

ERASMUS PROFICIENCY EXAM SAMPLE QUESTIONS

PART I: LISTENING (20 PTS)

(1 lectures, with an outline; ±900 words)

LECTURE (20 PTS)

Tapescript:

A professor:

Hello everyone and welcome to today's SOCIAL LINGUISTICS CLASS.

Let's start with a small talk about world languages. I'm sure you all know that many of the languages of the world are in danger of disappearing. Thousands of languages have already become extinct, and thousands more may die out in one or two generations. Unfortunately, in this way, many of the world's languages will soon be gone.

But why? What makes a language die? What makes others more dominant...? Any ideas...?

Well, let me answer this one:

The greatest threat to linguistic diversity is the dominance of a small handful of languages. In other words, some languages such as *Chinese, Spanish* and *English* are more dominant than others in the world.

But how could they become more dominant? Let me explain.

First, these widely-spoken languages currently play the largest roles in ***trade and communication***. **For instance,** business people, educators, science people, and so on, prefer these dominant languages.

Second, these dominant languages ***are spoken more widely because the number of people who speak these dominant languages is very large***. In other words, many, **many** (!) people speak these languages.

Finally, ***many bilingual speakers prefer a socially dominant language and don't use the minor one***; as a result, in many homes, ***children cannot learn the minor language***.

Because of all these reasons, after a couple of generations, it becomes impossible to find a person who speaks some of these languages. These languages are left to die.

Today the world has a HUGE population with people speaking **many** different languages. They have to communicate but at the same time they have to protect their native languages. Well, what is the solution to this problem?

It's ESPERANTO!!

[Slowly] E - S - P - E - R - A - N - T - O

So, what is *Esperanto*?

It is the most widely spoken constructed international secondary language. Let's have a look at some general and historical information about Esperanto...

Esperanto is a language which was introduced to the world in 1887 by Dr. Ludwig Lazarus Zamenhof after years of development. ***As I mentioned before, it is a constructed language. In other words, it was artificially created by Dr. Zamenhof. It is not a natural language like German or Turkish or Vietnamese. The elements of Esperanto, such as pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary, are based on the European languages. In other words, European languages have many effects on Esperanto.***

Why did Dr. Zamenhof want to create a new language? ***Because he grew up in a small region of Russia with a diverse ethnic population. He said in his memoirs there had been a lot of people from different ethnic backgrounds, and they spoke many different languages. They couldn't understand each other well, which caused a number of communication breakdowns.***

As a result, he came up with the idea to create an easy-to-learn language which allows people who speak different native languages to communicate, yet at the same time, keep their own languages and cultural identities. Dr. Zamenhof wanted to improve peace and international understanding among people.

All right friends, let's move on to the advantages of Esperanto.

According to **Esperantists**, (that is, people who use Esperanto as a secondary or native language), there are many advantages.

- **First**, it doesn't replace anyone's language but simply serves as a common second language. **That is**, it helps to protect minority languages and cultures.
- **Second**, it is four times easier to learn than learning a dominant natural language. **In other words**, it can be learned easily in much less time than any other language.
- **Third**, it is politically neutral. It doesn't represent any political or cultural view of any particular nation.

Let me summarize the advantages. It doesn't replace any language. It is easier to learn and it doesn't represent any political and cultural view.

Although there aren't many Esperantists – people who speak Esperanto – in any one place, there are some almost everywhere. Esperanto has a notable presence in over **a hundred countries**. **Usage is highest in Europe, East Asia, and South America**. Currently, estimates of Esperanto speakers range from **100,000 to 2,000,000 active or fluent speakers worldwide**. Also, there are **a thousand native speakers** who learned Esperanto from birth as one of their native languages.

Let me repeat that: **Europe, East Asia, and South America are the places where Esperanto is widely spoken. There are about 100,000 to 2,000,000 active or fluent speakers and there are about a thousand native speakers worldwide.**

Maybe you want to learn how you can learn Esperanto. Well, there are many sources for Esperanto learners.

First: *There are over a hundred magazines regularly published in Esperanto.*

Second: *There are thousands of books in Esperanto, both translated and original works.*

Third: *There are also millions of Esperanto web pages on the Internet. For instance, Lernu-dot-net is the most popular online Esperanto learning platform.*

Okay guys, let me wrap up today's topic.

TO SUM UP, Esperanto was defined as a language of international communication, more precisely as a universal second language. Ever since its introduction in 1887, there has been debate over whether it is possible for Esperanto to attain this position. We will see what will happen to Esperanto in the future...

All right friends! That's all for today!

Thank you, and see you tomorrow.

Listen to the professor and fill in the following outline. You have 1 minute to scan the outline before listening. After filling in your outline, you will have 8 minutes to answer the related questions. You will listen to the lecture ONCE. Only your answers to the questions will be graded.

OUTLINE

Topic: ESPERANTO

Some languages become more dominant because:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

General and Historical Information:

- _____
- _____
- _____

Dr. Zamenhof's early life:

- _____
- _____

Advantages of Esperanto:

- _____
- _____
- _____

Geography and Population of Esperanto:

- Where: * _____
* _____

- Number of people: * _____
* _____

Sources to learn Esperanto:

- _____
- _____
- _____

Answer the following questions according to the outline that you have filled in. You have 8 minutes to answer the following questions.

1. Which of the following is **NOT** a reason why some languages dominate others? (2 pts)
 - a) People in trade and communication usually prefer dominant languages.
 - b) The world-wide population of dominant languages is greater than other populations.
 - c) Children generally don't want to learn the minor language in many homes.
 - d) After some time, a dominant language is preferred more by bilingual speakers.

2. Which of the following is **NOT TRUE** about Esperanto? (2 pts)
 - a) It is unique with its grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation.
 - b) 1887 was the year when Esperanto was introduced publicly.
 - c) Esperanto is a project language which was artificially created.
 - d) European languages have many influences on Esperanto.

3. We know all of the following about Dr. Zamenhof **EXCEPT** that _____. (1.5 pts)
 - a) he grew up in a small region in Russia
 - b) he lived in a multi-ethnic region in Russia
 - c) he had difficulty learning languages
 - d) he was exposed to several languages

4. All of the following is an advantage of Esperanto **EXCEPT** that _____. (1.5 pts)
 - a) it doesn't represent a political view
 - b) when you learn it once, you can't forget it easily
 - c) you can learn it more easily than other languages
 - d) it doesn't aim to take other languages' places

5. Which of the following can be said about Esperanto? (1.5 pts)
 - a) More than 3,000,000 people speak Esperanto fluently.
 - b) There are about a thousand native speakers of Esperanto.
 - c) It is spoken in a limited number of countries all over the world.
 - d) In Africa and North America, Esperanto is widely spoken.

6. If a person wants to learn Esperanto, s/he can use all of the following sources **EXCEPT** _____. (1.5 pts)
 - a) internationally broadcasting TVs
 - b) sources on the Internet
 - c) translated and originally written books
 - d) regularly published magazines

PART II: READING (**±2 reading texts; ±40 pts; ±600 words**)

SAMPLE TEXT: Read the text and answer the following questions according to the text. (20 pts)

¹ What if you could build a computer that works just like the human brain? Scientists have started to imagine the possibilities: We could invent new forms of industrial machinery, create fully autonomous thinking cars, and devise new kinds of home appliances. A new project in Europe hopes to create a computer brain just that powerful in the next ten years—and it's incredibly well-funded. There's just one catch: computers that fast simply haven't been invented yet.

² On October 7, 2013, at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Lausanne, one of the most ambitious brain research projects in history officially kicked off. The Human Brain Project—backed by 1.2 billion euros and more than 250 researchers—aims to create the first complete computer simulation of the human brain. Over the course of a decade, everything we know about that particular organ's biology will be modeled.

³ The research **hinges on** creating a super-powerful computer that's 1,000 times faster than those in use today. If you're keeping track, that's an *exascale* supercomputer, one fast enough to model a nuclear explosion or the complex, planet wide forces that shape the climate. Just a few years ago, scientists started using *petascale* supercomputers like *Blue Waters* at the National Center for Supercomputing Applications (NCSA) in Illinois that went online last year. "Well-known manufacturers of supercomputers like IBM, Cray, Intel, and Bull, are committed to building the first exascale machines by approximately 2020. So we are confident we will have the machines we need," says Henry Markham, the director of the Human Brain Project.

⁴ For scientists, these sorts of projects are all about understanding ourselves. The brain is the least understood organ in the human body. We don't really know how the brain controls our thoughts, our bodily functions, or our behavior. And Markham says the lack of processing power in modern computers is the least of our worries. He says a computer brain will consume gigawatts of power, require new forms of memory, and force scientists to look at cutting edge storage techniques. But the immense technical hurdles will be worth the effort. The first phases will help us understand how the brain functions. In later phases, we'll find out how we learn, how we see and hear, and why the brain sometimes doesn't process information correctly.

⁵ Dr. Gayani DeSilva, a psychiatrist with a private practice in Orange, California, believes a human brain model could also have *unimaginable* implications for medicine, helping us learn how we adapt, heal, and develop. "The more we know about our brains, the more we can utilize our brains to their full potential, and intervene when issues arise," she says. Amina Ann Qutub, a bioengineer at Rice University, adds, "The human brain is immensely complex, and a model reduces this complexity into a controlled system. In a model, scientists can test hypotheses as to how the human brain works, and what occurs in disease in order to understand how to treat neurological conditions." In fact, it's analogous to astronauts training in a flight simulator prior to a shuttle launch. As with any cutting edge science, we don't know yet what we don't know. Qutub says **this** is all unmapped territory: "The total number of cells including the neurons, vascular cells, and glia in a human brain is more than the number of stars in the Milky Way," she says.

6 That's enough to give scientists quite the headache.

15. What is the text mainly about? (3 pts)

- a. Why the Human Brain Project is especially important for the fields of health and medicine
- b. What the Human Brain Project requires from all parties involved in the long run
- c. How the Human Brain Project will be realized and what its possible benefits will be
- d. Why the Human Brain Project is run by only Europeans and what its scope will be

16. Which of the following is **NOT** a characteristic of the Human Brain Project? (3 pts)
- It is based in Europe and has a large budget.
 - Though more will join, currently only a handful of scientists are involved.
 - Its purpose is to make a model or a computer simulation of the human brain.
 - It is directed by Henry Markham.
17. Which of the following about exascale supercomputers is **NOT** true? (4 pts)
- They are already in use in places like the National Center for Supercomputing Applications.
 - There are companies in the market that are capable of producing such computers in the near future.
 - They are capable of modeling large-scale events that can lead to understanding atmospheric changes.
 - IBM, Cray, Intel, and Bull haven't manufactured such computers though they have produced supercomputers.
18. What are some of the technical challenges while trying to create a computer brain? (3 pts)
- Understanding the various ways the brain functions and how it processes information
 - Catching up with the cutting edge industrial machinery that is used in autonomous cars
 - Devising advanced forms of storing information and providing huge amounts of power
 - Finding out the processing difficulties that the human brain may encounter
19. The author mentions "**astronauts training in a flight simulator**" in paragraph 5 in order to explain how _____. (3 pts)
- people can use the brain to its full potential after they know more about its functions and processes
 - neurological conditions may vary between people in different age groups and with different medical backgrounds
 - neuroscientists can reveal the limits of a complex system without changing its neural structure
 - researchers can check their assumptions before they can proceed with the treatment of a disease
20. What does "**hinges on**" in paragraph 3 mean? (2 pt)
- turns up
 - depends on
 - stands against
 - works out
21. What does "**this**" in paragraph 5 refer to? (2 pt)
- the plan for research
 - the field of medicine
 - the space study
 - the human brain

TASK 1: PARAGRAPH WRITING (40 PTS)

Choose ONE of the topics below and write an opinion paragraph of approximately 200 words. Give details and examples to support your ideas.

- Developed countries have become insensitive towards the problems of developing countries.
- Using technology is /isn't beneficial in learning a foreign language.