

How to Write a Linguistics Term Paper (Schriftliche Hausarbeit)

Purpose of this stylesheet

You are planning to write a *Hausarbeit*, i.e. a term paper in one of the Linguistics courses this term? The linguistics teachers will give you as much support as possible.

Here are some hints on what to expect from us and what we expect from you.

Overview

- Structure of a linguistics paper
- Styles for linguistics papers
- Stages of writing a term paper
- Support
- Grades

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, 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 and 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 ends with a formulation of your working hypothesis if you have an empirical part. If your paper is theoretical only, no empirical part is required. If your paper is empirical, the theory part should take up up to 50% of the paper.
- **Empirical part:** First, you describe your data collection and analysis (Participants, Method, Analysis), then you present your results. (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 findings discussed in the theoretical part. Discuss problems which occurred 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 works cited in your paper according to the styles listed below. A paper for a *Proseminar* will contain at least five references to research articles or monographs, a paper for a *Hauptseminar* at least eight. Use only scholarly sources, be they printed or from the Internet.
- **Appendix:** You may have extensive corpus data, tables of results, and so on. These belong in an appendix. For some kinds of paper you may also wish to include a CD-ROM.
- **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.“ You may also use the form at <www.philhist.uni-augsburg.de/de/fakultaet/formulare/formulare_studium/sammlung/eidesstattliche_versicherung.pdf>.

Remember that the basic function of any linguistics paper is to persuade the scientific community of the relevance, and innovative value of your results. In principle, this also applies to your term paper.

Styles for linguistics papers

The main point to remember is that formatting styles are intended to help your reader to read 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: Language in the modern world
Lecturer: Polly Tix
Term: WS 2001/02

The Third Way in Linguistics Speculations and Claims

Toni Blär

Address: Unteringstraße
10
Lohndüne
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Matriculation No: 987654321

- **TABLES AND GRAPHS** in the text are numbered and contain some explanation (= the caption). Example: *Table 4. Number of students taking linguistics exams from 1980 to 1999.* Table captions are given *above* the table, graph captions *below* the graph.

- REFERENCES

in the text are given in short form (author's name, year of publication: page) and NOT with a footnote. Example: As Muller (1995: 322) pointed out...

Distinguish clearly between what you find in the literature and your own contribution. For the former, you 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, do not quote other works but reformulate the central ideas in your own words.
- REFERENCES

in the bibliography have the following style (as long as you are consistent and include all relevant information, minor deviations from this model are allowed)

 - ARTICLES IN PERIODICALS/JOURNALS: Author's surname, initial. (Year). "Title of article." Name of Journal Number of Issue, page numbers. Example: Smith, J. (1965). "What's new in linguistics?" *Journal of Linguistics* 4, 324-335.
 - ARTICLES IN BOOKS: Author's surname, initial. (Year). "Titel of article" In: Editor's initials, surname (ed), Title of book, Place: Publisher, Page numbers. Example: Smith, J. (1985). "What's new in linguistics?" In: D. Lightfoot (ed.), *New horizons in linguistics*, London: London University Press, pp. 103-107.
 - BOOKS: Author's surname, initial. (Year). Title of book. Place: Publisher. Example: Muller, G. (1998). *What I like about linguistics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- LANGUAGE

Scientific 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

In a *Proseminar*, your paper needs to be 10-12 pages long, in a *Hauptseminar* 15-20 pages (excluding title page, table of contents, references, appendix, declaration). Deviations from the required length are not tolerated. In order to have comparable papers, please stick to the following layout parameters for the text: 2.5 cm margins to all sides, Times New Roman size 12, 1.5 spaced.
- MODELS

A number of good term papers which you are welcome to consider as models are available for inspection in room 3137. A list of preventable errors in writing term papers is available at www.christina-sanchez.de/material/coursework/mistakes.html.

Stages of writing a Hausarbeit

Writing a linguistic paper involves the following steps:

1. Planning and finding of topic

First of all you need to find a topic. Please do not expect us to give you a topic because you yourself 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 raises the most questions for me?
- Which is the main question I would like to discuss in my paper?

After you have found your topic please come to our office hour. We will help you with the next stage of reading and 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. We will suggest literature to you if you like. We will also help you to 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. We will help you with the technical aspects if you like.

4. First version

Next you write a first version of your paper according to the structure and styles outlined here. You can hand in parts of the first version for feedback if you want. 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

Even if you did not hand in the first version you will have to revise your paper. You will probably notice flaws in your argumentation, gaps or other things that need to be revised. Also check your spelling! It is a good idea to give a version to one or more friends because they will notice more and other things than you yourself. Another good idea is to read what you have written aloud to someone else. Then you will notice awkward formulations and other kinds of errors and understand better how to structure your writing and get new ideas. Double check your bibliographical references!

6. Submission

Only after revision submit your paper and have a rest.

Support

Writing a term paper is a skill that needs to be learned. Term papers are your chance to practice writing before you write your Masters thesis or *Zulassungsarbeit*, which will determine much of your final grade. So please make use of the support we offer for writing term papers. In detail we will help you with

- reading suggestions and cutting down your topic/hypothesis
- suggestions for data collection and analysis
- any feedback required during the production phase
- feedback and grade for the final version

If you experience trouble at any stage please come and see us or contact us by email.

Grades

As a general principle, Grade 3 means you have followed the following instructions and got the facts right, Grade 2 means you have done this and succeeded in placing the question you deal with in its scientific context, Grade 1 means you have done all this and contributed your own constructive criticism and new ideas on the subject. In particular we mark the following aspects:

- **Clarity of structure and expression**
We expect logical argumentation, precise discussion and a clearly structured paper. Please check this in your revision!
- **Scientific treatment of topic**
We expect a correct account of the facts and an awareness of their relevance to the field.
- **Your own ideas**
We mark the originality of your ideas and your discussion and presentation of your results and the literature you read.
- **Presentation**
We expect a formally correct clear presentation according to the styles outlined above.
- **Language**
We mark whether you have used correct English and good academic style. Your grade may fall by up to a whole grade for language errors. Orthographic errors are not tolerated and may result in the paper being rejected or in your paper being marked down.

We will discuss your grade with you in detail and give you suggestions on how your next papers can be improved.