Essays:

1. F – plagiarised from Wikipedia
   1. This essay is an outright fail: Grade H, 0 points. This is because it is all plagiarised from Wikipedia. The plagiarism in this case is very easy to spot; the square brackets are the links to footnotes that were not carried across when the text was copy-pasted, and the lack of transition between ideas, introduction of sophisticated terms (e.g. recursion) with no explanation and reference to scholars who are not cited (e.g. Daniel Everett) are all typical of an essay that has been plagiarised.
   2. However, you should remember that any plagiarism, even if it has been disguised (e.g. by removing the square brackets) is unacceptable, and we will notice it! If you are unsure what counts as plagiarism, consult this page on Moodle.
2. high A – well written, good structure, external sources
   1. This is a high A. It is well written, well organized, and shows familiarity with research both within and beyond the lecture material. Notice in particular the transitions between the paragraphs, and the unity of topic within each paragraph. Notice, too, the clear thesis statement in the first paragraph, which is recapitulated in the end without simply repeating the introductory claims.
   2. The topics discussed—color perception and agentivity—are introduced in the lecture on Sapir-Whorf, but the detailed description of Winawer shows that the student read the full paper, and discusses nuances that were not in the lecture slides. Further, the work from Thierry et al was not included in the lecture at all, so the student has shown independent reading.
3. high B – doesn’t show anything beyond lectures, but well structured, good evidence, experimental evidence (good)
   1. This essay is a high B. It is well-structured, and gives a variety of evidence in favor of the claim that there is experimental evidence in support of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis. It also makes the clear distinction between the strong and weak versions, and argues that the evidence supports only the weak version. The writing is perfectly competent, with appropriate citations and clear transitions. It is not elegant, and there are a few points of unclarity (e.g., the term `linguistic relativity’ is never fully defined, and what is ‘100 msec of category advantage’?) and errors (e.g., they don’t have huge affects), but it’s fine.
   2. However—and this is key—it does not go beyond anything in the lecture slides. It shows a firm, clear grasp of the nuances of the lecture, and the author may well have read the articles in full before citing them, but there is nothing in this essay that shows any evidence of having read anything beyond the lecture. To score higher than a B, you must show evidence of your own independent reading beyond the sources cited in the lecture.
4. F – doesn’t answer the question == doesn’t show understanding of the topic, poor writing, scrambled structure
   1. This essay is a fail on its own merits. Although it doesn’t really plagiarise anything (Wikipedia is cited, though incorrectly), it is a scrambled mess of topics, and even the bits taken from the lecture slides do not show any evidence of understanding of the topic.
   2. Furthermore, a lot of the information given is completely irrelevant to the question. Telling us that Whorf was a fire prevention engineer does absolutely nothing to help evaluate the accuracy of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, for example! The essay prompt also said to evaluate the hypothesis in light of more current experimental research; this essay includes nothing about recent experimental research, and so fails to address the question. To the extent that the essay is coherent at all, it seems to be more interested in giving the historical and theoretical background of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis; a brief mention of this wouldn't necessarily have been out of place, but a whole essay on it is not what was asked for.
5. C – follows lectures with no independent research, no analysis (rephrases slides), lacks in-text citations, quotes are poorly integrated, but does answer the prompt (thus, no fail)
   1. This essay is a C. If you look at the lecture slides, you’ll see that it simply walks through them, one by one, and writes down the material on the slides. In some cases (e.g., the last sentence before the ellipses), text is plagiarised directly from the lecture slides.
   2. The descriptions are vague, indicating that the author did not fully understand the examples, and the quotes from Sapir and Whorf are just copied wholesale into the text, with very meagre discussion. Furthermore, none of the claims are cited properly in the text (although the references section is in place). Nevertheless, it is mostly on topic, and the fifth paragraph does in fact answer the prompt.
6. B – scrambled structure, quite awkward writing, show superb external reading and research
   1. This essay is a B for a different reason from essay 2. There are many problems with it. It is scrambled and disorganised, with lots of poor writing. There are comma splices, awkward sentences, and it ends somewhere else from where it began. The introduction claims that all of Sapir-Whorf is wrong, while the conclusion states that only the strong version, linguistic determinism, is wrong. Also, the paragraph about Kuuk Thayorre doesn’t seem to connect to the broader theme of language and thought; rather it seems to be a side digression on the idea of metaphors of space and time. It could be made relevant, but that relevance isn’t drawn out. Also, the repeated references to Wikipedia are poor practice.
   2. What saves the essay from its poor writing and organisation is its independent research beyond the sources cited in lecture. The student clearly looked up Ekkehart’s book and found examples and quotes to directly challenge Whorf’s claims—examples and quotes that were nowhere pointed out in the lecture. This shows that the student was able to construct an argument (Whorf is wrong) based on their own research, rather than following solely the guidance given. Despite the poor execution, this student shows excellent independent research skills, which is why this essay is a B instead of a C.