UNIVERSITY OF SWAZILAND
DEPARTMENT OF AFRICAN LANGUAGES AND LITERATURE
MAIN EXAMINATION PAPER: MAY 2016
B. A. DEGREE

TITLE OF PAPER: SPECIAL EXAMINATION PAPER

TOPIC: LANGUAGE ACQUISITION IN OPTIMALITY THEORY

COURSE NUMBER: AL418/IDE-AL418

TIME ALLOWED: THREE (3) HOURS

INSTRUCTIONS:
1. ANSWER FOUR (4) QUESTIONS IN ALL.

2. CHOOSE ONE QUESTION FROM SECTION A.

3. CHOOSE THREE QUESTIONS FROM SECTION B.

4. LINGUISTIC EXPRESSIONS AND FORMALISM SHOULD BE USED WHENEVER APPROPRIATE.

5. ALL EXAMPLES SHOULD BE GLOSSED

THIS PAPER IS NOT TO BE OPENED UNTIL PERMISSION HAS BEEN GRANTED BY THE INVIGILATOR.

SECTION A

FIRST LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

Answer question 1 and any other question in this section

Question 1

Here are two (paraphrased) views on language acquisition: "Infants must acquire the words of their language, but they bring the sentence with them" (Lila Gleitman).

"Less is more" (Elisa Newport)

Explain these two views, providing evidence for each of them. Which view do you think is more plausible, and why?

[25 Marks]

Question 2

Down Syndrome and Autism are some of the conditions found in developmentally disabled children. Discuss these two conditions and show how they may delay the process of child language acquisition.

[25 Marks]

Question 3

    a) The Cognitive Theory of child language acquisition is somehow different from the Behaviourist and the Nativist theories of language acquisition. Discuss (10)

    b) Using examples from any language discuss the following questions and statements about language acquisition;

        i)   Is language acquisition the same for all children? Explain.   (3)
        ii)   How do children acquire pronunciation?   (2)
        ii)   How do children acquire sentences?   (4)

        iii)   Acquisition is more advanced in the domain of perception than in production. Discuss.   (6)

[25 marks]

SECTION B

OPTIMALITY THEORY IN LANGUAGE

ACQUISITION

Answer Question 4 and any other question from this section

Question 4

The initial ranking of constraints in child language acquisition is Markedness constraints above Faithfulness constraints, and overtime the ranking is reversed. Use Optimality Theory to account for the authenticity of this statement.

Question 5

With relevant examples, discuss the following linguistic terms and concepts as used in Optimality Theory:

a)
i)	Generator	(3)
ii)	Evaluator	(3)
iii)	Constraint violability	(4)
iv)	Hierachical ranking	(4)

b) What is the difference between *output constraints* and *input constraints*? (6)

c) While constraints are universal, the rankings are not. Explain. (5)

[25 marks]

Question 6

How does Optimality Theory account for intrachild variation? Present a tableau that assumes that the error patterns of reduction, epenthesis, and coalescence are produced by the same child

[25 Marks]