

Indian Institute of Engineering Science & Technology, Shibpur
1st Semester B. Tech. (Groups V-VIII) Midsem Examination, October 2023
Professional Communication in English –HU 1101

Full marks: 30

Time: 2 Hrs

Attempt all questions:

1. Fill in the blanks with the correct word/phrase: 1 × 5 = 5
 - a. The student, as well as the committee members, ____ excited. (is/are)
 - b. Neither alternative hypothesis ____ accepted. (was/were)
 - c. I had bought the sandwich before you ____ here. (had come/came)
 - d. The lakes and wells all dried up during the _____. (draught/drought)
 - e. Someone has to _____ for children's rights, as the children are helpless to do it themselves. (take up the cudgels/ Hobson's choice)

2. Read the following passage carefully and answer the questions briefly. 1 × 5 = 5

Vocabulary used in speech or writing organizes itself in seven parts of speech (eight, if you count interjections such as Oh! and Gosh! and Fuhgeddaboudit!). Communication composed of these parts of speech must be organized by rules of grammar upon which we agree. When these rules break down, confusion and misunderstanding result. Bad grammar produces bad sentences. Nouns and verbs are the two indispensable parts of writing. Without one of each, no group of words can be a sentence, since a sentence is, by definition, a group of words containing a subject (noun) and a predicate (verb); these strings of words begin with a capital letter, end with a period, and combine to make a complete thought which starts in the writer's head and then leaps to the reader's.

Must you write complete sentences each time, every time? Perish the thought. If your work consists only of fragments and floating clauses, the Grammar Police aren't going to come and take you away. Even William Strunk, that Mussolini of rhetoric, recognized the delicious pliability of language. "It is an old observation," he writes, "that the best writers sometimes disregard the rules of rhetoric." Yet he goes on to add this thought, which I urge you to consider: "Unless he is certain of doing well, [the writer] will probably do best to follow the rules."

The telling clause here is "Unless he is certain of doing well." If you don't have a rudimentary grasp of how the parts of speech translate into coherent sentences, how can you be certain that you are doing well? How will you know if you're doing ill, for that matter? The answer, of course, is that you can't, you won't. One who does grasp the rudiments of grammar finds a comforting simplicity at its heart, where there need be only nouns, the words that name, and verbs, the words that act.

Take any noun, put it with any verb, and you have a sentence. It never fails. Rocks explode. Jane transmits. Mountains float. These are all perfect sentences. Many such thoughts make little rational sense, but even the stranger ones (Plums deify!) have a kind of poetic weight that's nice. The simplicity of noun-verb construction is useful—at the very least it can provide a safety net for your writing. Strunk and White caution against too many simple sentences in a

row, but simple sentences provide a path you can follow when you fear getting lost in the tangles of rhetoric—all those restrictive and non-restrictive clauses, those modifying phrases, those appositives and compound-complex sentences. If you start to freak out at the sight of such unmapped territory (unmapped by you, at least), just remind yourself that rocks explode, Jane transmits, mountains float, and plums deify. Grammar is . . . the pole you grab to get your thoughts up on their feet and walking.

- A. What is the central idea of this passage?
- B. Briefly explain how nouns and verbs are the two indispensable parts of writing.
- C. Does the author of the passage support the following statement: “The best writers sometimes disregard the rules of rhetoric”?
- D. What does the author imply by “tangles of rhetoric”?
- E. What advice does the author provide if one finds complexities of grammar as “unmapped territory”?

3. Write a precis of the following passage by reducing to one-third of its length. Provide a suitable title:

6+1=7

Coronaviruses are a family of viruses that can cause respiratory illness in humans. They are called “corona” because of crown-like spikes on the surface of the virus. Severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS) and the common cold are examples of coronaviruses that cause illness in humans. The new strain of coronavirus — SARS-CoV-2 — was first reported in Wuhan, China in December 2019. It has since spread to every country around the world. Coronaviruses are often found in bats, cats and camels. The viruses live in but don’t infect the animals. Sometimes these viruses then spread to different animal species. The viruses may change (mutate) as they transfer to other species. Eventually, the virus can jump from animal species and begin to infect humans. In the case of SARS-CoV-19, the first people infected are thought to have contracted the virus at a food market that sold meat, fish and live animals. SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, enters your body through your mouth, nose or eyes (directly from the airborne droplets or from the transfer of the virus from your hands to your face). It then travels to the back of your nasal passages and mucous membrane in the back of your throat. It attaches to cells there, begins to multiply and moves into lung tissue. From there, the virus can spread to other body tissues. If you test positive for SARS-CoV-2 three months after your last positive test, it’s considered a reinfection. Before the omicron variant, reinfection with SARS-CoV-2 was rare but possible. Omicron (B.1.1.529) was first reported in South Africa in November 2021 and quickly spread around the world. With many mutations, omicron was able to evade immune systems and we had more reinfections than ever before. As the virus that causes COVID-19 continues to mutate, reinfection remains possible. Vaccination — including a booster dose — is the best protection against severe disease. (315 words)

4. Write a paragraph on the topic “Artificial intelligence and its impact on everyday life” in not more than 150 words. 8

5. Briefly describe the process of writing a formal email. 5