

FOUNDATION YEAR

READING TEST

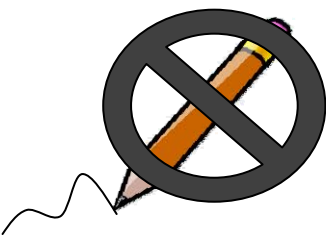
TITLE: **Babel revisited**

LEVEL: Final Exam

WHAT: **Practice Reading Exam including:**
Text
Worksheets
Answer Key

WHY: To give practice in multiple choice exam format
similar to the Foundation Year Reading Exam

HOW: Read the text and answer the questions.
Check your answers in the Answer Key.
If your answer doesn't match the Answer Key, refer to the script.



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PRACTICE EXAMINATION - READING TEST

INSTRUCTIONS FOR STUDENTS:

The questions in this section relate to the reading text: **BABEL REVISITED**

There are 7 parts in the reading section of the test:

Part 1: Skimming	(20 marks)
Part 2: Scanning	(30 marks)
Part 3: Connectors	(12 marks)
Part 4: Reference	(12 marks)
Part 5: Unknown Words	(6 marks)
Part 6: University Word List	(10 marks)
Part 7: Paraphrase And Summary	(10 marks)

Time approximately: 60 minutes

BABEL REVISITED

by Peter Muhlhausler

1. There are many examples throughout history of how Western thinking considers linguistic diversity to be dangerous and divisive, including the biblical story of the tower of Babel, which represents linguistic diversity as God's punishment for disobedience and presumption. This attitude has dominated Western thinking for centuries, and as a result many people believe that a multiplicity of languages is undesirable.
2. I believe, on the other hand, that linguistic diversity should not be seen as a problem but as an essential resource and that there is an urgent need to reverse policies and practices that currently threaten thousands of small languages. Unless **this** is done, the chance to learn from the **cumulative** insights, successes and errors of a large proportion of the human species will be lost forever.

The attractions of a single language

3. There have been many attempts to replace the diversity of human languages with a single language. This goal was **vigorously** pursued by the philosophers of the European Enlightenment and, in the latter half of the nineteenth century, by the supporters of artificial languages such as Volapuk and Esperanto which attracted millions of followers around the globe. Many Esperantists hoped not only that Esperanto would one day become a universal auxiliary language but that at a later stage it would be the world's *only* language.
4. The idea of the modern nation-state also provides a powerful inspiration for those who are committed to reducing linguistic diversity: a common language is often seen as a necessary binding ingredient for new nations. Only 200 years ago, French was not the mother tongue of the majority of people born in France, whereas today, non-French-speakers living in France belong to a small and shrinking minority. What happened in Western Europe in the past is being repeated nowadays in states such as Indonesia, where Bahasa Indonesia developed from being a small

auxiliary language into the country's main language and will soon be the mother tongue of more Indonesians than any other language.

5. It would be no exaggeration to say that the choice of a single national language is often regarded as a **precondition** for all modernization. No matter what language is chosen an introduced language such as English, French, Mandarin or Russian, or a newly developed language such as Filipino - a basic requirement is that it should be fully intertranslatable, that is, capable of expressing the concepts and distinctions that are needed in the modern world. But the need for intertranslatable languages has an unfortunate side effect - the destruction of small languages as outmoded and irrelevant.
6. The processes of streamlining which are taking place in the field of language can be compared to the streamlining of the world's plant and animal species. Both developments have been promoted by people acting with the best of intentions reducing the cost of communication in the first case and feeding the world's growing population in the second. Regrettably, those people had only a very limited understanding of the nature and function of diversity.
7. In recent years there has been a growing realization of the importance of biological diversity, and even more recently the voices of those **advocating** linguistic and cultural diversity have become louder. **However**, the importance of linguistic diversity has not yet aroused widespread public concern; nor has the notion that "linguistic ecology" needs the same amount of care as natural ecology. There are, however, a number of parallels between the two. First, all present-day diversity is the outcome of processes that took a very long time: millions of years in the case of bio-diversity, at least 100,000 years in the case of linguistic diversity. And once genuine diversity is lost, it cannot be easily restored, in spite of progress in bioengineering and linguistic engineering. A second, equally important similarity is that linguistic diversity and diversity in the natural world are both functional. The 10,000 or so languages that exist today reflect necessary adaptations to different social and natural conditions. They are the result of increasing specialization and finely tuned adaptation to the changing world.

One world or many?

8. To understand the nature of this fine-tuning, we need to contrast two theories about the relationship between language and the world. One theory, known as the mapping or labelling view, maintains that we live in one world that consists of many parts and each language provides a different set of labels for the same set of parts. According to this theory, the differences between languages are only superficial and all languages are fully intertranslatable.
9. The second theory holds that most perceptions of the world and parts of the world are brought into being and sustained by languages. Speakers of different languages, **therefore**, do not perceive the same world. Instead, different languages emphasize and filter various aspects of a multi-faceted reality in a vast number of ways.
10. If we accept **this theory**, then each language may be seen as a provisional interpretation of a world so complex that the only hope for understanding it is to approach it from as many different perspectives as possible. If we

regard each language as the result of a long history of human endeavour to gain knowledge of the world, we may begin to see why linguistic diversity is an invaluable resource rather than an obstacle to progress.

11. Different languages communicate different perceptions of reality in a number of ways. **These** include differences in vocabulary, differences in the grammatical information that is expressed, and differences in the boundary between what is regarded as literal truth and what is regarded as metaphorical.
12. Virtually all human knowledge depends on having criteria with which to determine similarities and differences. Doctors need to know, for instance, whether or not the red spots on the foreheads of two patients are symptoms of the same disease. Psychologists need to know whether two forms of behaviour are manifestations of the same psychological state, and biologists need to know whether two animals are members of the same species. In most instances, reliable criteria for similarities and differences are difficult to come by and decisions are usually determined by the available **lexical** resources.
13. One well-known area is that of colour names. The same area of the colour spectrum may have one name in one language, two names in a second language, and three names in a third. Not making a lexical distinction between, say, green and blue (as in the Welsh *glas*), means not focusing on the difference between the two colours in real life. In the field of plants, there are again considerable differences. Where certain plants are central to a culture, an amazing degree of lexical fine-tuning can occur. Many New Guinea languages, for example, make dozens of distinctions between different types of cordilyne leaves, according to whether such leaves are used for dressmaking, decoration, magic or other purposes. Similar fine-tuning can also be observed in the sub-languages spoken by specialist groups in Western societies, for example, the sublanguage of motor mechanics, painters, doctors or bankers.
14. Suddenly to get rid of all these fine distinctions developed by specialists over centuries would greatly impoverish a language such as English, making it incapable of referring to anything except in general terms. Abandoning language diversity could have similar consequences on a global scale. Specialist vocabularies and specialist knowledge about phenomena as diverse as types of snow, useful plants, types of weather or ways of dealing with children would suddenly be lost.

Language and the breakdown of traditional societies

15. One area that offers many examples of differences of this kind is kinship. Anthropological linguists have accumulated a vast amount of evidence as to how different languages focus in different ways on the shared properties and differences among family members. **While** in English, the word "sister" refers to the female sibling of both males and females, in Tok Pisin of Papua New Guinea, a pidgin language that often reflects a Melanesian interpretation of the world, the word "sister" means sibling of the opposite sex. A brother calls his sister "sister" and a girl calls her brother "sister". In some Aboriginal languages in Australia and other languages in Melanesia, the same word is used to refer to both grandfather and grandchild. In **these** instances, having the same label usually means getting the same treatment. Such labels reinforce **solidarity** within the group. For example, giving the same name to members of different generations can be a way of reducing generational conflict. The rather

impoverished inventory of words in most modern Western languages may not be sufficient to sustain complex extended family networks, and the replacement of an indigenous language with more distinctions by a Western language with fewer distinctions could be a factor in the breakdown of traditional societies.

Metaphorically Speaking

16. Another area in which there are considerable differences between languages is the naming of parts of the body. In many languages, including some spoken in West Africa, the term "hand" covers either the whole arm or the arm up to the elbow. The West African practice of gripping another person's lower arm when "shaking" is a reflection of a different linguistic organization. In my own native Alemannic, the terms "foot" and "leg" are not distinguished lexically, something that caused me considerable confusion when learning High German, where the distinction is made. In Melanesia, dogs are said to have two arms and two legs rather than four legs, and centipedes are perceived as having many arms rather than many legs.
17. Most of the examples given so far have dealt with the different ways in which languages lexically subdivide a fairly **tangible** reality - the reality of colour or the reality of plants and people. There are other less tangible realities where perception is even more closely linked to language: for example, the names of emotions or states of mind. The German word *Gemütlichkeit* does not compare neatly with the English word "cosiness", nor is "depression" the same as "melancholy". The absence of words for depression or sadness in certain Polynesian languages would seem to correspond to the absence of the associated phenomena.
18. Another important difference between languages relates to the ways in which they require speakers to make important choices about the people they are addressing. This is well known to English speakers who find that when they learn French the neutral English second person singular pronoun "you" has to be translated into "tu" or "vous", depending on the degree of politeness or solidarity being shown towards the person addressed. When using nouns, some languages do not have number distinctions at all while others like Fijian need to express at all times whether the speaker is talking about one, two, three, a few or more than a few **entities**. In some New Guinea Highland languages, a sentence such as, "The pig broke the fence", cannot be said in this kind of neutral manner. Using grammatical endings, the speaker has to indicate whether this is a report of what he or she has actually observed or whether **it** is an inference from indirect evidence such as pig droppings or hearsay.
19. The influence of certain semantic distinctions, or differences in meanings, can be so strong that it leads languages to interpret reality in different ways. Two of these ways can be categorised as involving either causality or comity. These terms need to be defined further: causality means causing something to happen, while comity refers to the concept of sharing. Two examples should illustrate these differences. In many European languages, verbs such as "to teach" or "to cure" can be paraphrased as "to cause to learn" and "to cause to get better". However, in many American Indian languages, such verbs can be paraphrased as "the teacher shares the student's learning progression" and "the doctor participates in the patient's recovery". **Whereas** the European languages emphasise control - the teacher causes the students to learn - the American Indian languages emphasise shared responsibility.

- 20.** Languages, **finally**, differ according to the metaphors their speakers live by. Western life tends to be dominated by a small number of metaphors. The saying "time is money", for instance, reinforces cultural practices such as charging by the hour, trying to save money by getting things done more quickly and the view that there are more economical and less economical uses of time. Needless to say, such a metaphor does not occur in non-monetary, traditional societies where work and gain are measured in terms other than quantity of time "spent".
- 21.** Environmental discourse provides a striking example of why learning from different languages may be very important. Western languages have many gaps in their ability to express aspects of the environment. The number of edible plants the average Westerner can name contrasts very unfavourably with the many hundreds of names known to the average speaker of a South American Indian language.
- 22.** There is now a growing awareness of "green" issues, and "green" vocabulary is on the increase. We have words such as "biodiversity", "recycling" and "lead-free petrol" but not all of these terms are equally suitable for environmental discourse. For instance, the word "resource" suggests that the notion of **regeneration** is applicable to both renewable and non-renewable resources and the very term "environment" suggests a division between humans and what is around them, an idea that is not widely found in the languages of the world.
- 23.** The combined **propensity** of Western languages to emphasize human causativity and control and their object-dominated character suggests that the best course of action is one of establishing control over a small bounded area and not, as other languages would suggest, learning to understand an undivided whole.
- 24.** **This idea** of control and of division contrasts strongly with many languages, such as Barai, a language of Papua New Guinea, where to express the notion of "my land" one uses the pronoun for mutual control. This suggests interdependence and the need for balance and co-operation between people and the land.
- 25.** Western metaphors of the land, **on the other hand**, are dominated by the distinction between human beings and the non-human world, and the idea that human beings are a privileged species, the rulers or controllers for whose benefit the rest of the world was created. Recent metaphors such as "Spaceship Earth" reinforce the idea that the Earth exists predominantly for the benefit of its human inhabitants, and the idea of environmental management and eco audits is just another version of the old picture of human beings as rulers over the rest of creation.
- 26.** I would suggest that Westerners are trapped within the limitations imposed on them by their languages and this is one of the principal reasons for the lack of genuine progress in the environmental sciences. This example of environmental discourse illuminates the dangers of monolingualism and monoculturalism and shows how many different interpretations - and many different languages - are necessary to solve the problems facing the world.

Adapted from The Unesco Courier February 1994.

QUESTIONS

PART 1: SKIMMING

(20 MARKS)

Read the following statements carefully and then mark the correct response on your answer sheet.

1. The main purpose of this article is to:

- a) argue for the importance of linguistic diversity
- b) argue for the need for greater understanding of different languages
- c) discuss the advantages and disadvantages of linguistic diversity
- d) explain the differences between languages

2. The main point of the introduction (paras 1-2) is that:

- a) linguistic diversity urgently needs to be preserved
- b) many people believe that linguistic diversity is undesirable
- c) the author believes that many languages cause confusion
- d) the author disagrees with Western thinking

3. The main point of the conclusion (para 26) is that:

- a) it is important to have many interpretations to solve the world's problems
- b) monolingualism and monoculturalism are dangerous
- c) Western languages do not allow progress in the environmental sciences
- d) Westerners are trapped by their limitations

4. The author's attitude could best be described as:

- a) approving of Western thinking
- b) critical of linguistic diversity
- c) critical of Western thinking
- d) impartial and objective

5. The most appropriate alternative title for this passage is:

- a) "How Western thinking restricts progress"
- b) "Languages and how they differ"
- c) "One or many: the linguistic diversity debate"
- d) "Simplify not diversify: the case for a world language"

PART 2: SCANNING

(30 MARKS)

6. Which of the following is presented as an argument for a single language?

- a) a national single language is seen as necessary for modernisation
- b) small languages are irrelevant
- c) the world only needs one language

7. In paras 6 and 7, the author claims that:

- a) biological diversity is more important than linguistic diversity
- b) linguistic diversity and biological diversity both have important functions in the world
- c) linguistic diversity is more important than biological diversity
- d) linguistic ecology does not require the same amount of care as natural ecology

8. In paras 8-11, the author supports the theory that:

- a) all languages are intertranslatable
- b) different languages show different perceptions of reality
- c) speakers of different languages perceive the same world
- d) there are no major underlying differences between languages

9. The author suggests (paras 13-14) that a lack of language diversity could lead to:

- a) inability to distinguish colours
- b) inability to discriminate between different plants
- c) lack of knowledge about how to bring up children
- d) loss of specialist vocabularies

10. The main implication of para 15 is that:

- a) English words for family relationships are more precise than words in other languages
- b) if Western languages take over, traditional societies may be at risk because their complex family relationships could not be accurately expressed in European languages
- c) most modern Western languages do not have the right kinds of words to describe complex family relationships in traditional cultures
- d) traditional societies do not make the same kinds of distinctions between family members as Western cultures do

11. The purpose of para 16 is to:

- a) explain why West Africans hold arms instead of shaking hands
- b) give an example of different ways of describing animals and their limbs
- c) indicate the difficulties of communicating with people of different languages
- d) show how different languages distinguish the parts of the body

12. In para 17, the author suggests that:

- a) English people are more depressed than Germans
- b) German is a more comfortable language than English
- c) Polynesian languages have fewer words for sadness
- d) the lack of words for depression in Polynesian languages indicates that Polynesians do not suffer from this emotion

13. The examples that the author provides in para 19 are used to illustrate:

- a) differences between European languages and American Indian languages
- b) differences between causality and comity
- c) different ways of teaching and curing in American Indian as opposed to European cultures
- d) how different languages can represent different perceptions of reality

14. In paras 21-23, what argument is the author putting forward?

- a) because of the inadequacies of Western languages, it is necessary to learn different ways of looking at the environment from different languages
- b) by using Western terminology to describe environmental issues, we are misrepresenting the environment
- c) not all the words used to describe the environment are appropriate
- d) to manage the environment, it is best to establish control over a small area

15. What two approaches are being contrasted in paras 23-25?

- a) differences in attitudes between Western and other cultures towards the land and the environment as a whole
- b) different metaphors used by Western languages and Papua New Guinea language to describe the land
- c) distinctions between humans and the environment
- d) environmental management being contrasted with space exploration

PART 3:

CONNECTORS

(12 MARKS)

Choose the most appropriate answer and mark the response on your answer sheet. The connectors are in bold in your text.

16. However (para 7) could be replaced by which of the following connectors

- a) furthermore
- b) moreover
- c) nevertheless
- d) notwithstanding

17. therefore (para 9) shows:

- e) addition
- f) consequence
- g) contrast
- h) exemplification

18. while (para 15) shows:

- a. addition
- b. contrast
- c. condition

19. whereas (para 19) can be replaced by which connector?

- a) although
- b) because
- c) conversely
- d) while

20. finally (para 20) shows:

- a. addition
- b. conclusion
- c. consequence
- d. summary

21. on the other hand (para 25) can be replaced by which connector?

- a. by comparison
- b. furthermore
- c. in contrast
- d. moreover

Choose the information being referred to by the reference words in your text. The reference words are in bold in your text.

22. this (para 2) refers to:

- a. linguistic diversity should not be seen as a problem
- b. linguistic diversity should be seen as an essential resource
- c. the belief that a multiplicity of languages is undesirable
- d. there is a need to reverse policies and practices that threaten thousands of small languages

23. this theory (para 10) refers to:

- a. different languages emphasize and filter various aspects of a multi-faceted reality
- b. the differences between languages are only superficial
- c. the mapping or labelling view

24. These (para 11) refers to:

- a. a number of ways
- b. differences in vocabulary
- c. different languages
- d. different perceptions of reality

25. these (para 15) refers to:

- a. a brother calls his sister "sister" and a sister calls her brother "sister".
- b. some Aboriginal languages in Australia and other languages in Melanesia
- c. the same word is used to refer to both grandfather and grandchild
- d. both a) and c)

26. it (para 18) refers to:

- a. a report
- b. the pig broke the fence
- c. this kind of neutral manner

27. This idea (para 24) refers to:

- a. establishing control over a small bounded area
- b. learning to understand an undivided whole
- c. the best course of action
- d. the combined propensity of Western languages to emphasise causativity and control

PART 5: GUESSING THE MEANING OF UNKNOWN WORDS**(6 MARKS)**

Select the meaning closest to the word in the text. The unknown words are in bold in your text.

28. cumulative (para 2) means:

- a. collective
- b. different
- c. intellectual
- d. linguistic

31. lexical (para 12) means:

- a. diagnostic
- b. logical
- c. textbook
- d. vocabulary

29. vigorously (para 3) means:

- a. energetically
- b. foolishly
- c. mistakenly
- d. viciously

32. impoverished (para 15) means:

- a. enhanced
- b. empowered
- c. expanded
- d. limited

30. precondition (para 5) means:

- a. catalyst
- b. prerequisite
- c. restriction
- d. turning point

33. solidarity (para 15) means:

- a. differences
- b. family ties
- c. generations
- d. unity

PART 6: UNIVERSITY WORD LIST**(10 MARKS)**

The following words are from the University Word List. Choose the meaning closest to the word in the text. The University Word List words are in bold in your text.

34. advocating (para 7) means:

- e. arguing against
- f. discussing
- g. disputing
- h. proposing

35. tangible (para 17) means:

- a. ordinary
- b. physical
- c. recognisable
- d. unemotional

36. entities (para 18) means:

- a. ideas
- b. people
- c. pigs
- d. things

37. *regeneration* (para 22) means:

- a. exhaustion
- b. exploitation
- c. reduction
- d. regrowing

38. *propensity* (para 23) means:

- a. potential
- b. power
- c. resistance
- d. tendency

PART 7	PARAPHRASE AND SUMMARY	(10 MARKS)
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39. Choose the most academic paraphrase of paragraph 9.

- a. Different languages emphasise and filter various aspects of a multi-faceted reality, in a vast number of ways. This is based on the theory that most perceptions of the world and parts of the world are brought into being and sustained by languages. Therefore, speakers of different languages do not perceive the same world. (Muhlhausler, 1994)
- b. The second theory posits that because perceptions of the world are created by languages, speakers of different languages perceive different worlds. This mean that different languages reflect a variety of aspects of reality. (Muhlhausler, 1994)
- c. The perception of different worlds by speakers of different languages is held to be true, according to the second theory. Thus, different languages create their own world and their own reality, which cannot be interpreted by someone who does not speak that language. (Muhlhausler, 1994)

40. Which of the following sentences best summarises the whole article?

- a. Although there is debate about the value of language diversity, the author believes that it is vital to preserve different ways of perceiving and understanding the world's problems.
- b. Despite the attractions of a single language, many languages are better because there is a chance that traditional cultures might break down if they lose their own language.
- c. Language diversity is causing as much debate as biological diversity and is equally important.

ANSWER KEY

PART 1: SKIMMING	(20 MARKS)
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1.a 2.a 3.a 4.c 5.c

PART 2: SCANNING	(30 MARKS)
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6.a 7.b 8.b 9.d 10.b 11.d 12.d 13.d 14.a 15.a

PART 3: CONNECTORS	(12 MARKS)
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16.c 17.b 18.b 19.d 20.a 21.c

PART 4: REFERENCE	(12 MARKS)
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22.d 23.a 24.a 25.d 26.b 27.a

PART 5: GUESSING THE MEANING OF UNKNOWN WORDS	(6 MARKS)
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28.a 29.a 30.b 31.d 32.d 33.d

PART 6: UNIVERSITY WORD LIST	(10 MARKS)
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34.d

35.b NOTE: Physical here means as in part of physics (light, colour etc) part of the perceivable world, concrete, not abstract and conceptual only

36.d 37.d 38.d

PART 7: PARAPHRASE AND SUMMARY	(10 MARKS)
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39.b 40.a