

Practical Guidelines for Writing a Paper in Linguistics

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This document is meant as a reference guide for writing papers in linguistics at our department. The general guidelines for issues of content and style are applicable to all levels of our programmes (i.e. Staatsexamen, B.A. and M.A., including final theses). While individual instructors and seminars may differ with regard to the particular expectations for term papers (especially in terms of topic areas, approaches, etc.), the guidelines presented here are widely agreed upon by the staff members of the English Linguistics department. Note that there are similar guidelines for writing term papers in literary studies. To your relief, the general conception of what you are supposed to do in term papers is pretty much overlapping in both areas, the specifics simply being adapted to the object of investigation and to the conventions of the respective academic discourse community.

Further, this document is open to suggestions by students and colleagues in order to tackle FAQs that have come up during seminars or to catch up on recent developments in academia.

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1. How to write a paper in linguistics

1.1. What are you supposed to do in a term paper?

In general, the successful composition of a term paper is an important qualification you are supposed to achieve in linguistics seminars at our department. It demonstrates the following:

- You have acquired a certain amount of expertise in a particular subfield of linguistics, so that you know your way around basic concepts, research interests and debates in the field
- You can collect relevant academic literature on a particular topic in this field in a sophisticated and independent manner
- You can identify (for your particular topic area) a problem or question worth researching
- You can read and understand previous research on this question conducted by professional linguists
- You can write a coherent piece of text in which you discuss a manageable selection of this research from a particular perspective (i.e. with a certain goal in mind that you pursue systematically and consistently throughout the paper)
- Your writing adheres to certain formal standards of academic discourse (i.e. clear and register-adequate English, text formatting, conventional ways of citation and referencing, sensible structuring of the paper, and a reader-directed way of making your goals, methodology, analyses and results transparent)

1.2. From a research question to the structure of the paper

You can never cover an entire topic area in your paper. You always need to narrow a potential topic down to a very specific research question, i.e. a particular problem within the topic area that you deal with. Therefore, probably the most important conceptual step in the planning of your paper is to

distinguish between a topic area that you are interested in, and a very specific goal that you pursue in your paper. It is one of the most common mistakes to confuse those two things, leading to students writing about a certain topic (area) without having a precise goal in mind. Thus, always set out to answer a specific question! Prior to writing your paper, you should always consult your instructor for confirming the suitability of your specific topic, goal, and overall strategic focus.

Once you have identified a research question, i.e. a particular problem, hypothesis or general goal, the following points are worth noting:

- Deal with the topic in an objective and reliable way, adhering to the general principles of academic work. Remember that a term paper is not a personal report; we are neither interested in your intuition nor in a personal narrative or review. Throughout the writing process, take the academic literature you read on your topic as an example of good scientific practice, i.e. as a role model for the general approach, procedure, structure, style, idiomaticity, etc.
- Never lose sight of your specific goal in the paper. Sometimes students get lost in the literature on the topic or in specific aspects of the topic (area) that are not immediately relevant to their own investigation. Therefore, it is crucial that every part of the paper is immediately relevant to your hypothesis, i.e. at any stage of your analysis it is clear to the reader why this paragraph is important for achieving your goal. If you cannot justify this, cut it out!
- The structure of the paper reflects your particular way of dealing with the topic, specifically your line of argumentation. Therefore, structure your paper in a sensible way, and remember that the internal structure of larger sections reflects how the different aspects of the research question are weighed by you.

1.3. Typical structure of a paper

Every academic paper is framed by an introduction and a conclusion section. The 'main body' in-between is then structured according to your own preferences. It is generally neither advisable to have only one 'mega-section' between the introduction and the conclusion nor to have a fragmentation into a dozen of itsy-bitsy chapters. Rather, your argumentation stretches over several, relatively equally weighed sections. The particular focus of your paper should also show in relative page quantity. Here is an example:

Imagine a term paper written in a B.A. Hauptseminar/Vertiefungsmodul on Second Language Acquisition. It deals with the factors that affect the degree of foreign accent in L2 learners. The following table of contents is adapted from a suppositious student paper dealing with this topic. (Do not worry about the terms. It is the outline that is of interest here.)

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This outline shows you that the topic is first contextualized (2.), i.e. embedded in its theoretical context. It is here that the topic is properly introduced and defined, and that relevant theoretical literature is surveyed. The author then narrows down the scope of the paper (3.) to the three factors that she sets out to investigate in particular, i.e. her specific goal in this paper is to argue for the importance of precisely those three factors. After providing some important information on these factors (3.1-3.3), the author then analyses, discusses and compares selected empirical evidence on which her hypothesis is based, namely two case studies dealing with the specific factors she is interested in (4.). (The discussion of empirical research was a required aspect of this paper.) Finally, a conclusion section rounds off the paper, followed by a bibliography.

On the basis of this example, some common misconceptions deserve to be mentioned:

- On the one hand, it is mandatory that your own discussion be embedded into previous research and proceed from a presentation (and precise definition) of the concepts relevant to your specific goal. That is, never start your discussion of a topic in a theoretical vacuum, as if you had never attended a course in this area and never bothered to read the foundational literature on the topic. This may seem self-evident, but many papers read just like that.
- On the other hand, it is not true that your paper has to be split up fairly evenly into a 'theoretical' and an 'analytical' section. The length of the theoretical embedding of the topic depends entirely on the specific goal you pursue in the paper. In other words, do not summarise and discuss unnecessary aspects of the literature in order to fill pages.
- Although we sometimes speak of a 'main body' (as a term that neatly captures everything but the introduction and conclusion of your paper), never actually call any section in the paper 'main body'! The substantial part of your paper is rather divided into several sections, each of which receives its own meaningful title, just as in the example above.

1.4. What makes a good 'introduction' and 'conclusion'?

In general, those two framing elements of your paper are important, so do not ever neglect them!

The introduction reveals the topic area in which your paper is situated, and identifies a specific problem or research question within this area. In other words, this initial part of the introduction leads from the topic area to your specific goal. In this, it answers the question of why you conduct this study, what makes it interesting, etc. Once you have narrowed down your scope like this, you essentially foreshadow how you are going to approach your research question. Specifically, you inform the reader about how the paper is going to be structured, and what you are going to do in the individual sections, i.e. what kinds of steps you are going to take in order to reach your goal, what kinds of data you are going to use, which methodology is relevant, etc. Again, we will give you an example of a possible student paper here:

1. Introduction

The issue of how age influences the acquisition of a non-native language is one of the most controversial and frequently investigated topics in the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) (cf. Muñoz 2008a, Singleton 1995, among many others). It is commonly assumed that children are better language learners than adults, in the sense that they learn a second language more effectively and can achieve better ultimate results in that language (cf. Abello-Contesse et al. 2006: 7). Based on these assumptions, many countries have promoted early language instruction in primary schools or even in kindergarten. For example, the European Commission, in its publication *Promoting Language Learning and Linguistic Diversity: An Action Plan 2004-2006* (2003) expresses its intention to encourage the early learning of foreign languages in each of its member states. However, the conception that *the younger the better* is frequently based on research conducted in immersion settings (Muñoz 2006a: vii). In those studies, older and younger learners that have immigrated to the country of the target language (TL) are compared with respect to their second language (L2) proficiency. Such naturalistic contexts, in which learners are exposed to their L2 on a daily basis, are obviously very different from classroom contexts which offer only limited exposure to the TL.

This paper focuses on the effects of learners' initial age on foreign language learning in a minimal input situation in order to examine whether a younger starting age is also beneficial under these conditions. In a first step, it is necessary to briefly review some general assumptions about the issue of age in the field of SLA. Secondly, in chapter 3, basic differences between naturalistic and formal settings will be pointed out in order to demonstrate why starting age does not necessarily have the same effects in both contexts. Based on this examination, I will make predictions about the influence of learners' initial age in formal language settings. Chapter 4 provides a close analysis of two previous studies which both examine possible advantages of a younger starting age in a minimal input situation, but draw different conclusions concerning this research question. In the subsequent chapter, I am going to seek possible explanations for the different results in order to give an outlook on whether an early start is advantageous or not.

The **conclusion** section typically refers back to the introduction: it concisely takes up your goal again and what your agenda of the term paper was. It then summarises your findings and indicates what you have not been able to discuss. It may also point to potential for future research, i.e. questions that follow from your findings.

In shorter papers in particular, introduction and conclusion should not exceed $\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{3}{4}$ page each (NB: This may be different to papers in literature studies).

1.5. Further remarks

Include a cover sheet containing at least your name, matriculation number, branch of study, e-mail, seminar details, full title and date of handing-in. This is followed by the table of contents.

Beware that cover sheet, table of contents, bibliography, appendices and illustrations are not included in the page/word count proper.

The page/word limit is specified by your instructor and depends on your branch of study, the module the seminar belongs to, and the amount of credit points the paper is worth accordingly.

Add a declaration of academic integrity (cf. departmental homepage), which is supposed to be thoroughly read and, if agreed to, signed by you on a printed sheet of paper.

Occasionally, instructors accept papers in data file format only, or request to hand in a printed as well as an electronic version. If in doubt, consult your instructor.

At advanced stages of your studies, you are often required to go beyond discussions of previous research, conducting a small empirical study of your own instead. Because of the different scope and

approach of such studies, they typically have a somewhat different structure. If this applies to your paper, please consult Appendix 1 ('Structure of an empirical investigation') and your instructor.

In general, it may be very helpful to also ask your instructor about the specific criteria for the evaluation and grading of the paper, so that you know what to keep an eye on during the writing process. Keep your instructor informed so that nasty surprises can be avoided.

In the next section, we will turn to questions of layout and style.

2. Stylistic, formatting and citation conventions in linguistics

2.1. Stylistic questions

In general, your style of writing the paper is important and will have an impact of your final mark. Given that you seek an academic qualification at an English department, your language and style will also be evaluated. Depending on the level at which your paper is written (Staatsexamen/BA/MA/final theses), your language will either be graded along with the other aspects of the paper, or error-free and stylistically appropriate production will actually be taken for granted, and any serious flaws may negatively affect the acceptance and grade of an otherwise satisfactory paper. A general recommendation is to allow time for proofreading before submission.

With regard to style, try to aim at the register-appropriate and clearest possible way of presenting your study. ('Academic' does not mean 'stylish', 'particularly complex' or 'rhetorically elaborate'.) Get rid of every line that you can dispense with; if it is possible to cut a word out, cut it out.

Be absolutely precise and consistent in your use of terminology! Every topic area in linguistics comes with some specific terminology; you should define relevant terms when they first occur (with the help of your sources), and use them consistently throughout the entire paper. It is not 'bad style' at all to use the same scientific words multiple times, so refrain from using synonyms that potentially lead to confusion. (German and English differ with regard to the stylistic acceptability of synonyms. When you refer to terminology, neither language accepts synonyms. But for 'ordinary' text, German is more restrictive, English is somewhat less restrictive here.)

With regard to more specific language problems (e.g. typical lexical and grammatical blunders), take a look at Appendix 3 in this document.

2.2. Layout and typographic conventions

In terms of layout, a common standard is a word-processed document with a 12pt font size (preferably Times New Roman or Calibri), 2.5 cm margins and a 1.5 space between lines. Deviations are possible. What is more crucial, however, is that you enhance readability by justifying the flow of the text. Use full justification ('Blocksatz') in the main text, all footnotes as well as for the list of references at the end!

Avoid the use of unnecessary emphasis in the form of underlining, bold marking or italics. Note that these have conventional uses:

- You may underline a word, phrase or passage in a direct quote in order to emphasise it, but you have to state that you added the emphasis: (my emphasis)
- You may use bold markings for highlighting particularly important parts of your examples.
- Use *italics* for book titles (e.g. *Metaphors We Live by*) and for metalinguistic references, i.e. lexical items, phrases, constructions you discuss as examples: the word blue

Page numbering is, of course, necessary and begins with number 1 on the first page of actual text, i.e. on the page of the introduction (i.e. cover sheet and table of contents do not count)!

Divide your sections into meaningful paragraphs. It is not required to indent each new paragraph:

[...] We are now aware of the formal properties of verb-first constructions in German.

It is also interesting, however, to take a closer look at the meaning of such constructions and how they are employed in actual discourse. [...]

Paragraphs are, ideally, relatively equal in length, but this is not always necessary. It is, however, totally inappropriate to open up new paragraphs for one or two sentences only.

2.3. Use of examples

Whenever you need to exemplify a linguistic construction that you talk about, such examples are set off from the text, numbered consecutively, indented and ideally put in italics:

Subject-modifying relative clauses typically follow the subject NP directly in English:

- (1) *The man I saw on the street was talking to his neighbour.*

Unlike in example (1), it is actually preferable to identify the source from which your examples are chosen, i.e. it is always better to cite attested or authentic (corpus) examples. This enhances the empirical credibility of your paper. For instance, your example may be taken from a reference grammar (cf. example (4) below, taken from a grammar of the American language Wappo). Alternatively, it may be taken from a newspaper or an actual corpus of English, such as the BNC or the ICE-GB, or the *Oxford English Dictionary*. In such cases, you briefly mention the source right after the example and provide the full reference of the corpus in the bibliography (cf. the section on ‘online sources’ in 2.6. below):

- (2) *I'm going back to Denmark for two weeks.* (ICE-GB: S1A-089 #093:1:B)
 (3) *Take hede lest eny man deceave you.* (1526 Tindale Mark xiii, OED)

If your example is taken from an online source (other than a more conventional corpus), you have to provide the full URL and the date of access in brackets.

- (4) *Our letters crossed.*
 (<<http://www.utexas.edu/cola/centers/lrc/books/typeo4.html>>, 10/6/2009)

For reasons of space, however, it may be more convenient to assign an abbreviation or an otherwise unambiguous reference (e.g. [Wappo Type 4]) which is then taken up and specified in full in the bibliography.

Example sentences from languages other than English may receive a morpheme-by-morpheme separation, a literal morpheme-by-morpheme translation (‘glossing’), and an idiomatic translation. The example also provides the relevant information on the language and where you took the example from:

- (5) Wappo (Wappo-Yukian: California; Thompson and Li 2006: 142)
He k'ew-i [ew-ø mehlah-ukh] hak'-še?
 DEM man-NOM fish-ACC catch-INF want-DUR
 ‘This man wants to catch fish.’

As you can see, the first line names the language, the family it belongs to, and the reference to where you took the example from. The second line then spells out the original example (again in italics), but separates all morphemes by hyphens (cf. below). The third line provides a gloss for each morpheme. The grammatical abbreviations need to be explained at the beginning or end of the paper (in a list of glosses); they are typically spelt in SMALL CAPITALS and the spaces between the words line up with the example line above. Finally, a translation into English is provided. If you refer to single words and their inflections from more familiar languages, you can integrate them with the running text, e.g.

The same phenomenon can also be observed in the formation of the future tense in French, as in *demandera* (ask-1SG.FUT, ‘I will ask’).

You can assume that your instructor is able to handle such examples. In general, you write your paper for an informed expert readership. Do not state and repeat the obvious, which would be required if you wrote for readers without prior linguistic/academic knowledge.

A note on hyphens: Throughout the paper, make sure you distinguish properly between hyphens (-) and dashes (–). Some word processors tend to automatically transform hyphens into dashes, but this is inappropriate in many contexts. Think of the German distinction between ‘Bindestrich’ and ‘Gedankenstrich’ and the difference might become clearer.

Likewise, use the apostrophe (') according to standard English usage and do by no means confound it with (´), (̀) or whatever your keyboard may offer!

2.4 Illustrative material

Sometimes it is necessary to include tables and figures into your paper. If you think they might disturb the flow of the text (because they are too long or elaborate), you can put them into an appendix at the end of the paper. More often, however, illustrative material can be placed in the sections where you discuss it.

In those cases, it is important that all figures and tables get their own consecutive numbering (Fig. 5 or Tab. 2), and every figure or table also has a caption (e.g. Tab. 1: *Interrogative pronouns in English*)! If you scan and paste tables or figures from other articles, make sure you cut out the original numbers and labels and integrate the material properly with your own text (i.e. a ‘Fig. 4’ in the original article may be your ‘Fig. 1’, in keeping with your counts).

2.5 Text-internal references to previous research

Probably the most serious no-go in academics is to steal other people’s ideas, or what is commonly called plagiarism. It is important to know and to state what previous research has found out about the topic, but you have to make it explicit at all cost when you are referring to other people’s ideas, either by direct quotes or by paraphrasing their main findings or arguments.

Direct quotes

Direct quotes can be integrated directly with your own running text, even within sentences:

The author suggests that “the use of the pronominal forms [...] through time constitutes a change in the typological tendencies in English” (Laitinen 2008: 155).

As this example demonstrates, the original quote is framed by “...”, and the quote closes before the reference is given and the sentence is concluded with a full stop. If the quote itself ends with a full stop in the original, you can either adopt the same practice or place the full stop in front of the quotation marks, the reference then standing behind the quote without any punctuation afterwards (i.e. never insert two full stops!). As can also be seen above, if it is necessary to leave out some material of the quote, [...] can instead be inserted into the quote. In general, one should avoid *changing* the wording of quotes, but if this is absolutely necessary, then the substituted material also appears in [...]:

The theoretical context for my paper is a model developed by Croft (2006), which provides a framework for “analyzing language change that integrate[s] functional-typological and variationist sociolinguistic approaches to historical linguistics” (ibid.: 34).

Here, the form *integrate[s]* was adapted to agree with a singular subject (which may have been plural in the original). Sometimes, such changes become necessary because the original authors use an abbreviation that your reader does not know and hence you may wish to spell it out within the quotation, e.g.:

“Salience and [cross-linguistic influence] seem to interact in the acquisition of the English definite article by Finnish speakers” (Jarvis and Pavlenko 2008: 185).

(In this example, the original abbreviation CLI has been replaced by [cross-linguistic influence].)

As in the last-but-one example, *ibid.* may be used to avoid repeating an immediately aforementioned (longer) reference. In other words ‘ibid.’ in the example above replaces ‘Croft (2006)’.

In general, be careful in your use of direct quotes:

- Avoid making your paper an assembly of quotations by using too many of them! You should only fall back on a direct quote if it succinctly makes a point that contributes to your line of argumentation (or presents a counter-position that you intend to challenge). There is no point in providing a list of quotes and in leaving it up to the reader to make sense of it.
- Try to avoid quotations from third sources, i.e. something like (Croft 2003: 17, cited in Evans and Green 2006: 122). Quote from the original source and list this source in the reference section at the end of the paper. It is bad practice to copy quotations made in textbooks, rather than quoting an author's opinion directly. This entails, however, that you also consult the original source whenever possible, i.e. that you check at least whether the original quotation fits the argumentative context in which you want to use it.
- Finally, also try to avoid long quotations. As a rule of thumb, if a quote is longer than three lines, set it apart from the text (as an extra paragraph, indented, smaller font type, no need to use quotation marks then):

Declerck describes the temporal schema of the Present Perfect as follows:

[A] present perfect locates a situation in a period of time that starts before t_0 and leads up to it. The situation located in this period can either lie entirely before t_0 and lead up to (and include) t_0 . In the former case the present perfect is said to have an 'indefinite' ('existential') meaning, in the latter it is 'continuative'.

(Declerck 1991: 28)

Thus, the Present Perfect differs in its temporal schema from the Simple Past (Preterite).

References

Text-internal references serve a variety of different purposes. The most straightforward one is that of indirect quotation. In these situations, you paraphrase someone else's claims, opinions or statements, and it is here that discourse markers like *according to X*, *following X*, *in keeping with X*, etc. come into play:

According to Croft (2003: 59-62), word order patterns in the languages of the world are shaped by competing motivations.

Following Lakoff and Johnson (1980), I will argue that the concept of TIME is conceptualised and structured metaphorically in terms of orientation and movement in space.

In my use of the term *mental lexicon* I follow Aitchison (2003).

In the following, I will briefly outline the most prominent theories of second language acquisition. This survey is based on Mitchell and Myles (2004).

In contrast to previous work (e.g. Chomsky 1969; 1973), I claim ...

Note that the use of *f.* / *ff.* sometimes used to abbreviate 'the immediately following page/pages' is uncommon, so it should be entirely avoided. 'ff.' in particular is unspecific. Simply spell out the actual stretch of pages, e.g. Croft (2003: 59-62).

A second important function of such references is to provide support for your own claims. In other words, whenever you make certain claims or statements in your paper that you cannot reasonably be argued to have come up with yourself, insert a reference to an authoritative source that the reader can turn to in order to verify your statement. This is done far too infrequently in papers, but it is good academic practice and thus should be your aim. In such situations, the reference is typically introduced by *cf.* (Latin *confer*, 'compare', German 'siehe'). We saw one example of this earlier, and we shall repeat it here:

The issue of how age influences the acquisition of a non-native language is one of the most controversial and frequently investigated topics in the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) (cf. e.g. Singleton 1995; Muñoz 2008a).

Note: Sources of equal importance are given in chronological rather than in alphabetical order.

Aim at avoiding footnotes. All references within the text as well as the sources of direct quotes can be made explicit in the text itself ([author year: page](#)). This may differ from the use of footnotes in other disciplines such as history, so be sure to follow the linguistic conventions. Therefore, use footnotes only for the following:

- additional information that is useful to know but would disturb the smooth flow of the main text (e.g. additional references to secondary sources, counterpositions in the literature)
- further explications that enable a better understanding of terminology, quotations and minor aspects of the topic
- cross-references to statements of your own text (e.g. [cf. 1.2. above](#)).

We recommend to use 10pt font size for footnotes.

2.6 References (Bibliography)

All references made in the text, i.e. all works cited or referred to in the text, are listed in alphabetical order at the end of the paper. This section is entitled References or Bibliography. It is mandatory that all works that appear in your bibliography are mentioned somewhere in your paper, and, conversely, that all references in the text are listed in the bibliography. This may seem self-evident, but it is actually a common source of mistakes.

The layout and typography of the reference section follow the general guidelines provided by the MLA. Note, however, that the citation conventions in linguistics differ from those used in literary criticism. What is common to both is that the bibliography entries are listed alphabetically and that if an entry stretches over more than one line, all but the first lines are indented (e.g. in MS Word: Absatz > Sondereinzug > hängend > 0,5cm). In linguistics, it is not common to distinguish between primary and secondary sources.

We further strongly recommend consulting the [Chicago Style Manual](#) in cases of doubt. This comprehensive manual is considered very useful by the staff members for the purpose of compiling formally appropriate bibliographical entries. However, whatever conventional style sheet you stick to, use it consistently throughout. A flawless bibliography is one of the necessary components that lead to a good mark. Take your time to do it diligently.

In order to understand which 'rules' of typography apply in which case, it is necessary to understand, first of all, that there are different types of publication, each of which requires a certain amount of information to be specified for the reader. Here are the most common types of publication you will encounter, along with the respective information needed and the conventional way of citation in linguistics.

Monographs

A monograph is a book written by one or more people.

(Some students think that books are called monographs because they were written by a single author ('mono'), but that is not what the name stands for. The decisive criterion is that the author or authors are responsible for the contents of the entire book, rather than just for an essay within the book.)

For a monograph, it is essential to know (in this order): the name(s) of the author(s), the year of publication (typically in brackets), the title of the book, the particular edition (if a particular book was 'updated' and republished as a 2nd, 3rd or 4th edition), the place where it was published, and the publishing company. Note that even if you quote only from particular pages of the book in your paper, the entry for the book in the bibliography never contains those pages, i.e. you always quote the entire book. As for the form, the title (and subtitle) of a monograph is always put in italics, and it is common (though not obligatory) to capitalize each content

word of the title. But beware: If you do it once, do it for all entries – even if the original book itself does not do so.

In sum, entries for monographs look like this:

Aitchison, Jean. 1999. *Linguistics*. 5th ed. London: Hodder and Stoughton.

Lakoff, George and Mark Turner. 1989. *More than Cool Reason: A Field Guide to Poetic Metaphor*. Chicago et al.: The Univ. of Chicago Pr.

(Note that in the example above, only the first place of publication is rendered explicitly, the others are condensed to 'et al.'. Further, there are conventionalised abbreviations such as 'Univ.' or 'Pr.' which you may use.)

Sometimes monographs as well as collections of essays (cf. below) appear in a particular book **series**. You can mention this series as an additional piece of information on the title; it would then be inserted right before the place of publication in brackets, e.g.

Bybee, Joan. 1985. *Morphology*. (Typological Studies in Language 9.) Amsterdam: Benjamins.

(In this case, we are dealing with a monograph, entitled *Morphology*, which appeared in the book series Typological Studies in Language published by John Benjamins Co.; it is the 9th book of the series.) All the pieces of information can usually be retrieved from the book itself.

A paper in a collection of essays

Academic authors do not just write entire books. They also write shorter contributions (called articles, essays or simply papers), and they typically publish those works in one of two ways: either the work appears in a journal ('Fachzeitschrift', cf. below) or in a book that collects multiple papers on a specific topic. Such books are called collective volumes ('Sammelbände') and they have editors rather than authors, i.e. someone who is responsible for collecting and 'editing' the articles in the form of a book. If, in your own paper, you refer to a specific article from such a volume, then the necessary information for the bibliography is (in this order): the name(s) of the author(s) of the article, the year of publication, the title of the article, the title of the collective volume (in italics), the name(s) of the editor(s) of the book, the place of publication, the publishing company, and, finally, the specific pages of the article within the book. Here is a typical example:

Cristofaro, Sonia. 2005. "Purpose Clauses." In *The World Atlas of Language Structures*. Haspelmath, Martin et al. (eds.). Oxford: Oxford Univ. Pr. 506-507.

Some common stylistic questions: The title of the article can be put in inverted commas. Whichever way you choose, be consistent throughout the bibliography. As mentioned above, collective volumes, too, may appear in a book series, and again you may (but need not) mention the name of the series (in the same style as outlined for monographs above). One editor is always abbreviated by *ed.*, while multiple editors are abbreviated by *eds.*

Sometimes you may refer to the entire volume rather than to a specific article that appeared in it, for instance if you want to provide an example of a book that deals with a specific topic. Then the bibliographical entry looks like this (compare it to the one above):

Haspelmath, Martin et al. (eds.). 2005. *The World Atlas of Language Structures*. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Pr.

A final comment: A specific type of collective volume is represented by encyclopaedias or handbooks which contain short reference articles on specific topics. Such works are highly recommended for gaining overviews of particular topic areas. Their contents thus typically differ from the more specific research articles found in collective volumes. In terms of quotation and style, however, such publications are treated just like collective volumes, i.e. you need to identify the particular author of the encyclopaedia or handbook entry, the editors of the entire book, etc. Here is an example:

Ehlich, Konrad. 2000. "Deixis." In: *Metzler Lexikon Sprache*. 2nd ed. Glück, Helmut (ed.). Stuttgart et al.: Metzler. 138-139.

A journal article

Articles that appear in journals work similarly, but this time there is no editor (since the journal is not a unique book and there is no one who is uniquely responsible for any specific edition). You need to mention (in this order): the name(s) of the author(s), the year of publication, the title of the article, the title of the journal, the volume (i.e. specific issue of the journal, 'Jahrgang') and the page numbers of the article within this issue.

Dahl, Östen. 1979. "Typology of Sentence Negation." *Linguistics* 17. 79-106.

The title of the journal appears in italics (just like a book title), the issue number does not.

An online source

This is a somewhat more difficult issue since many scenarios are possible.

If an author has put an article on his private website (and the article has not been published 'properly' yet), you can list this paper as an ordinary article (i.e. by providing the name(s) of the author(s), the year in which the article was written, the title of the paper, the information that it is a yet unpublished manuscript (rather than a proper publication), and the URL at which it is located. Finally, you provide the date of your access to the URL:

Bickel, Balthasar. 2008. "A General Method for the Statistical Evaluation of Typological Distributions." Ms., Univ. of Leipzig.
<<http://www.uni-leipzig.de/~bickel/research/projects/pub.html>>. 23
March 2009.

As you can see, the most common practice is to use *Ms.* for manuscript and to also provide some information as to where the manuscript was written. You then add that the paper is available online by typically putting the actual URL in <...>. The same quotation procedure also applies to doctoral dissertations that have not been published in printed format, but which may be available to you online:

De Beule, Joachim. 2007. "Compositionality, Hierarchy and Recursion in Language: A Case Study in Fluid Construction Grammar." Ph.D. dissertation, Vrije Universiteit Brussel.
<<http://arti.vub.ac.be/~joachim/#Publications>>. 2 April 2010.

If, by contrast, you cite an entire online source for which no particular author can be identified, use [n.a.] (analogous to [n.d.] for 'no date'). For instance:



[n.a.]. 2010. *Oxford English Dictionary*.
<www.oed.com>. 7 February 2010.

Some minor aspects:

- The respective first names of authors are usually spelt out in full in the reference section. You may, however, also abbreviate them (e.g. [Huddleston, R. and G. K. Pullum. 2002 ...](#)), but then you have to do so consistently, i.e. throughout the bibliography.
- If a work is co-authored than three authors or co-edited, you are allowed to shorten its reference by using 'et al.':
([Quirk et al. 1992](#))
- If you need to make reference to two works of the same author that were published in the exact same year, you differentiate them by small letters after the year of publication:
(cf. [Haspelmath 2005a](#)), [Nichols \(1986b\)](#).
Note, however, that if such symbols are used in the sources that you quote from, but you do not have multiple references to the same author, the symbols become superfluous for your own paper!

Generally, there is, of course, some room for minor variations in these citation forms. What is important, however, is that you remain consistent.

Appendix 1: The structure of an empirical investigation

At advanced stages of your studies, and definitely in final theses, you are often required to go beyond discussions of previous research. Instead, depending on the seminar or topic, you may be asked to conduct your own empirical study. This may be done on the basis of corpora, questionnaires, samples etc. Since such papers are invariably more complex and include specific analytical techniques (such as the presentation of data, statistical analysis etc.), their structure is typically somewhat more elaborate than what we saw earlier. The basic structure (introduction – several main sections – conclusion – bibliography) remains the same, but you need to also include the following building blocks:

Contextual embedding (typically briefly in the introduction and one or two following sections)

- a. Background and preview
Why do you conduct this study? What makes it academically interesting? Provide a statement of purpose and a clear research question.
- b. Linguistic phenomenon
Describe the linguistic phenomenon you investigate (e.g. relative clauses). Define the category, describe its features (e.g. inflectional variation), provide examples.
- c. Literature review
If there are previous studies, summarize the main findings and say what you intend to do in your study based on previous work (e.g. look at a particular phenomenon that has not been investigated thus far, challenge a previous hypothesis, replicate a previous study to see if the results of that study carry over to other data, etc.). If there are no previous studies, state so.
- d. Preview / explicit hypothesis
State your hypothesis/hypotheses and if necessary explain it/them in more detail. This may include a preview of your most important results.

Methods

- a. Subjects, corpus, and materials
Describe the data you investigate. If you conduct an experimental or questionnaire study, characterize your subjects and describe the materials you have used. If you conduct a corpus study, characterize the corpus (e.g. size, kind). You may want to include summary tables of your data, but do not present the results of your analysis at this stage.
- b. Procedure
Describe the way you have collected the data. How did you conduct the experiment? How did you search for particular constructions in the corpus?
- c. Coding
Describe how you have categorized the data. Give an overview of all categories and state how you assigned a particular response (in an experimental study) or a particular instance (in a corpus study) to a particular category.

Results

- a. Descriptive summary of results
 - (i) In the social sciences (e.g. psychology, sociology) you first present your results and then discuss them. In linguistics, the results and the discussion are often combined in one section, but if you find it appropriate you can separate them.
 - (ii) Present tables and figures to summarize your findings, but do not present your findings twice, e.g. first in a table and then in a figure.
 - (iii) Preparing tables and figures can be difficult. Do not give long tables including hundreds of numbers; nobody has the time to look at them. The tables and figures in the text serve to provide easy access to your most important findings. The appendix may include a more detailed summary of your results presented in more comprehensive tables.
 - (iv) You need to discuss the results presented in tables and figures! The figures/tables alone are not sufficient. State what the descriptive statistics suggest.
- b. Inferential statistics

Once you have described your data, submit them to statistical analysis. State what type of test you have used and present the relevant measures (e.g. p-value, F-value, degrees of freedom, effect size, confidence intervals). If it is not obvious why you used a particular test, explain your decision, but do not describe obvious choices (e.g. “I have used a chi-square test because the data are frequency data”). Say also what the statistical analysis suggests, i.e. how the results should be interpreted.

Discussion (typically, there is a separate discussion section, and some of the points below can also be incorporated into the conclusion section)

- a. Provide a short summary of your results
- b. Theoretical implications: If possible, consider your paper from a broader theoretical perspective and mention implications of your study for related questions.
- c. Future direction of research: Mention open questions. What should be done in the next step? Are there ideas for an experiment, etc.?

Appendix

If the data are too comprehensive to be included in the text, include them in the appendix. If the data are very comprehensive, you might only present parts of your data there.

References

List all articles and books you have cited.

Especially if you have to write multiple papers in a relatively short time, you need proper techniques for finding and reading academic literature relevant to your topic. Both qualifications are typically acquired in seminars other than the actual class for which you write the term paper.

We offer a tutorial on research techniques and composition of term papers:

Further, the [RWTH main library](#) offers courses on a fairly regular basis.

There are specific online databases for linguistic literature research (you may ask your instructor for details and offers during the current term). Highly recommended online resources are, for instance, the [MLA International Bibliography](#) or the [BLL \(Bibliography of Linguistic Literature\)](#) which can be freely accessed via your university account.

Note that the mark of your term paper will always reflect or evaluate the depth and breadth of your literature research, i.e. whether or not you manage to tap variegated sources of literature, consult different types of publications (i.e. specific articles rather than just the most general textbooks that you happened to have found on a library shelf), and how many works you actually consulted (it is usually not sufficient to hand in a term paper with two or three references).

Allow time to order books and articles that are not available in Aachen, for instance via the main library ('Fernleihe'). Further, more and more articles can be had directly from the net. It is up to you to judge the usefulness and the academic reliability of the sources you use. If in doubt, consult your instructor.

As for the efficient reading of academic literature, make use of the different techniques you have been acquainted with. There is no 'gold standard' here since the whole point of consulting the literature is not to write a summary of reviews (in fact, this entire reference guide was designed to make clear that this is not the point of a term paper!). Rather, you have to read and discuss the relevant literature in pursuit of your goal. Some helpful questions during the reading process may be the following:

- ✓ *What does the text deal with exactly?*
- ✓ *What's the specific perspective from which the topic is considered?*
- ✓ *What's the author's method of tackling the question?*
- ✓ *What's the structure of the text? How does it reflect the author's line of argumentation?*
- ✓ *What are the central hypotheses and findings?*
- ✓ *Do these findings point to further research? Are there any open questions?*

As was mentioned earlier, try to see every article you consider as a possible role model for your own paper. Note recurrent terms and phrases that the authors use (cf. also 'collocations' in Appendix 2 below), and thus broaden your horizon in terms of register appropriateness. (However, note again: avoid plagiarism at all cost.) Enhance your academic discourse skills; get a feel for good introductions and conclusions, and appreciate the way in which specific research questions are developed and tackled by means of empirical methods. In all, develop strategies to provide academically valuable arguments, which includes an appropriate form.

Appendix 3: Recurrent practical language mistakes in term papers

Experience has shown that, in addition to common non-native mistakes, there are some recurrent problem areas of language use that are specific to term papers or at least particularly conspicuous in this context. The following is a non-exhaustive (!) list of such typical areas:

Collocational and other logical lexical-choice mistakes

- lack of awareness of the precise meaning and use of certain discourse markers (*due to*, *according to*), and the misuse of logical connectors such as *therefore*, *consequently*, *thus*, etc.
- prepositional mistakes (*decide on*, *independent of*)
- difference between *by/in contrast* and *on the contrary* (look it up again)
- underuse of the correct cleft constructions for emphasis: *It is only when/not until X that Y...*
- use of articles (*the* is sometimes over-, sometimes underused)
- mass-count noun distinction (most problematic here is the misuse of *research* as a count noun, i.e. there are no 'researches' in the sense of 'studies'; likewise, 'a research by X' does not exist!)
- confusion of *besides* and *beside X* (in the sense of *apart from*, *in addition to*)
- confusion of *obvious* and *apparent*
- specific noun-verb collocations that do not make sense: 'this may answer the reason why X', 'the phenomenon means that X', 'plays an important factor', 'the findings claim', 'the point is about X', 'to show a reason'. None of these combinations exist, but all of them were found recurrently in term papers! Therefore, think carefully about what you intend to say, and check whether the combination would make sense in German (the mistake is actually not so much collocational but logical in nature).
- dangling participles

Use of TAM (tense-aspect-mood)

This is a notoriously difficult area of English grammar, particularly for German learners of English, even if they are very advanced. Here are some common trouble sources:

- misuse of past tense where either present perfect or past perfect would have been required
- inconsistent use of tenses, particularly in the flow of text and in reported speech (no feeling for required tense shifts, underuse of the past perfect in reports on experiments)
- past tense of some modal expressions (*die Teilnehmer sollten* = 'they should', *could* used as widely as German *konnten*)

Here, consulting grammar books and your expertise gained in *Sprachpraxis* courses provide the best remedy.

Word order

- German-induced patterns of word order (time before place and related things, pre- instead of postmodification, e.g. participles ('a point which is in most studies excluded' > *a point which is excluded in most studies*), and quite a few other patterns that should strike you as really German)

Comma punctuation

- Commas before nominal/complement clauses are used in German (*Ich denke, dass...*), but not in English (*I think that...*)!
- no feeling for the difference between restrictive and non-restrictive relative clauses, as reflected by consistently missing commas before non-restrictive uses
- Check on spelling and punctuation; do not rely exclusively on your Word spellchecker, for instance.

Precise use of terminology and the correct scientific concepts

- Make sure you know the differences between *theory*, *model*, *hypothesis*, *prediction*, *cause*, *effect* etc. and use those terms precisely.

Further dos and don'ts:

- Aim at comprehensibility, readability, transparency
- Criticism of sources and own research ideas are strongly encouraged, not only in advanced seminar papers and final theses.
- Avoid Germanisms in general. Examples are notorious 'one'-constructions (*Man ...*) or 'I would say', which is as odd as it is inappropriate.
- Avoid trivial and colloquial language (e.g. 'stuff', 'something', 'lots of', 'anyway') in your argumentation.
- The use of sentence-initial 'and', 'but', 'because' may be grammatical, yet is rather untypical of academic papers.
- There is still case distinction in English; use of the genitive appropriately. In other words, know where the apostrophes are put in your paper. What is the genitive of 'Socrates' or 'Amos Oz', what is the genitive of 'authors'? Better look it up, you might be mistaken.