Law Prohibiting the Use of the Word “Oriental”

The northwestern US state of Washington made headlines earlier this year when it passed a law prohibiting the use of the word “Oriental” in official contexts. Instead, the word “Asian” must be employed. The new law only bans the use of the word “Oriental” when the reference is to human beings. Therefore, one law which defines “minority group” to include “Orientals” will be changed to refer to “Asians”, but another law which refers to “Oriental medicine” will be left unchanged. According to the law’s sponsor, Korean-American state senator Paull Shin, the law was passed because the term “Oriental” is “pejorative terminology” and “offensive”.

The English language is full of other apparently contradictory tendencies for words relating to ethnicity. “Chinatown”, meaning a neighborhood where Chinese immigrants live, is proper English. But “Chinaman”, meaning a Chinese person, became offensive in America during the first half of the 20th century, even though it is a direct translation of Zhongguoren. And “Frenchman”, meaning a French person, is perfectly neutral English.

The care Yankees must take in referring to Asians is as nothing compared with the delicacy required to get through the minefield of terms for Americans of sub-Saharan African ancestry. “Colored person” is now offensive, even though it was regarded as a polite term for much of the century after the US Civil War (1861-65). On the other hand, “person of color”, meaning someone of any non-European race, is acceptable and, in some ideological circles, a favored phrase. “Negro” (the Spanish word for “black”) gave way to “black” or “Black” in the 1960s, only to yield in turn to “Afro-American” in the 1980s and “African-American” or “African American” in the 1990s.

And while one can speak of “black people” and “white people” or “blacks” and “whites”, one would be ill advised to speak of “red people” (American Indians - the “First Nations” of Canada, by the way) or “yellow people”
(Asians). “Reds” is reserved for politics. The term “browns” is used occasionally to refer to Latin Americans of Indian or mixed Indian/European ancestry.

What to make of this jumble of conflicting language taboos? One can draw two lessons: First, non-native speakers should use caution when speaking about ethnicity or race in English, as the English language is rife with linguistic traps in this area. Second, the number of offensive terms relating to other ethnic groups is a signal that the US has never been fully comfortable with its status as a multiracial society. Culture is reflected in language, and the large number of pejorative ethnic terms in American English shows that the United States still suffers from ethnic and racial tensions.

II. Put the following passage into English (45 points).

丈夫是个从不多话的人。恋爱时节觉得这样的男人干脆利落，不拖泥带水、婆婆妈妈，挺不错。结婚后才发现这两个人的世界没有了语言的“掺和”，生活简直就没了点亮色，真没劲。有意无意间有了愠怒之词，怨他不会说话，不会幽默。怪自己眼睛近视，看错了人。话讲过也就算了，没想到怪事却紧接着发生了。

那晚我翻箱倒柜想找一件合适时下穿着的裙，却怎么找都是旧日风行的大摆裙，我忽然心生一念，问他：“你说，可不可以将这大摆裙改成A字裙呢？”他毫不犹豫立刻给我回答：“据我所知，A字裙绝对不可能改成大摆裙，但大摆裙能否改成A字裙得问问裁缝。”你瞧，这不是废话一堆、整个白问了吗？不过，我倒一惊一乐，总算有了点进步！这废话虽还算不上幽默，也算逗个乐吧。

还有一次，让他去买牙膏，他非要买个闻所未闻的新品牌回来，小小的个头价倒挺高。他说是换换口味，我也就带着期待赶紧试用，盼望铝皮上传达的种种美好感觉能立竿见影，可一切如故，我断定他是上当了。他倒显得很轻松，给我送上一句：“据说，牙膏都是刷到最后，你才觉得它最好！”唉，真亏了，这牙膏厂怎么没请他去做广告！

Part Two   English Linguistics (30 points)

I. Read each of the following statements carefully and decide which one of the four choices best completes the statement (8 points).

1. The scholars who put forward interaction hypothesis hold ________.
   A) language acquisition is a process of “stimulus-response”.
   B) humans are predisposed to acquire a language.
C) human’s linguistic potentiality must be combined with the environment.
D) human’s linguistic environment can be ignored as long as humans have language.

2. In the Semantic Triangle advanced by Ogden and Richards, “thought or reference” is ______.
   A) word, sentence       B) the object       C) concept       D) symbol

3. The word “laze” is an example of ______ in word formation.
   A) acronym       B) blending       C) functional shift       D) back formation

4. Field of discourse, __________, and mode of discourse are the three social variables that determine the register.
   A) style of discourse       B) formality of discourse
   C) tenor of discourse       D) content of discourse

II. Explain the following linguistic terms (16 points).

1. euphemism
2. brain lateralization
3. a minimal pair
4. locutionary act

III. Answer the following question (6 points).

Draw two possible tree diagrams for the following sentence to show its syntactic structure.

*The boy saw the man with a telescope.*

Part Three  English Literature (30 points)

I. Define the following terms (10 points).

1. Epic
2. Classicism

II. Read and Analyze the following (20 points).

1. Identify the author and the source of the following passage, and comment on its form and theme.

Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is:
What if my leaves are falling like its own!
The tumult of thy mighty harmonies
Will take from both a deep, autumnal tone,
Sweet though in sadness. Be thou, Spirit fierce,
My spirit! Be thou me, impetuous one!

Drive my dead thoughts over the universe
Like withered leaves to quicken a new birth!
And, by the incantation of this verse,

Scatter, as from an unextinguished hearth
Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!
Be through my lips to unawakened Earth

The trumpet of a prophecy! O Wind,
If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?

2. Identify the author and the source of the following passage, and make a brief comment on it.

“Now, if you’re ready, set him alongside of Dan’l, with his fore-paws just even with Dan’l, and I’ll give the word.” Then he says, “One two three jump!” and him and the feller touched up the frogs from behind, and the new frog hopped off, but Dan’l give a heave, and hysted up his shoulders so like a Frenchman, but it wan’s no use he couldn’t budge; he was planted as solid as an anvil, and he couldn’t no more stir than if he was anchored out. Smiley was a good deal surprised, and he was disgusted too, but he didn’t have no idea what the matter was, of course.

The feller took the money and started away; and when he was going out at the door, he sorter jerked his thumb over his shoulders this way at Dan’l, and says again, very deliberate, “Well, I don’t see no p’ints about that frog that’s any better’n any other frog.”

Smiley he stood scratching his head and looking down at Dan’l a long time, and at last he says, “I do wonder what in the nation that frog throw’d off for I wonder if there an’t something the matter with him he ’pears to look mighty baggy, somehow.” And he ketched Dan’l by the nap of the neck, and lifted him up and says, “Why, blame my cats, if he don’t weigh five pound!” and turned him upside down, and he belched out a double handful of shot. And then he see how it was, and he was the maddest man he set the frog down and took out after that feller, but he never ketched him. And--