



Department of English

Class: 2nd year class

Subject: Linguistics

Allotted time: 01 H: 30

Correction of the Exam of the Third Semester

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1) – "What characterized human communication via language is the fact that humans do not juxtapose sounds and words in a random way. Instead, they ring the changes on a well-defined patterns", explain briefly (06 pts).

Many animal communication systems consist of a simple list of elements. There is no internal organization within the system. Human language, on the other hand, is most definitely not a haphazard heap of individual items. For instance, take the sounds a, b, s, t. in English there are only four possible ways in which these sounds could be arranged: bats, tabs, stab or bast (the latter meaning 'inner bark of lime', Oxford English Dictionary. All other possibilities are excluded because the rules subconsciously followed by people who know English do not allow these combinations. Similarly, consider the words: burglar, loudly, sneezed, the. Here again, only three combinations are possible: The burglar sneezed loudly/ Loudly sneezed the burglar/ and (perhaps) The burglar loudly sneezed. All other combinations are not allowed. In brief, human language places firm restrictions on which items can occur together, and the order in which they come, and this is what is called the feature of patterning in human language.

2) – "Ferdinand De Saussure' s influence in the field of linguistics is permanent", write a brief account on the contributions of De Saussure in the field of linguistics (06 pts).

- Prior to the 20th century, linguists took an **atomistic** view of language: it was seen as a compilation of individual elements, for instance, speech sounds, words and grammatical endings. This was an item-centred analysis. Ferdinand de Saussure put forward a very different view where language is seen as **structured system** of relation oppositions.

- Various theoretical dichotomies can be extracted from Saussure's work (Course in General Linguistics. This has become a tradition. He made a clear distinction between several new concepts: langue/parole, syntagmatic/paradigmatic relationships, synchronic/diachronic studies and signifier/signified. (Students need to explain those dichotomies).

3) - In addition to his remarkable contribution to the fields of phonology and morphology, Bloomfield's name is usually attached to a pioneering syntactic theory called immediate constituent analysis (ICA).

3.1. Define this theory ? (02 pts)

ICA is an explicit method of analyzing sentences grammatically by dividing them into their component parts.

3.2. What the basics of the theory ? (03 pts)

The methodology of ICA consists in splitting a sentence up into two **immediate constituents**, which are analyzable into further constituents. This process of **segmentation** continues until the smallest indivisible units, the morphemes, are reached. The latter are called the **ultimate**

constituents, and each is given an identifying label. As a principle, the partition in ICA is binary. According to ICA, a sentence is not seen a string of elements but it is made up of **layers** of constituents (or **nodes**). Thus, constituent structure is **hierarchical**.

3.3. What are the weaknesses of ICA ? (03 pts)

The main weaknesses for which this analysis is reprimanded are the following:

- a) In some sentences, it is not always clear where the division should be;
- b) ICA does not indicate the role or function of constituents as they are not labelled. When parsing is done, some implied grammatical information is included (circularity of argument);
- c) In ICA division is arbitrarily binary, while some sentences may have alternative analyses;
- d) The analysis in ICA does not go beyond the morpheme;
- e) Because it focuses only on the surface of the sentence (formal properties), ICA cannot show the syntactic relationship between sentences which are superficially different (active/passive, positive/negative) and fails to show the differences between sentences which are superficially similar;
- f) ICA cannot handle lexical and syntactic ambiguity in the sentence;
- g) ICA does not demonstrate how to form new sentences;
- h) ICA cannot handle sentences with discontinuous elements;
- i) ICA cannot handle complex sentences. (Students should write at least four weaknesses).

Important Remark: All types of mistakes/ errors: syntactic, semantic, spelling, grammatical are not allowed and will influence your final evaluation.