

How your exam will be conducted

Module A: Varieties of English over space and time

Module A is examined by oral exam. Below is a complete list of the exam questions I may ask you, organized by lesson (topic), plus a list of the source texts which will be available for you to consult during the exam. You should choose ONE of the topics (e.g., “2b”, “7a”) to prepare as your personal “special subject”, thereby giving you the opportunity to study one of your own points of interest in detail and gain some degree of control over what you will be examined on. You will then be asked a further two questions, each from a different topic area.

The reading supplied for each lesson should be sufficient for general answers; for your special topic, you should refer to the “further reading” and other research which you conduct yourselves. The “extra reading” zip file on the course website contains four articles which are of particular use to non-attending students, but will supplement notes taken in class by the attendees.

1) New Found Lands (1600-1700)

- a. What can pre-1700s written English texts tell us about the way people spoke?
- b. With reference to pre-standard written English, why is it desirable or necessary to introduce a standard orthography?

2) Enlightenment and the quest for a Gold Standard

- a. With specific reference to Cawdrey and Johnson, *who* were the first dictionaries for and *what purpose* were they meant to serve
- b. How do new words enter a language? Where do they come from and who introduces them? What happens to synonyms / conflicting forms?
- c. What was the contemporary reaction to the massive influx of new words into English between c. 1550 and c. 1700?
- d. To what extent can we say that a standard written form implies a standard spoken form?

3) Here be pirates. Creoles and the accents of far-away Englishes.

- a. Who were the people who exported English to the colonies? How may the way they spoke (accent, dialect) and what they spoke about (professional language/ jargon) have influenced the development of English outside the UK?
- b. What differences are there between Pidgins, Creoles, Dialects and the Standard language? How do they relate to one another?
- c. Why is it difficult to read (understand) non-standard orthography which faithfully reflects the sounds of speech (c.f. Louise Bennet, *Bans a Killin*; *Brer Rabbit* parallel text, both provided for reference)

4) The Boston tea-party and its fall-out:

- a. What factors influenced the development of a native North American variety of English, and makes this particular variety of English different from the kinds of English that developed in *exploitation colonies* (e.g. Singapore, India, West Africa, etc.)?
- b. Compare the views of Samuel Johnson and Noah Webster on the matter of English spelling.
- c. What kinds of linguistic influence did successive waves of immigrant groups to North America have on the English that has developed there?

5) Empire!

- a. What function do particles serve in Singapore English (and in other East-Asian Englishes) and why can they be considered to be characteristic of distinct varieties of English rather than “interlanguage errors”?
- b. What does Kachru’s model of the “circles of English” tell us about the use and ownership of the English language across the globe?
- c. What is English as a Lingua Franca? How can it be compared to English as a foreign language?

6) Language and the assertion of identity

- a. With reference to the “Dreamy Mae” parallel text, describe some of the lexical and grammatical differences between African American Vernacular English and standard American English.
- b. What advantages and disadvantages can you identify in educational or political policies which promote the use of dialects and other “sub-standard” forms of a language?
- c. What does the presence of “eye dialect” (the deliberate use of non-standard spelling to reflect accent) contribute within a work of fiction?

7) “There were shepherds abiding in the fields”: The Nativity in a dozen Englishes

- a. What impact did the earliest translations of the bible have on the development of the English language?
- b. Discuss the relationship between words and meaning in religious texts, with particular reference to register, directness and mysticism
- c. What changes to the English language can we observe by examining successive translations of the Bible in parallel text?

Texts available for comment during the oral exam

A. Pre-standard British English

1. Thomas Hariot *A Briefe and True Report of the New Found Land of VIRGINIA* (1590). Preface : “To the adventurers, favorers, and well-willers of the enterprise for the inhabitting and planting in Virginia”
2. Verbatim transcripts of the Salem witchcraft trials (1692): *The Examination And Confession of Mary Barker of Andivor, Second Version*
3. Robert Cawdrey *A Table Alphabeticall Of Hard Usual English Words* (1604). “To the Reader” [extract].
4. George Puttenham *The Arte of English Poesie* (1589) chapter 4 “Of Language”
5. Two letters from *The 1820 Settler Correspondence*, Sue Mackay (ed.)

B. Non-standard and dialect forms of (modern) English

1. Isaac Newton “*Pierpont Morgan*” *Notebook* [extract] studies in phonology
2. Irvine Welsh, *Skagboys* p52

C. African American English

2. *Terpsichore in the Flat Creek Quarters*. Manuscript held in the archives of the Royal Maritime Museum, London.
2. Excerpts From AAVE and Standard English Versions of “Dreamy Mae”, (Simpkins, Holt, & Simpkins, 1977)

D. English Contact Languages

1. Jamaican Patois: Louise Bennett *Bans a Killin* (1944)
2. Singapore English: (i) *Malaysia to Singapore: only we can use the word 'lah'*
(ii) *Speak Good Singlish Movement* Facebook posts

E. Parallel texts

1. Bible (i) King James Revised Version (1766). *Gospel of Saint Luke – Chapter 2, verses 1-14*
(ii) Contemporary English Version (1995). *Gospel of Saint Luke – Chapter 2, verses 1-14*
(iii) Hawai'i Pidgin. *Gospel of Saint Luke – Chapter 2, verses 1-14*

Module B: Academic writing in English

Module B is examined by a written paper. On the following pages you can find a “sample test”, which shows you the tasks that you will be asked to perform. All of the texts used relate to the content of Module A, so you will be familiar with the topics that they discuss. Obviously the texts selected for the real exam will be different from those used in the sample test, but the strategies that you will need to use remain exactly the same.

There are four sections, each examining a different aspect of academic writing: summarizing, arranging information, writing introductions, writing up data. Each section has a maximum score of 25 (total marks in exam= 100).

YOU MAY USE A MONOLINGUAL DICTIONARY (English only) DURING THIS TEST.

Module B – sample test

Time: 2hrs. You may use a monolingual dictionary.

1. Prepare a summary of this text in no more than 150 words.

3.1 University writing practices

The particular kinds of writing that hold sway in the university have emerged to represent events, ideas and observations in ways that facilitate efficient, even shorthand, communication among insiders. Essentially, the process of writing involves creating a text that we assume the reader will recognise and expect, and the process of reading involves drawing on assumptions about what the writer is trying to do. Hoey (2001) likens this to dancers following each other's steps, each building sense from a text by anticipating what the other is likely to do. But while this anticipation provides for writer-reader coordination, allowing the co-construction of coherence from a text, academic writing disrupts our everyday perceptions of the world and sets up different expectations. Effective writers craft texts in a way that insiders can see as 'doing biology' or 'doing sociology', and this both restricts how something can be said and authorises the writer as someone competent to say it. In other words, students learn what counts as good writing through an understanding of their discipline and the conventions and genres regarded as effective means of representing knowledge in that discipline.

Broadly, the social practices of the academy produce particular configurations of text which cause difficulties for many students. In everyday uses of language, for example, we tend to represent things in a certain way, so that events unfold in a time sequence and agents accomplish actions. This is a 'natural' or congruent representation (Halliday 1994) in that we tend to translate our perceptions of the physical world into the grammatical system of language: we call it as we see it. Academic writing, however, turns our way of expressing meanings on its head through an incongruent use of language. It treats events as existing in cause and effect networks, disguises the source of modality of statements, foregrounds events rather than actors, and engages with meanings defined by the text rather than in the physical context.

These practices often confuse newcomers and force them into roles, identities and ways of writing which run counter to their experiences and intuitions about how language is used, forcing them to represent themselves in certain ways. They require us to change our normal ways of speaking in order to fit in. Ivanič (1998), for instance, found that many of her 'mature' female students felt insecure about their educational identity, as the discourse they were expected to use seemed pretentious and false: it did not let them 'be themselves'. L2 students often experience even greater problems as they encounter writing conventions that can differ considerably from those in their first language. These frequently demand that students are more explicit about the structure and purposes of their texts, more cautious in making claims, clearer in signposting connections, and generally that they take more responsibility for coherence and clarity in their writing (Clyne 1987).

Culture, however, is an extremely controversial notion, with no single agreed definition. One version sees it as a historically transmitted and systematic network of meanings which allow us to understand, develop and communicate our knowledge and beliefs about the world (Street 1995; Lantolf 1999). Language and learning are, therefore, intrinsically bound up with culture. This is partly because our cultural values are carried through language, but also because cultures make available certain taken-for-granted ways of organising our understandings, including those we use to learn and to communicate.

2. Re-order the sentences below to recreate a single paragraph of an original academic text¹. Write the first words of each sentence in the space provided (there is no need to re-write each sentence in full)

- a) A secondary aim, however, is to discuss the statistical measures beyond frequency counts available for ranking formulaic sequences extracted from a corpus.
- b) In this paper, we present a method for deriving a list of formulaic expressions that uses an innovative combination of quantitative and qualitative criteria, corpus statistics and linguistic analyses, psycholinguistic processing metrics, and instructor insights.
- c) It encompasses a statistical measure of cohesiveness—mutual information (MI)—that has heretofore not been used in related research, in conjunction with validation and prioritization studies designed to provide insights into which formulas are perceived to be the important ones for teaching
- d) Long lists of highly frequent expressions are of minimal use to instructors who must make decisions about what content to draw students' attention to for maximum benefit within limited classroom time.
- e) Our primary aim in this research is to create a pedagogically useful list of formulaic sequences for academic speech and writing.
- f) Psycholinguistically salient sequences, on the other hand, like 'on the other hand', cohere much more than would be expected by chance.
- g) The departure point for our research was dissatisfaction with a strictly frequency-based rank ordering of multiword phrases on the one hand, and a frequency plus intuition-based ordering on the other hand, coupled with a need for relatively contained, manageable sets of multiword expressions for use in classroom applications and teaching materials development.
- h) The fact that a formula is above a certain frequency threshold and distributional range does not necessarily imply either psycholinguistic salience or pedagogical relevance; common sequences of common words, such as 'and of the,' are expected to occur frequently.
- i) They are 'glued together' and thus measures of association, rather than raw frequency, are likely more relevant.
- j) We used frequency as a starting point, but our approach is substantially more robust than the previous corpus-based methods for classifying multiword formulas.

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¹ Rita Simpson-Vlach and Nick C. Ellis. 2010. An Academic Formulas List: New Methods in Phraseology Research. *Applied Linguistics*: 31/4: 487–512

3. Choose ONE of the three essay topics below: write the first paragraph of the essay (100-150 words), making sure that you (i) specify the topic and scope of your answer, (ii) outline the organization of the rest of the essay, and (ii) indicate the main points of the argument that you are going to defend.

- 1) It is increasingly becoming more important to teach Lingua Franca English than to use native-speaker (US or UK) models. Discuss.
- 2) Compare Samuel Johnson's and Noah Webster's views on English spelling.
- 3) Is writing simply "speech written down" or is it a form of language in its own right?

This image shows a single page of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page, typical of notebook paper. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the page.

A bar chart comparing the percentage of UK Students (dark grey bars) and Hong Kong students (white bars) across three categories: Certainty, Probability, and Possibility. The Y-axis represents the percentage (%), ranging from 0 to 70 in increments of 10. The X-axis lists the three categories. For Certainty, UK students are at approximately 35% and Hong Kong students at approximately 62%. For Probability, UK students are at approximately 45% and Hong Kong students at approximately 22%. For Possibility, UK students are at approximately 20% and Hong Kong students at approximately 15%.

Category	UK Students (%)	Hong Kong students (%)
Certainty	35	62
Probability	45	22
Possibility	20	15

[illegible]

