

**HSS PhD Entrance Examination  
Linguistics**

**Date:** 5<sup>th</sup> December 2016

**Time:** 10am – 12pm

**Total Marks:** 100

**Note:**

- Section 0 is mandatory. It carries 20 marks.
- Attempt any other two sections.
- Each of the sections 1, 2 and 3 carries 40 marks.
- Verbosity will not be rewarded. Be precise.
- Do not cheat. If you are caught cheating your application will stand canceled.

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**Section 0: Essay/Critical Thinking about Language**

Attempt any **ONE** between the two questions in this section. Your response should NOT exceed 150 words.

*I am not going to argue that typology lacks theoretical interest or importance. If a particular feature is manifested in 90 per cent of languages in a properly constructed sample, then that is a fact in need of explanation. If feature A is correlated with feature B significantly greater than chance would predict, then that too is a fact in need of explanation. But crucially, it does not follow that the explanation of such facts needs to reside within grammatical theory. That is, it might be wrong to derive the overwhelming preference for the feature that shows up in 90 per cent of all languages from a principle, or a set of interacting principles, within generative grammar. And similarly, the implicational relationship between A and B could fall out from the interaction of the grammatical module with others involved in the totality of language, rather than from the internal structure of grammatical theory itself.*

(F. Newmeyer 2005, *Possible and Probable Languages: A Generative Perspective on Linguistic Typology*)

1. Do you agree with Newmeyer that systematic correlations between features could result from factors other than the interaction of grammatical principles? Elaborate your answer with natural language examples that you think can bear upon this point.

*Descriptive formal categories cannot be equated across languages because the criteria for category-assignment are different from language to language. This old structuralist insight (called categorial particularism) has recently been emphasized again by several linguists, but the idea that typologists need to identify "crosslinguistic categories" before they can compare languages is still widespread. Instead, what they have to do (and normally do in practice) is to create comparative concepts that help them to identify comparable phenomena across languages and to formulate cross-linguistic generalizations. Comparative concepts have to be universally applicable, so they can only be based on other universally applicable concepts: conceptual-semantic concepts, formal concepts, general concepts, and other comparative concepts. If, by contrast, one espouses categorial universalism and assumes*

*crosslinguistic categories, as many generative linguists do, typology works by equating comparable categories in different languages, which are said to "instantiate" a cross-linguistic category. But in typological practice, all that is required is that a language-specific category matches a comparative concept. For example, the Russian Dative, the Turkish Dative and the Finnish Allative all match the comparative concept 'dative case', but they are very different distributionally and semantically and therefore cannot be equated and cannot instantiate a cross-linguistic category 'dative'*

(M. Haspelmath 2008. *Comparative Concepts and Descriptive Categories in Cross-linguistic studies*)

2. In Apatani, a Tibeto-Burman language of Arunachal Pradesh, there are three lexical items da~du~do which can occur as existential verbs (be). Two typologists A and B classified them differently based on the same data. Discuss Haspelmath's concepts of categorial particularism and categorial universalism with respect to this context.

	so myu ako da here man one exist here is a man (standing)	so myu ako du here man one exist here is a man (sitting)	so myu ako do here man one exist here is a man (lying down)
	kile=ho ŋi da river.loc fish exist there are fish in the river	so ceyar du here chair exist here is a chair	bajar=ho ŋi do market.loc fish exist there is fish in the market
Typologist 1	da: stand	du: sit	do: lie down
Typologist 2	da: be (moving or with high likelihood to move)	du: be (not moving but with potential for displacement)	do: be (cannot move)

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### **Section 1**

1. I often wonder whether humans will ever appreciate hard work.

For the underlined unit, please answer the following questions: [5]

- i) Is it a constituent?
- ii) What diagnostics/tests would you use to answer (i)?

2. Speakers can substitute an entire embedded sentence as the one in 'John knows that Mary had left home yesterday' with the pronoun 'it' in an appropriate context. Explain whether the substitution rule is category (part of speech) sensitive, and how? [5]

3. Consider the following sentence in Malayalam. State three word-order differences between Malayalam and English, based on this sentence. [6]

- (i) ellaawarum awal pariiksha paassawum enna wicaariccu  
all she exam pass-future that think-past  
'Everyone expected that she will pass the examination'

4. Imagine reading the following English sentence

The boy saw a postman with a telescope.

Discuss in detail the steps/processes that will be required for an English native speaker to comprehend this sentence. [5]

5. What are some of salient properties of the human sentence comprehension system? [5]

6. You are required to syntactically analyze (parse) the following sentences [5]

- (a) The boy saw a postman with a telescope.
- (b) The boy saw the doctor was thin.

Construct a simple phrase structure grammar in order to do this.

7. In Dutch, participles are formed by affixing to the verb root.

Verbal Stem		Past participle
váng	catch	ge-vang-en
ont-váng	receive	ont-vang-en
prè-figéer	prefix	ge-pre-figeer-d
rè-animéer	reanimate	ge-re-animeer-d

(a) What is the past-participle morpheme in Dutch? [2]

(b) What blocks the form \*ge-ont-vang-en from appearing in the language? [3]

(c) Given that both pre- and re- are English prefixes that are being attached to Dutch words, explain why ge- surfaces in the words 'prefix' and 'reanimate'. [4]

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## Section 2

1. Draw a tree diagram for the following correlative from Tibetan (Keenan, 1985).  
(erg = ergative; abs = absolutive; gen = genitive) [6]

- (i) Peeme thep khiipa the nee yin  
Peem-erg. book.abs. carry-past the.abs. I.gen. be  
'The book Peem carried, that (book) is mine.'

2. Consider the following sentences. Is there a Binding Theory (Chomsky 1981; 1986) puzzle here and how do you propose to solve the problem and generate the good structures? [6]

- (i) John<sub>i</sub> saw a snake near him<sub>i</sub>.
- (ii) John<sub>i</sub> saw a snake near himself<sub>i</sub>.

3. Consider the following sentences. With regard to processing ambiguity, which phrase/word in these sentences will lead to processing difficulty? Why? [8]

- (a) The girl knew the answer was correct.
- (b) While Susan was dressing the baby played on the floor.

4. Psycholinguistic experiments are conducted to understand the processing cost during sentence processing. What are some of the ways in which these costs can be measured? [5]

5. What is the evidence for localization (i.e., use of dedicated areas) of language in the brain? [5]

6. Answer the questions that follow with respect to the given data from Papago, an Ulto-Aztec language.

Imperfective Singular	Plural	English Gloss	Perfective Singular	Plural	English Gloss
him	hihim	walking	hi:	hihi	walked
hi:nk	hihink	barking	hi:n	hihin	barked
hikck	hihikck	cutting	hikc	hihikc	cut
'elpig	'e'elpig	peeling	'elpi	'e'elpi	peeled
huksan	huhuksa	scratching	huksa	huhuks	scratched
cicwi	n cicicwi	playing	cicwi	a cicicwi	played

(a) What is the underlying representation of the given verbs in Papago? Explain how you came to that conclusion. [5]

(b) Write a word formation rule to either derive imperfective from perfective or perfective from imperfective, whichever you think is true for Papago. [5]

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### Section 3

1. Explain what you understand by the term 'defective intervention' (Chomsky, 2001) with reference to the following Icelandic sentence from Holmberg and Hroasdotir (2004). [4]

(i) það virðist einh verjum manni hestarnir vera seinir  
 there seems.sg some man.dat the horses.nom/pl be slow  
 'The horses seem to some man to be slow.'

Now compare the Icelandic sentence with the following Hindi-Urdu sentences. Give an analysis that will account for the presence or absence of defective intervention for all three sentences. You must consider the case marking on the absolutive object and the corresponding verbal morphology while preparing your analysis (erg = ergative; dat = dative; def = default morphology) [6]

(ii) Johnne mujhe dekhaa  
 John-erg. I.fem.dat. see.def.  
 'John saw me'

(iii) Johnko me dikhi  
 John-dat. I.fem.abs. see-fem.sg.  
 'John saw me'

2. Examine the following ambiguous context free grammar and answer the questions which follow.

S → Ab | aaB  
 A → a | Aa  
 B → b

Find an equivalent unambiguous context-free grammar. Also explain why the equivalent grammar is unambiguous. [5]

3. Both constraint-based model and the garden-path model predict sentence (a) to be easier than (b). Why? [5]

- (a) He saw the boy in the garden.
- (b) He saw the boy was running.

4. With regard to lexical processing what happens when one encounters an ambiguous word? Does this processing pattern change when the context constrains the meaning of the ambiguous word? Explain using an example. [5]

5. Answer the following questions with respect to reduplication in Gapapaiwa.

Verb Root	past imperfect	
ki.ta	i.ki.ta.ki.ta	'he was seeing'
vo.na	i.vo.na.vo.na	'he was speaking'
ba.gi	i.ba.gi.ba.gi	'he was working'

(a) What are the possible reduplicative templates (Verb root, 2 syllables, 2 moras, CVCV, ...) for imperfect aspect w.r.t the verbs see, speak and work? [3]

ve.rau	i.ve.ra.ve.rau	'he was running'
ma.kai	i.ma.ka.ma.kai	'he was sitting'

(b) List two ways in which the words 'run' and 'sit' narrow down your analytical options from earlier? [4]

ba.ba	i.ba.ba.ba	'he was walking'
te.te	i.te.te.te	'he was creeping along'

(c) With respect to your analysis account for the imperfective forms of the words 'walk' and 'creep along'. [4]

u.m.a	iu.mu.ma	'he was drinking'
u.wa.ra	iu.wu.wa.ra	'he was wallowing'
ivu	_____	'he was fetching'

(d) Minimally alter your analysis to account for the imperfective derivation of 'drink' and 'wallow'. [2]

(e) Give the imperfective form for the verb root [ivu]. [2]