

## EXERCISE 70: Comparison/Contrast—Humanities/Business

In some questions in the Reading Section on the Paper-Based TOEFL, you will be asked to recall and relate information and content from comparison or contrast passages about various fields of study. Choose the best answer for multiple-choice questions.

### Levels of Vocabulary

Most languages have several levels of vocabulary that may be used by the same speakers. In English, at least three have been identified and described.

- Line Standard usage includes those words and expressions understood,  
 5 used, and accepted by a majority of the speakers of a language in any situation regardless of the level of formality. As such, these words and expressions are well defined and listed in standard dictionaries. Colloquialisms, on the other hand, are familiar words and idioms that are understood by almost all speakers of a language and used in  
 10 informal speech or writing, but not considered acceptable for more formal situations. Almost all idiomatic expressions are colloquial language. Slang, however, refers to words and expressions understood by a large number of speakers but not accepted as appropriate formal usage by the majority. Colloquial expressions and  
 15 even slang may be found in standard dictionaries but will be so identified. Both colloquial usage and slang are more common in speech than in writing.

- Colloquial speech often passes into standard speech. Some slang also passes into standard speech, but other slang expressions enjoy  
 20 momentary popularity followed by obscurity. In some cases, the majority never accepts certain slang phrases but nevertheless retains them in their collective memories. Every generation seems to require its own set of words to describe familiar objects and events.

- It has been pointed out by a number of linguists that three  
 25 cultural conditions are necessary for the creation of a large body of slang expressions. First, the introduction and acceptance of new objects and situations in the society; second, a diverse population with a large number of subgroups; third, association among the subgroups and the majority population.

- 30 Finally, it is worth noting that the terms "standard," "colloquial," and "slang" exist only as abstract labels for scholars who study language. Only a tiny number of the speakers of any language will be aware that they are using colloquial or slang expressions. Most speakers of English will, during appropriate situations, select and use  
 35 all three types of expressions.



1. Which of the following is the main topic of the passage?
  - (A) Standard speech
  - (B) Idiomatic phrases
  - (C) Different types of vocabulary
  - (D) Dictionary usage
2. How is slang defined by the author?
  - (A) Words and phrases accepted by the majority for formal usage
  - (B) Words and phrases understood by the majority but not found in standard dictionaries
  - (C) Words and phrases that are understood by a restricted group of speakers
  - (D) Words and phrases understood by a large number of speakers but not accepted as formal usage
3. The word "obscurity" in line 20 could best be replaced by
  - (A) disappearance
  - (B) influence
  - (C) qualification
  - (D) tolerance
4. The word "appropriate" in line 14 is closest in meaning to
  - (A) old
  - (B) large
  - (C) correct
  - (D) important
5. The word "them" in line 22 refers to
  - (A) words
  - (B) slang phrases
  - (C) memories
  - (D) the majority
6. Where in the passage does the author explain where colloquial language and slang are most commonly used?
  - (A) Lines 4-6
  - (B) Lines 16-17
  - (C) Lines 24-26
  - (D) Lines 33-35
7. What does the author mean by the statement in lines 8-11: "Colloquialisms, on the other hand, are familiar words and idioms that are understood by almost all speakers of a language and used in informal speech or writing, but not considered acceptable for more formal situations"?
  - (A) Familiar words and phrases are found in both speech and writing in formal settings.
  - (B) Familiar situations that are experienced by most people are called colloquialisms.
  - (C) Informal language contains colloquialisms, which are not found in more formal language.
  - (D) Most of the speakers of a language can use both formal and informal speech in appropriate situations.
8. Which of the following is true of standard usage?
  - (A) It can be used in formal or informal settings.
  - (B) It is limited to written language.
  - (C) It is only understood by the upper classes.
  - (D) It is constantly changing.
9. The author mentions all of the following as requirements for slang expressions to be created EXCEPT
  - (A) new situations
  - (B) a new generation
  - (C) interaction among diverse groups
  - (D) a number of linguists
10. It can be inferred from the passage that the author
  - (A) does not approve of either slang or colloquial speech in any situation
  - (B) approves of colloquial speech in some situations, but not slang
  - (C) approves of slang and colloquial speech in appropriate situations
  - (D) does not approve of colloquial usage in writing