

## Language Sample Comprehensive Exam Questions

1. Explain at least one reading of the slogan that “Meaning is use”. Describe philosophical problems that the slogan is meant to overcome. Is this approach to meaning ultimately promising?
2. “Names are disguised definite descriptions with a Russellian quantificational semantics”. Explain this claim in detail, and then evaluate both the pros and the cons of the position.
3. “There are no such things as shared public languages with shared public meanings”. Explain how philosophers as various as Chomsky, Davidson and Quine might arrive at such a view. Are they right to say that shared public languages are explanatorily unnecessary?
4. Can there be such a thing as a semantics of metaphor?
5. “Appearances to the contrary, co-referential expressions are substitutable *salva veritate* in propositional attitude contexts”. Explain this claim in detail and evaluate its plausibility.
6. “*The best way to explain the truth conditional contribution of indexicals is \_\_\_\_*”. Compare and contrast several approaches to the problem of context sensitive linguistic expressions so as to complete this sentence in a plausible way.
7. “There are no pragmatic determinants of what is said. Instead, the contribution of pragmatics to the truth conditions of utterances is exhausted by the assignment of referents to context-sensitive items within disambiguated logical form”. Explain this claim in detail, and then evaluate both the pros and the cons of the position.
8. “Appearances to the contrary, the phenomenon of vagueness in natural language is consistent with standard logics”. Explain this claim in detail, and then evaluate both the pros and the cons of the position.