

Homework No. 1

(due at beginning of class Monday, April 12)

I. General Facts about Language and Linguistics

1. Give one example each for what is studied in the following four subfields of linguistics: 1. phonetics, 2. morphology, 3. syntax, and 4. pragmatics. The example should be different from the ones on our handout, but you can browse the Language Files. (40 points)

II. Communication Systems

1. Consider the case of peacock communication. Peacocks (the males) use displays of large, multi-colored feathers to try to attract peahens (the females) for mating purposes. The peahens have no such tailfeathers with which to respond, but simply approach the males to signify their willingness to mate.

QUESTION: Which design features of communication systems does peacock communication have? If there is not enough data to make any strong conclusions for a given feature, say what we would need to know in order to decide. If whether or not a feature is present seems to depend on how you interpret the data, give all the possibilities you have in mind and why you think they are possibilities. (Recall how the question of whether bee communication has the feature of Displacement seemed to depend on how we interpreted the meaning of the bee dances). (30 points)

For your convenience, here is a list of the nine design features:

Medium	Interchangeability	Discreteness
Semanticity	Arbitrariness	Displacement
Pragmatic Function	Cultural Transmission	Productivity

2. We know that only human language has all nine of the design features. Try to imagine what would happen if suddenly we lost the feature of **Displacement**. How would our communication change? What abilities would we lose? What about if we instead lost the feature of **Interchangeability**? How about **Productivity**? (Discuss all three of these separately). (30 points)

IV. Linguistics outside the classroom:

Which talks and experiments are currently being offered? List two talks and one experiment. (Bonus question, 10 points extra)