BACHELOR OF ARTS
FINAL EXAMINATION
LINGUISTICS – SAMPLE PAPER

Before you take the test, read carefully the instructions below:

1. You have a maximum of **2 hours** to complete the test;

2. Please **write your name** clearly where indicated;

3. The exam paper is composed of **four sections,** each examining one subject area that was taught as part of the linguistics programme. In each section you are presented with a piece of text and a number of questions that you are required to answer;

4. **All answers must be completed on the exam paper.** Each section is worth a maximum of 25% of the total result;

5. At all times **you must work independently** of other students taking the exam;

6. If you have **any questions, ask them now**.

NAME: ....

DATE: ....

TOTAL SCORE: .... [to be completed by the assessors]

Department of English Language and Literature
University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice
Page **1** of **8**

SECTION ONE – INTRODUCTION TO LINGUISTICS

[25% marks]

Read the text below and answer the exam question. The required minimum word limit is 200 words.

Scotland is part of the UK and the official language is English. However, much of the English used by Scottish speakers can vary dramatically from Standard English. Consider the following example of spoken discourse. The former is in a Scottish dialect and the latter in Standard English.

> **Aye, it wis fair dreich'it yesterday, ye ken**
>
> **Yes, it was raining heavily yesterday, you know**

Both utterances mean exactly the same. Although they are both English, their language realisations are, however, quite different.

Exam Question

Consider the utterances above and discuss the following issues:

- What is a dialect and how does it differ from a language?
- Dialects are considered to be regularly patterned. What do we mean by that? Can you provide an example from the text above?
- Which level(s) of dialect variation is/are most noticeable when you compare the two utterances?
- What might be some of the social implications of speaking Scottish English?

MODEL ANSWER

A dialect is a variety of a language. Although the term is applied most often to regional speech patterns, a dialect may also be defined by other factors, such as social class. Conventionally, it is described by means of comparison with the standard variety of a language. It is, however, by no means inferior to this socially favoured variety. As does the standard variety of a language, dialects enable their speakers to communicate any idea or message they wish to convey; dialects may be equally complex, and also regularly patterned. Determining the actual boundary between a dialect and a language in its own right may not be completely straightforward. In general terms, speakers of different dialects of the same language should be able both to communicate with each other and to understand each other. In reality, nevertheless, this is not always the case as it is also possible for political intervention to define the boundaries of a particular language or dialect by basing these on the needs of a certain, typically more powerful, political group. For example, the Chinese language comprises a number of mutually unintelligible dialects (at least in their spoken form). Despite this diversity, it has been defined by the government as Chinese to in effect unify the country.

Regular patterning of dialects means, as does the standard variety, that dialects follow a set of 'grammar' rules even though these may not be formally written down. These rules are responsible for the recurrence of certain structures that are specific for the particular dialect. In the above example, the 'ye ken' (= you know) is not there to check the recipients' understanding; it has a role of a syntactic marker, in this case acting as a full stop.

The individual differences among dialects of the same language may be defined along four levels of dialect variation: lexical, phonological, morpho-syntactic, and pragmatic. In the above example, probably the lexical variation is most noticeable. In Standard English, the meaning of the word 'fair' is more commonly associated with justice or with colour. In Scottish English, however, it can also be used as an adjective meaning 'a lot of', in this case 'a lot of rain'. Another example of lexical variation is the replacement of the word 'Yes' with 'Aye'.

The implication of speaking a language variety that is different from the standard is that it immediately identifies where you come from, either socially or regionally. This could create difficulties if that particular group were not perceived favourably in that society. Alternatively, it could create opportunities if that social group were valued in society. It is also possible that you can be misunderstood or not understood by using unfamiliar words, such as 'dreich'it' in the example, or considered to be irritating if you use specific speech patterns such as 'ye ken' (= you know) when the recipient is not aware that they are working as a discursive full stop rather than a question directed at them.

SECTION TWO – PHONETICS AND PHONOLOGY

[25% marks]

> **Q.** **What happens to a sophisticated fridge when you pull out the plug?**
> **A.** **It loses its cool.**
>
> <div align="right">[After Dick Francis]</div>

Exam Question

All parts relate to this joke.
- Transcribe the text, using standard phonetic transcription.
- The grapheme "a" may correspond to a number of phonemes in pronunciation. Give at least four different phonetic realisations, including examples of words in spelling, and comment on the reasons for differences.
- Identify an instance of a mute consonant in the text and explain how mute consonants differ from elision; give at least four more examples of mute consonants in words.
- Give two examples of "weak forms" from the text and explain what they are.
- What is the difference in pronunciation between "lose" and "loose"? Transcribe the words and comment on the difference.

MODEL ANSWER

Full phonetic transcription:

| ˈwɒt ˈhæpn̩z tu ə səˈfɪstɪkeɪtɪd ˈfrɪdʒ wen ju ˈpʊl ˈaʊt ðə ˈplʌɡ |

| ɪt ˈluːzɪz ɪts ˈkuːl |

Different pronunciation of the grapheme "a":

[æ]	happen	stressed closed syllable
[eɪ]	late	stressed open syllable
[ə]	umbrella	unstressed reduced syllable
[ɑː]	palm	lengthening effect of spelt "l"
[ɔː]	saw	
[e]	many	

Mute consonants

w<u>h</u>en – "h" is mute when it follows initial "w" in many wh-words (where, why, what, etc.)

<u>w</u>ho – mute "w"
<u>w</u>rite – mute "w" before spelt "r"
<u>g</u>nat – mute "g" before "n"
<u>k</u>now – mute "k" before "n"
lam<u>b</u> – mute "b" in tautosyllabic "mb" clusters
dou<u>b</u>tful – mute "b" in tautosyllabic "bt" clusters

Mute consonants – obligatory loss of a spelt consonant, they are never pronounced

Elision – optional loss of a spelt consonant (or a weak vowel); in careful pronunciation the consonant need not be dropped: e.g., "these fac(t)s"

Weak forms

you   [ju] x [ˈjuː]
the   [ðə / ði] x [ˈðiː]

Unlike lexical words, some monosyllabic grammatical words (pronouns, auxiliary verbs, prepositions, etc.) may occur in stressed (strong) variants or unstressed/reduced (weak) variants, which are phonologically different. Weak forms are more common. Strong forms of such words are used if the word is communicatively important (emphasis, contrast, stranded prepositions, when such words are cited, etc).

LOSE x LOOSE

lose   [ˈluːz] (verb)
loose [ˈluːs] (adjective)

The final [z] in "lose" is not fully voiced, but it makes the preceding vowel longer. Conversely, the voiceless [s] in "loose" makes the vowel shorter. The difference in the length of the vowel is more noticeable than the voiced/voiceless consonant contrast.

SECTION THREE – MORPHOLOGY

[25% marks]

Read the text below and answer the exam question. The required minimum word limit is 200 words.

The following is an excerpt from *Monty Python's Life of Brian.* Both underlined lexemes are nonce-formations, i.e. they are results of creativity in language rather than lexicalised items. Although they cannot be found in standard dictionaries, they strictly follow the productive morphological rules for their formation and inflection.

<table>
<tr>
<td>

-Speak up!
-Quiet, Mum!

Well, I can't hear a thing.

Let's go to a <u>stoning</u>.

-You can go to a stoning any time.
-Come on, Brian.

Will you be quiet?
Don't pick your nose!
...

</td>
<td>

...
-I can't hear a bloody thing.
-Don't you swear at my wife.

I was only asking her to shut up
so we can hear, <u>big nose</u>.

Don't you call my husband "big nose."

-Well, he has got a big nose.
-Could you be quiet, please?

</td>
</tr>
</table>

Exam Question

Consider the underlined lexemes above and discuss the following issues:

- "Stoning": Discuss the word-formation processes that gave rise to this lexeme. Discuss these processes within a broader context.
- What is the semantic relationship between *stone* as a piece of rock and *stone* as a hard seed shell in some types of fruit, and why? Explain the difference between polysemy and homonymy.
- "Big nose": decide whether this compound is endocentric or exocentric. Give your reasoning.
- Describe three general rules for forming plurals in compounds. Provide examples for each of them.

MODEL ANSWER

- The starting point is the noun *stone*. The verb *stone* with the meaning "to throw stones at sb" is then achieved through the process of conversion. Then we get the noun *stoning* with the meaning "the occasion at which people are stoned" through the process of suffixation. In a diagram, the processes can be visualised in the following way:

  stone (noun) >> conversion >> stone (verb) >> suffixation >> stoning (noun).

  Conversion involves changing a word-class without any change of form. It is a productive process between the major word-classes – between verbs and nouns (e.g., V→N *cheat*, N→V *butter*), adjectives and nouns (e.g., Adj → N *human*), and adjectives and verbs (e.g., Adj→V *clean*). Conversion is also termed zero-derivation, as it is understood as suffixation with a zero suffix *cheat* (V) → *cheat*+Ø (N).

- This semantic relationship is polysemy, as the two meanings are related. In this particular case, the meaning of the latter is a metaphorical extension of the former based on the feature of

hardness. The distinction between polysemy and homonymy is based on the relatedness of meaning – homonyms are two words of the same form that are completely unrelated, e.g., *bat* – 1. a flying rodent, 2. a wooden club.

- *Big nose* is an exocentric compound. Exocentric compounds are those in which the head (the second element of the compound) does not express the overall meaning of the compound. In our case, big nose is not a type of nose. In the more common endocentric compounds, the head gives meaning to the whole compound, e.g., goldfish is a type of fish. This distinction can also be described on the concept of hyponymy: goldfish is a hyponym of fish (in other words, goldfish has a more specific meaning than fish), whereas big nose is not a hyponym of nose.

- Rule 1: if the compound does not include a nominal element, the plural marker goes to the end of the whole compound, e.g., *forget-me-nots, grown-ups*.

  Rule 2: if the compound includes one nominal element, it is this noun that forms the plural, even if it is not the final element, e.g., *blackbirds, sons-in-law*.

  Rule 3: if both elements in the compound are nouns, it is the second noun that forms the plural, e.g., *boyfriends, fountainpens*. If the first element is man or woman, and it is an appositive compound (i.e. the first element is not a modifier of the second one), both elements form the plural, e.g., *women doctors, men servants*.

SECTION FOUR – SYNTAX

[25% marks]

Read the following text carefully then perform the tasks below.

A Valentine's Day tale

An English journalist came to New York. She was attractive and witty, and right away she hooked up with one of New York's typically eligible bachelors. Tim was forty-two, an investment banker who made about 5 million dollars a year. For two weeks, they kissed, held hands – and then on a warm fall day he drove her to the house he was building in the Hamptons. They looked at the plans with the architect. "I wanted to tell the architect to fill in the railings on the second floor, so the children wouldn't fall through," said the journalist. On Sunday night, Tim dropped her off at her apartment and reminded her that they had dinner plans for Tuesday. **On Tuesday**, he called and said he'd have to take a rain check. When she hadn't heard from him after two weeks, she called and told him, "That's an awfully long rain check." He said he would call her later in the week.

(Bushnell, Candace. *Sex and the City*. Great Britain: Abacus, 2008.)

Tasks:

1) Identify the clause elements SVO in the following sentence.

   I wanted to tell the architect to fill in the railings on the second floor […]
   S   V   O
   *   S   V   O*

2) Translate *An English journalist came to New York*. Comment on the difference between the English sentence and its Czech equivalent.

   'Do New Yorku přijela anglická novinářka.'
   It is usual in English that the rhematic subject is at the beginning of the sentence; however, in Czech, the rhematic subject is typically at the very end. The difference between these two sentences lies in the position of the rhematic subject, while the rheme as such remains the same (the subject). It corresponds with the *end-focus principle* in Czech and the SVO order in an English statement. Both the English and Czech sentences are unmarked, as the Czech version does not deviate from the *theme-rheme* sequence and the English version adheres to grammatical word order.
   The marked version of the Czech sentence would be, for instance, 'Anglická novinářka přijela do New Yorku'.

3) There is one expression in **bold** in the text.

   a. Through what is the clause element realised?
   b. Identify its syntactic and grammatical function.
   c. Suggest another possible position for this element in the sentence.
   d. Comment on the difference between these two positions.

   a) PrepP

   b) Syntactic function: Adverbial; Grammatical function: Time adjunct.

   c) and d) Position: *On Tuesday* is considered to be thematic because it appears at the beginning of the sentence. Another possible position: 'He called on Tuesday …' In this case *on Tuesday* might be both rhematic (stressed) and thematic.

4) Identify the semantic role of the subject in the following sentence: *They looked at the plans with the architect.*

   They - agentive subject.

END OF EXAM