一、國文（50%）

　　作文：我的大學生涯（注意：文字要求簡潔流暢，條理清晰）

二、英文（50%）

I.　**Write a summary (15%)**: Read the following passage and write a summary of <u>200 words</u>. You should find the main ideas of the text and express them in your own words.　Do not quote portions of the English text.　<u>Indicate the number of words at the end of your summary</u>.

　　The romantic idealism of the late eighteenth century, as encountered in the views f Johann Herder (1744-1803) and Wilhelm von Humboldt (1762-1835), placed great value on the diversity of the world's languages and cultures.　The tradition was taken up by the American linguist and anthropologist Edward Sapir (1884-1939) and his pupil Benjamin Lee Whorf (1897-1941), and resulted in a view about the relation between language and thought which was widely influential in the middle decades of this century.

　　The "Sapir-Whorf hypothesis," as it came to be called, combines two principles.　The first is known as *linguistic determinism*: it states that language determines the way we think.　The second follows from this, and is known as *linguistic relativity*: it states that the distinctions encoded in one language are not found in any other language.

　　Whorf illustrated his view by taking examples from several languages, and in particular from Hopi, an Amerindian language.　In Hopi, there is one word (*masa'ytaka*) for everything that flies except birds—which would include insects, airplanes, and pilots.　This seems alien to someone used to thinking in English, but, Whorf argues, it is no stranger than English-speakers having one word for many kinds of snow, in contrast to Eskimo, where there are different words for falling snow, snow on the ground, snow packed hard like ice, slushy snow, and so on.　In Aztec, a single word (with different endings) covers an even greater range of English notions—snow, cold, and ice. When more abstract notions are considered (such as time, duration, velocity), the differences become yet more complex: Hopi, for instance, lacks a concept of time seen as a dimension; there are no forms corresponding to English tenses, but there are a series of forms which make it possible to talk about various durations, from the speaker's point of view.　It would be very difficult, Whorf argues, for a Hopi and an English physicist to understand each other's thinking, given the major differences between the languages.

　　Examples such as these made the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis very plausible; but in its strongest form it is unlikely to have any adherents now.　The fact that successful translations between

languages can be made is a major argument against it, as is the fact that the conceptual uniqueness of a language such as Hopi can nonetheless be explained using English. That there are some conceptual differences between cultures due to language is undeniable, but this is not to say that the differences are so great that mutual comprehension is impossible. One language may take many words to say what another language says in a single word, but in the end the circumlocution can make the point.

Similarly, it does not follow that, because a language lacks a word, its speakers therefore cannot grasp the concept. Several languages have few words for numerals: Australian aboriginal languages, for example, are often restricted to a few general words (such as "all", "many", "few", "one", and "two"). In such cases, it is sometimes said that the people lack the concept of number—that aborigines "haven't the intelligence to count," as it was once put. But this is not so, as is shown when these speakers learn English as a second language: their ability to count and calculate is quite comparable to that of English native speakers.

However, a weaker version of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis is generally accepted. Language may not determine the way we think, but it does influence the way we perceive and remember, and it affects the ease with which we perform mental tasks. Several experiments have shown that people recall things more easily if the things correspond to readily available words or phrases. And people certainly find it easier to make a conceptual distinction if it neatly corresponds to words available in their language. Some salvation for the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis can therefore be found in these studies, which are carried out within the developing field of psycholinguistics.

II. **Interpret and Comment:** Read the following passage and (1) summarize the main ideas of the text in a paragraph of about 100 words (but do not quote portions of the English text, and indicate the number of words at the end of the paragraph) (15%); (2) comment on what effect the author believes e-mail (or the Internet) is having on language usage, whether e-mail (or the Internet) has also affected the usage of Chinese and people's concern for grammar, and whether you agree or disagree with the author's point-of-view in no more than 300 words (indicate the number of words at the end) (20%).

Now that I'm a grammar maven, everyone's afraid to talk to me. Well, not everyone. Since my grammar book was published this fall, my friends have discovered a new sport: gotcha! The object is to correct my speech, to catch me in the occasional "between you and I" (OK, I admit it). The winner gets to interrupt with a satisfied "aha!"

But people I meet for the first time often confess that speaking with an "authority" on language gives them the willies. Grammar, they say apologetically, was not their best subject.

And they still don't get it: the subjunctives, the dependent clauses, the coordinating conjunctions. So their English is bound to be flawed, they warn, and I should make allowances. They relax when I tell them that I'm not perfect either, and that I don't use technical jargon when I write about grammar. You don't have to scare readers off with terms like *gerund* and *participle* to explain why an *-ing* word like *bowling* can play so many different roles in a sentence. With the intimidating terminology out of the way, most people express a lively, even passionate, interest in English and how it works. As a reader recently to me, "I don't need to know all the parts of a car to be a good driver."

Grammarians and hairsplitting wannabes have always loved to argue over the fine points of language. What surprises me these days is the number of grammatically insecure people who are discussing English with just as much fervor, though without the pedantry. As a guest author on radio call-in shows and online chats, I've found that the chance to air a linguistic grievance or pose a question in a nonjudgmental atmosphere often proves irresistible. "Is *irregardless* OK?" a caller hesitantly asks. "I hear it so much these days." (No.) Or, "Is *sprang* a word?" (Yes.) "Media *is* or media *are*?" (*Are*, for the time being.) I saw an ad with the word *alright*, spelled A-L-R-I-G-H-T. It is correct? (No, it's not all right.) "If I *was*? Or if I *were*?" (It depends.) I love it when people who say they hated grammar in school get all worked up over *like* versus *as*, or *convince* versus *persuade*, or *who* versus *whom*. Obviously it wasn't grammar per se that once turned them off. It was the needless pedagoguery—the tyranny of the pluperfects, the intransitives, and all the rest. The truth is that people love talking about words, about language. After years as an editor at *The New York Times Book Review*, I can vouch that almost everybody gets something wrong now and then—a dangler here, a spelling problem there, a runaway sentence, beastly punctuation. Those who regularly screw up would like to do better, and even the whizzes admit they'd like to get rid of a weakness or two.

So, is grammar back? Has good English become... cool?

Before you laugh, download this. Thanks to the computer, Americans are communicating with one another at a rate undreamed of a generation ago—and in *writing*. People who seldom wrote more than a memo or a shopping list are producing blizzards of words. Teenagers who once might have spent the evening on the phone are hunched over their computers, gossiping by e-mail and meeting in chat rooms. Wired college students are conferring with professors, carrying on romances, and writing home for money, all from computer terminals in their dorm rooms. Many executives who once depended on secretaries to "put it in English" are now clicking on REPLY and winging it.

The downside of all this techno-wizardry is that our grammar isn't quite up to the mark. We're writing more, and worse, than ever before. (If you don't believe this, check out a chat room

or an electronic bulletin board. It's not a pretty sight.) The ease and immediacy of electronic communication are forcing the computer-literate to think about their grammar for the first time in years, if ever. It's ironic that this back-to-basics message should come from cyberspace. Or is it? Amid the din of the information revolution, bombarded on all sides by technological wonders, we can hardly be blamed for finding in grammar one small sign of order amid the chaos.

There is evidence of this return to order elsewhere in our society, too. Perhaps the "family values" mantra, for better or worse, is nothing more than a call for order in a culture that seems to have lost its moral bearings. At any rate, laissez-faire grammar bashers who used to regard good English as an impediment to spontaneity and creativity are seeing the light—and it's not spelled L-I-T-E.

But what about those of us whose "lex" education is a dim memory? The very word *grammar* evokes a visceral response—usually fear. If it makes your hair stand on end, you're part of a proud tradition. The earliest grammarians, bless their shriveled hearts, did English a disservice by appealing more to our feelings of inferiority than to our natural love of words. They could never quite forgive our mongrel tongue for not being Latin, but felt that English could redeem itself somewhat by conforming to the rules of Latin grammar. The word *grammar*, in fact, originally meant "the study of Latin." All this may help explain a couple of silly no-nos from the past, discredited by the most respected twentieth-century grammarians: those inflexible rules against splitting an infinitive and ending a sentence with a preposition.

Surely no school subject has been more detested and reviled by its victims than grammar. Some people would rather have a root canal than define the uninflected root of a word. At the same time, the ability to use language well appeals to our need to be understood, to participate, to be one of the tribe. It's no wonder so many of the people I meet confess to being grammatically inadequate, yet fascinated by words.

My message to these people, delivered from the lofty heights of my newly acquired mavenhood, is this: stop beating up on yourselves. It's only a grammatical error, not a drive-by shooting. Words are wonderful, but they're not sacred. And between you and I (aha!), nobody's perfect.