they are not always grammatical in the same contexts. What's going on? Describe and – as far as possible – explain.

Here are some sentences to get you started; don't restrict yourself to them. Feel free to disagree with the grammaticality judgements here, as usual; supply your own if you prefer.

- 1) *Bill lacks/is missing/is without/doesn't have ambition.*
- 2) *Bill lacks/is missing/is without/doesn't have hair.*
- 3) *Bill lacks/is missing/is without/doesn't have a hair on his head.*
- 4) *Bill ?*lacks/*is missing/is without/doesn't have any hair.*
- 5) *Bill lacks/is missing/is without/doesn't have his hair.*
- 6) *Bill lacks/is missing/is without/doesn't have a finger on his left hand.*
- 7) *Bill lacks/is missing/is without/doesn't have two fingers on his left hand.*
- 8) *Bill lacks/is missing/is without/doesn't have five fingers on his left hand.*
- 9) *Bill lacks/is missing/is without/doesn't have the thumb on his left hand.*
- 10) *Bill lacks/is missing/is without/doesn't have a thumb on his left hand.*
- 11) *Bill lacks/?is missing/is without/doesn't have a conscience*
- 12) *Bill ?*lacks/*is missing/is without/doesn't have much money in his wallet.*
- 13) *Bill ?*lacks/*is missing/is without/doesn't have a red cent.*
- 14) *Bill *lacks/*is missing/?is without/doesn't have too much time left.*
- 15) *Bill lacks/is missing/is without/doesn't have a wife.*
- 16) *Bill *lacks/is missing/is without/?doesn't have his wife.*
- 17) *Bill ?lacks/?is missing/?is without/doesn't have his wife with him.*

Maximum 2 pages.