



UNDERGRADUATE UNIVERSITY EXAMINATIONS

SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP

DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF EDUCATION ARTS

ENG 321 : PSYCHOLINGUISTICS

DATE: 9TH APRIL 2026

DURATION: 2 HOURS

MAXIMUM MARKS: 70

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Write your registration number on the answer booklet.
2. **DO NOT** write on this question paper.
3. This paper contains **SIX (6)** questions.
4. Question **ONE** is compulsory.
5. Answer any other **THREE** questions.
6. Question **ONE** carries **25 MARKS** and the rest carry **15 MARKS** each.
7. **Write all your answers in the Examination answer booklet provided.**

QUESTION ONE

Read the Case Study below carefully and answer the questions that follow:

SPEECH COMPREHENSION PROCESS

Speech comprehension is actually about understanding speech. Steinberg, Nagata and Aline (2001) traced the beginning of speech comprehension from the womb. It was however impossible to finalize the very beginning of speech comprehension in children. Whether it begins from the womb is impossible to determine. Even though scholars tried to establish the very time the child starts to comprehend speech, it has not actually been easy for this to be fully established. The attempt to investigate the less than 12 hours after the child was born could not show any significant ability of the neonate (new born baby) to understand the mother's voice and react to it while played under an experimental condition after four days. Yet, the same extent of comprehension and reaction to the mother's voice could not be established after just 12 hours (Steinberg, Nagata & Aline, 2001). All these show the impossibility of establishing the actual time that comprehension begins for humans.

Nonetheless, it is important to state that the essential thing about speech comprehension is the fact that it can occur in individuals once they can establish communication occurrence in terms of meaning making. This thus shows meaning as being basic to comprehension. Scovel (1998) regards comprehension as the ability of the listener or reader to be able to decipher the information being passed across. Steinberg, Nagata & Aline (2001) on their part state that except the word in the language is linked to real or existent element, it cannot be regarded as able to be meaningful. In their view, speech can only be comprehended if the person receiving the information can link the words in the language to concrete things, making communicative meaning within that language otherwise communication event may be difficult.

In addition, Steinberg, Nagata and Aline (2001) also aver/declare that thought is the

foundation of language. To them, meaning is rooted in the thought of the user of the language. The idea is that without thought, language cannot form meaning. It is this meaning contained in a thought element or the idea contained in the language that contains the meaning. As such, concepts are contained in the language and they can only be comprehended if they are explicitly passed across. The question here is that, as noted by Steinberg, Nagata and Aline (2001), those mute people that can comprehend language can essentially do so because they have thought processes. They were thus able to establish the importance of thought to making meaning in language.

It is also important to determine that their argument is not an extension of linguistic relativism. Nonetheless, one could only say that the connection of thought to language is an important aspect of what psycholinguistics is expected to study after all. Thought is naturally a part of the linguistic process; only that it is never expressed.

In the same vein, it is imperative to state that the being able to produce speech is not the only way of measuring language acquisition. This is because, as mentioned above, it is possible to have the comprehension of language without the ability to produce it. This is seen in the examples provided by Steinberg, Nagata and Aline (2001) in the experiments done with Christopher Nolan, Anne McDonald and Rie (Japanese) who despite being mute went ahead to make use of written language to make impact, even publishing best seller books. It is thus obvious that muteness does not equal lack of language. You may see this being re-enacted in President Hugo Chavez of Venezuela having to be communicating with his aides essentially through writing, due to his partial loss of speech as a result of cancer.

Required:

- a) Define speech comprehension **(3 marks)**
- b) Meaning is basic to comprehension, discuss **(6 marks)**
- c) Neonate have no internal mechanism or ability to develop language by themselves, asses the truth of this statement **(6 marks)**
- d) Assess the benefits of psycholinguistics knowledge to students **(10 marks)**

QUESTION TWO

- a) Describe operant condition in language learning (10 marks)
- b) Discuss the function of thought in communication (5 marks)

QUESTION THREE

- a) Language is said to be inborn, evaluate the truth in this statement (10 marks)
- b) Mind influences the language competence, discuss (5 marks)

QUESTION FOUR

- a) Define language (3 marks)
- b) Discuss the characteristics of human language (12 marks)

QUESTION FIVE

Analyse the following theories of language learning.

- i. Nativist theory (5 marks)
- ii. Interactional theory (5 marks)
- iii. Cognitive theory (5 marks)

QUESTION SIX

- a) Psycholinguistics was developed due to some factors, discuss (10 marks)
- b) Describe Language Acquisition processes involved in psycholinguistic inquiry (5 marks)