

LNGT0101: Introduction to Linguistics

Issues you might want to consider when looking at your LAP language

Introduction: Basic info, history and genetic classification, sociolinguistics

- (1) The name of the language and whether the name has any significance, where it is spoken, the number of speakers, if it is endangered or extinct.
- (2) What is the language's genetic classification? What are related languages?
- (3) What is the sociolinguistic situation like? Are there several dialects of the language, sociolinguistically speaking? Is the language used in a multilingual society? What percentage of the people are monolingual? Is it an official language? If it is used in a multilingual society, what contexts are speakers likely to use this language in? Is there regular code-switching, i.e., moving back and forth between the language and another language in discourse or even within the same utterance?
- (4) Are children learning the language as their native language? What pressures are there on young people to learn another language?

Phonology

- (5) Provide basic facts about the consonant and vowel system of the language. Highlight any interesting aspects in this regard.
- (6) Describe most salient cases of allophony in the language.
- (7) What phonological processes/phenomena is the language best known for?
- (8) Comment on syllable structure. What phonotactic constraints are there?
- (9) Is stress placement predictable?
- (10) Is it a tone language? If so, how many tones are there?

Morphology

- (11) Is the language dominantly isolating or synthetic? If synthetic, is it dominantly agglutinative or fusional? Make sure you give examples to illustrate the morphological typology of the language.
- (12) What are the more common morphological operations in the language? Prefixation? Suffixation? Infixation? Circumfixation? Provide examples.
- (13) Is the language mainly head-marking or dependent-marking or mixed?
- (14) What is the alignment (i.e., case and agreement) system in the language? Exemplify some intransitive and transitive sentences in the language. Notice that some languages have a split case and agreement system, as we mentioned in class. If your LAP language is of that sort, explain the basis of the split in the language (e.g., tense/aspect, semantics of the verb, pronoun vs. NP?).
- (15) Any interesting observations on the tense system? Aspect? Mood? Modality?

Syntax

- (16) What is the basic word order in the language? Are other word orders possible? If so, state the conditions under which these other orders occur.
- (17) Is the language uniformly head-initial or head-final or mixed? Consider the position of main verbs with regard to auxiliaries, objects with regard to verbs, adpositions with regard to NPs, determiners with regard to NPs, etc.

- (18) How are yes-no questions formed in the language? How are wh-questions formed?
- (19) Is it a null subject language?

General comments on content and format

- (20) Make sure you give examples to illustrate each linguistic fact you cite. Linguistic analysis is fundamentally based on illustrating data. Without data, how could anyone verify what you are saying?
- (21) This is not expected to be a comprehensive report on the language. Please be selective on what facts about your LAP language you want to highlight. You cannot possibly try to cover everything about the language in a 8-page report. Try to focus on a small number of particular linguistic aspects that interest you and discuss them in detail, rather than try to give a Wikipedia-style ‘overview’ of the language with no depth.
- (22) This is also meant to be a descriptive report, but with clear reliance on linguistic argumentation (stating generalizations on the basis a set of data, while highlighting any apparent exceptions and ways to analyze them), in the very same way we did in class as well as on homework/exams.
- (23) You should consider dividing your report into sections. This is the norm in linguistics papers.
- (24) For documentation, linguists typically use the APA (American Psychological Association) in-text citation system. When citing a reference, simply write the last name of the author(s), followed by the publication date of the reference between parentheses, in the text of your paper. For example:
 - In Chomsky (1965), a distinction is made between three levels of adequacy for grammatical theory: observational adequacy, descriptive adequacy, and explanatory adequacy.If you are quoting exact words, then add the page number(s) after the publication date, e.g., Chomsky (1970:33).
- (25) Because this is an in-text citation system, you should not use footnotes to provide bibliographic information for your sources. Instead, make a list of these sources at the end of the paper under the heading ‘References.’
- (26) Footnotes (or endnotes, it’s up to you) can be still used in this system, but mainly to provide any additional information that you think should be helpful to the reader, without having to interrupt the flow of the main text.
- (27) Use a Times New Roman font size of 12, with double spacing. You may use either footnotes or endnotes. The report should be 8-page long, excluding the reference page(s).