
UNIVERSITI SAINS MALAYSIA

Second Semester Examination
Academic Session 2004/2005

March 2005

HET 521 - Psychology and Sociology of Language

Duration: 3 hours

Please check that this examination paper consists of THREE pages of printed material before you begin the examination.

Answer FOUR questions. All questions carry equal marks.

1. EITHER

- [a] Do you agree that the process of comprehending ambiguous sentences and garden-path sentences can shed light on our sentence processing strategy? Discuss. Exemplify with clear examples and make reference to relevant theories to support your answer.

OR

- [b] The literature on language and the brain suggests that in the normal human brain, both hemispheres are involved, perhaps to differing degrees in language function. However, it is also evident that such bihemispheric involvement may not be necessary for reasonably normal functioning. Discuss this by citing evidence from experimental studies that leads to this conclusion.

2. EITHER

- [a] L1 and L2 acquisition involves essentially the same general cognitive strategies. Do you agree? Discuss.

OR

- [b] Researchers now agree that there is much more variation in the grammars of people learning second languages than in the grammars of people learning first languages. Discuss this issue with regard to the factors that involve individual differences. Support your answer with evidence from your readings.

3. EITHER

- [a] *"Global' is a trendy word nowadays. But without cynicism, what I mean is that we can teach English, through the environment, without teaching 'Englishness' or 'Americanness' or whatever cultural values we might accidentally or deliberately put across to our students."*

(Etchells 1:1995)

Assess this observation in relation to the learning/teaching of English in your country.

OR

- [b] *"A language which has come to be spoken by as many English has, ceased to be the property of any of its constituent communities. Nobody owns English now- not the British, with whom the language began, nor the Americans, who are now its largest mother tongue community. The total number of mother tongue speakers in the world is some 400 million, is actually falling as a proportion of world English users."*

(Crystal, 52: 2000)

To what extent is Crystal right? Give your reasons.

[25 Marks]

4. EITHER

- [a] Fowler (1981), Fairclough (1989) and Halliday (1994) claim that language use is a social practice that is closely and dialectically related to social reality and ideologies.

Do you agree or disagree? What are your reasons?

OR

- [b] *"One may want to gauge the economic role of lingua in a world drenched in the "euphoria" of the New Economy. Traditionally, linguistic variables are seldom explicitly taken into consideration in economics, nor are economic variables often incorporated in the study of language. How often do we actually reflect on the role of language in society and the economy? Should there be any real relevance between linguistic issues and economics (or vice versa)"*

(Tan, 13:2000)

Sociolinguistics has nothing to offer in a discussion of questions of this kind: they are really quite meaningless.

Do you agree or disagree? What are your reasons?

[25 Marks]