How to Write a Linguistics Term Paper (Schriftliche Hausarbeit)

Overview

1. Structure of a linguistics paper
2. Styles for linguistics papers
3. Stages of writing a term paper

1. Structure of a linguistics paper

We strongly recommend the following structure for linguistics papers:

- Title page: See Styles section.
- Table of Contents: with section numbers (only Arabic numerals), subsection numbers, page numbers (by the way: your term paper is not a book, so it contains **sections** and **subsections**, not chapters)
- Introduction: The introduction contains your motivation for dealing with the topic. State your goal in relation to the problem, give plausible examples, state your general research question/s and give a brief outline of the paper.
- Theoretical part: The theoretical part gives the background of the paper and contains a discussion of the relevant technical terms (correctly used!) and research that has already been done on the topic and presents these results accurately and systematically. It points out contradictions and/or gaps in these previous studies and ends with a formulation of your research question/s or working hypothesis.
- Empirical part: First, you describe your data collection and analysis (Participants, if applicable; Method; Analysis), then you present your results in a separate section. (Of course, you should not name the headings 'Theoretical Part' and 'Empirical Part'. Rather, find headings that reflect the contents of these sections.)
- Discussion and Conclusion: In the discussion you give a summary of your results and relate them to the goals discussed in the Introduction and to the previous findings discussed in the theoretical part. Discuss problems which occurred during your study and open questions which remain. Finally, possible applications of the results can be mentioned. You may also wish to give an outlook on further developments.
- References: In the references you list all (and only the) works cited in your paper according to the styles listed below. A paper for a BA seminar will contain at least ten references to research articles or monographs, a paper for an MA/M.Ed. seminar at least 15. **Use only scholarly sources please**, be they printed or from the Internet. If you are uncertain as to what counts as a scholarly source, please ask your instructor.
- Appendix: You may have extensive corpus data, tables of results, and so on. These belong in an appendix.
- Declaration on non-plagiarism: Remember to add a page at the end of the paper with the following text and your signature (plus place and date): "Hiermit versichere ich an Eides statt, dass ich die vorliegende Hausarbeit selbständig und ausschließlich mit den im Literaturverzeichnis angegebenen Quellen und Hilfsmitteln angefertigt habe."
  It is a major offense to use artificial intelligence in the production of term papers or other work for your studies. Any such attempt will be considered plagiarism and will immediately be reported to the Prüfungsamt.

2. Styles for linguistics papers

Formatting styles, for example APA, help your reader to grasp the paper as easily as possible and concentrate on what you are saying (which is obviously in your own interest, too). Please make sure you follow these conventions in your paper. You will find standard examples of how to format a linguistics paper in linguistic periodicals such as *Journal of Linguistics, Language and Speech* and *Linguistics*.

- TITLE PAGE

The title page should have the following format:

Class: Forensic Linguistics
Lecturer: Dr. Polly Tix
Term: WS 2023/24

Author Profiling:
Criminals' text message exchanges

Leon H. Oswald

Address: Elmstraße 411
12345 Daarle
Email: LHO@home.com
Tel.: 054321-1234567
Matriculation No: 987654321

- TABLES AND GRAPHS in the text are numbered and contain some explanation (= the caption).

Examples: Table 4. Number of students taking linguistics exams from 1980 to 1999.

            Figure 3. Frequency of compounds in ICE-GB and ICE-Nigeria.

Table captions are given above the table, graph captions below the graph (which is referred to as a Figure).

- REFERENCES

References to the sources of quotations and paraphrases are included in the text. Do not use footnotes simply to give bibliographical information. Footnotes may be used for additional comments to the main text, but should be used sparingly. In-text references consist of author, date and page number(s) and must follow APA style.

The format is (author, year, p. x):
(Schneider, 2007, p. 56)

Short quotations (fewer than 40 words) are incorporated into the text and marked by quotation marks. For example:

> The language situation can be characterized as a Creole continuum in the sense that "[t]here is a complex pattern of variation conditioned by social and situational factors, in which the boundaries between creole and standard become quite blurred" (Winford, 1997, p. 258).

Longer quotations (more than 40 words) are set off from the text and marked by indenting and single spacing. For example:

> The history of English and English-derived varieties in Jamaica begins in the seventeenth century:
>
>> After roughly 150 years of Spanish occupation, Jamaica came under British control in 1655. English became the language of prestige and power on the island, reflecting the social status of its users, while the emergent Creole was regarded as the fragmented language of a fragmented people. (Beckford Wassink, 1999, p. 58)

Please distinguish clearly between what you find in the literature and your own contribution. For the former, you always need to indicate the source clearly. **Do not copy passages from the internet or anywhere else without giving the appropriate reference**. This is intellectual theft and leads to an automatic fail without a chance of rewriting your paper. In general, please do not quote other works directly but reformulate the central ideas in your own words. You can find information on the placement of in-text references here: https://rasmussen.libanswers.com/faq/32328

- LIST OF REFERENCES

The section "references" at the end of the paper lists all sources cited in the paper in APA style. Basic information and examples of some common types of sources are provided below. For further information consult APA (2020) and/or the APA style website (https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/references/examples).

Monograph
Last name of author, initial(s) of first name(s) of author. (date). *Title of book*. Publisher.
    https://doi.org/xxxx
(more than one author: see examples in section "Journal article" below)

Blommaert, J. (2010). *The sociolinguistics of globalization*. Cambridge University Press.
    https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511845307
Garrett, P. (2010). *Attitudes to language*. Cambridge University Press.
    https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511844713

Journal article

Last name of author, initial(s) of first name(s) of author. (date). Title of article. *Title of Journal, volume*(issue number), pages of article. https://doi.org/xxxx

Jowitt, D. (1994). The English of Nigerian newspapers. *English Today, 10*(4), 23-28. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0266078400007859

Mair, C., Hundt, M., Leech, G., & Smith, N. (2002). Short term diachronic shifts in part-of-speech frequencies: A comparison of the tagged LOB and F-LOB corpora. *International Journal of Corpus Linguistics, 7*(2), 245-264. https://doi.org/10.1075/ijcl.7.2.05mai

Tagliamonte, S., & D'Arcy, A. (2009). Peaks beyond phonology: Adolescence, incrementation, and language change. *Language, 85*(1), 58-108. https://doi.org/10.1353/lan.0.0084

Article in edited collection

Last name of author, initial(s) of first name(s) of author. (date). Title of article. In initial(s) of first name(s) of editor. last name of editor (Ed.), *Title of edited collection* (pp. pages of article). Publisher. https://doi.org/xxxx

(more than one editor: see examples)

Bayard, D. (2000). The cultural cringe revisited: Changes through time in Kiwi attitudes towards accents. In A. Bell & K. Kuiper (Eds.), *New Zealand English* (pp. 297–324). Benjamins. https://doi.org/10.1075/veaw.g25.16bay

Hackert, S. (2010). Of old and new Anglo-Saxons: The native speaker and nationalism in English-speaking countries. In C. Lange, U. Schäfer, & G. Wolf (Eds.), *Linguistics, ideology and the discourse of linguistic nationalism* (pp. 77-96). Peter Lang.

Nelson, G. (1996). The design of the corpus. In S. Greenbaum (Ed.), *Comparing English worldwide: The International Corpus of English* (pp. 27–53). Clarendon.

- LANGUAGE

Academic English is quite a different register from spoken English (for instance, academic texts do not use contracted forms such as "isn't"). Please make sure you use appropriate expressions and vocabulary. Avoid first and second person pronouns – you are not writing to a pen-friend or expressing a simple opinion but carefully formulating results which are intended to be more generally valid.

Example: instead of writing "And then I looked at how long the vowel /a/ is before the /r/" write something along the lines of "Subsequently, the length of the vowel /a/ preceding an /r/ was measured". Again, check linguistic papers in journals to get a feeling for the style!

- LENGTH

The length of your paper is specified in your Modulbeschreibung. This word count excludes title page, table of contents, references, appendix, declaration. Deviations from the required length of more than 10% are not tolerated.

Please adhere to the following layout parameters for the text: 2.5 cm margin on the left and 3.0 cm on the right, Times New Roman size 12 (or another default font), 1.5 spaced.

3. Stages of writing a Hausarbeit

Writing a linguistic paper is a process that takes some time and that involves the following steps:

1. Planning and finding of topic

First, you need to find a topic. Please do not expect us to give you a topic because you know best where your interests lie. In order to find a topic, re-read the course materials and ask yourself the following questions:

- What is especially interesting about the topic of the course?
- Which part is most fascinating for me?
- Which parts raise the most questions for me?
- What is the question I would like to answer with my study?

After you have found your topic you can contact us for help with the next stage of reading, cutting down your topic and data collection.

2. Reading and cutting down your topic

When you have found a topic for your paper, read what has been written about the topic so far and formulate your topic precisely, i.e. decide which aspects you should discuss and which you might leave out. You will then have the central question/hypothesis of your paper.

3. Collecting data

Your hypothesis determines what kind of data you should collect and how (unless you can use data that is already available, such as corpora).

4. First version

Next you write a first version of your paper according to the structure and styles outlined here. Please remember that your paper needs to have a line of argumentation (think of trying to convince the reader of why research on your topic is interesting and why your study is necessary). Make sure you include only relevant material. Ask yourself with every passage, table and graph: do I need this for my argumentation? If the answer is "No", get rid of it.

5. Revision

You will have to revise your paper, typically several times, for example to make the line of argumentation clearer. Please minimize flaws in your argumentation, gaps or other things that need to be revised. Also check your spelling!

It is a good idea to ask someone else to proofread your work. Another good idea is to read what you have written aloud to someone else to detect awkward formulations and other kinds of errors. Double check your bibliographical references!

6. Submission

Only after revision submit your paper in the form requested by your instructor.

Your contact hours with us are mainly during the teaching term. During the term breaks, we are often busy doing research, attending conferences, grading class work or we can simply be unavailable because we are on vacation. Please start planning your paper well during the semester. Chances are that if you contact us too close to the deadline, there is no time to help you. "You weren't available because you went on holiday, so I missed the deadline" is in no way acceptable to say or even think.