

Guide to the Linguistics Portion of the MA exam in Spanish
Effective Fall 2010 for Students Admitted Spring 2010 and Later

The linguistics portion of the MA exam will test your knowledge of ~~specific~~ material. This document offers an exhaustive list of the questions you can expect to see on the exam. To accommodate students with different course histories, there will be two questions from each of the three areas listed (synchronic (527, 526), Diachronic (520, 525) and Second language acquisition (524). You will be required to answer any two questions appearing on the exam.

Grading rubric:

The answers will be graded on a 20-point scale, as follows. A passing grade is 15 points.

<u>Completeness</u> (Max: 8 points): The answer gives an overview of the main issue(s) and presents critical details. The answer demonstrates a clear and comprehensive understanding of the topic.	
<u>Accuracy</u> (Max: 5 points): The answer gives accurate information about the issue(s) in question.	
<u>Supporting evidence</u> (Max 5 points): The answer makes specific reference to the material covered in the relevant linguistics course or reading and includes critical examples.	
<u>Style</u> (2 points): The answer is well organized and clearly written.	
Total points (out of 20):	

List A: Synchronic linguistics

Questions for Spanish 527:

- 1) Define the following terms and explain how they apply to the Spanish verbal paradigm: tense, aspect, mood, number, person, simple/compound tenses.

- 2) Describe the following types of “Se” in Spanish: a) reflexive, b) reciprocal, c) impersonal, d) lexical (inherente), e) passive, f) spurious (indirect object). Be very specific in your presentation of the properties of each type.

- 3) Define “subject”. Describe the main properties of the subject in Spanish, including pronominal use and placement within the sentence.

- 4) Describe the main properties of the direct object in Spanish. Be sure to discuss

pronouns, reduplication, placement within the sentence, *laísmo/leísmo*, and the interaction between direct and indirect object pronouns.

5) Describe the main properties of the indirect object in Spanish. Be sure to discuss pronouns, reduplication, placement within the sentence, *laísmo/leísmo* and the interaction between direct and indirect object pronouns.

6) Discuss the distribution of the two Spanish copulas, *ser* and *estar*. Be sure to consider all cases and provide illustrative examples.

7) Describe the syntactic structure of complex sentences containing (i) a subordinate noun clause, (ii) a subordinate adjective clause, and (iii) a subordinate adverbial clause. Give concrete examples for your descriptions. Compare and contrast the nexus used in each type of complex sentence that you describe.

Questions from Spanish 426/526

NOTE: Questions 1 and 2 below refer to topics also covered in Spanish 527.

1) Give a detailed description of the following types of affix in Spanish and an example for each of them:

- Prefijo derivativo gramatical
- Prefijo derivativo semántico
- Infijo derivativo gramatical
- Infijo derivativo semántico
- Interfijo
- Sufijo flexional
- Sufijo derivativo gramatical
- Sufijo derivativo semántico

2) Give a detailed description of the following types of affix in Spanish and give an example for each of them:

- Flexión
- Derivación
- Composición
- Parasíntesis

3) In the context of a subordinate noun clause used as direct object of a verb of communication or perception, discuss at least *five* cases where the use of the indicative mood and the subjunctive mood yields a semantic difference in the whole complex sentence. Give an example for each case.

Recommended preparation materials for the above questions:

- Campos, Héctor (1993). *De la oración simple a la oración compuesta*. Georgetown University Press.
- Wheatley, Kathleen (2005). *Sintaxis y morfología de la lengua española*. Prentice Hall.
- Tran, Tri C. (2006). *Diccionario bilingüe para estudiantes de lingüística*. University Press of America
- Vining Lung, P. and DeCesaris, J. (2007). *Investigación de Gramática*. Thomson/Heinle.
- Whitley, M.S. (2002). *Spanish/English Contrasts*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press. (earlier editions are also fine).
- Course packet(s) for any of the above courses.

List B: Questions for 420/520 and RGR 425/525

- 1) Present the *Confluencias vocálicas* (including the *tónicas, átonas iniciales y finales*, and *intertónicas*) from Classical Latin to Vulgar Latin. Be sure to include one example per each change.
- 2) Discuss the three lenition processes involving the stop consonants [b,d,g] from Classical Latin to Vulgar Latin. Give at least one example for each of the changes.
- 3) Discuss the following historical phonological processes from Old Spanish to Modern Spanish and give an example for each of them:

- Pérdida de /h/ inicial
- Confluencia de /b/ y /β/
- Desafricación de /dz/ y /ts/
- Ensonoramiento de las sibilantes sonoras

Recommended preparation materials for the above questions:

- Penny, Ralph (2002). *A History of the Spanish Language*. 2nd edition. Cambridge.
- Pharies, David A (2007). *Breve historia de la lengua española*. The University of Chicago Press.
- Agard, Frederick B. (1984). *A Course in Romance Linguistics*. Volume 1: A Synchronic View. Georgetown University Press.

List C: Second Language Acquisition (524)

1. First Language Acquisition and Second Language Acquisition: Similarities and Differences?
2. What is Universal Grammar?

3. What is Behaviorism and how does it shape our understanding of first and second language acquisition?
4. Explain in what ways the following teaching methods/approaches have been influenced by either (or both) behaviorist or cognitivist perspectives of second language acquisition: Audio-Lingual Method, Natural Approach, Total Physical Response, Communicative Approach.
5. Discuss Second Language Acquisition as a discipline. To what other disciplines is it related and how?
6. What factors (variables) can affect a person's acquisition of a second language?
7. Explain the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (two different versions) and how it is related to Behaviorism.
8. Compare and critique Behaviorism and Cognitivism as fundamental theories on which we base our approaches to second language learning.
9. What are Morpheme Order Studies and what are they supposed to reveal about first and second language acquisition?
10. What are learning styles and learning strategies? In this context, what does "field independence and field dependence" mean? Provide one or two examples of people with different learning styles and strategies and how this is revealed in their learning behavior.
11. Describe the acquisition of lexical meaning by second language learners. How does the evidence from Spanish bear on general research findings?
12. Describe the research on the development of the subjunctive and complex syntactic abilities by foreign language learners of Spanish. What is Processability Theory? How are the tenets of this theory supported by research, for example, on the acquisition of *ser/estar* and *por/para*?

Further reading:

Gass, Susan and Larry Selinker. *Second Language Acquisition. An Introductory Course*. Mahwah: Lawrence Earlbaum Associates, 2009.