

Syntax Paper Assignment

This paper is intended to be a first exposure to doing syntax on your own, making use of first-hand data (from a living, fluent speaker). It should not be done exclusively from reference sources. (In fact, for this paper, I recommend that you do not consult any reference sources at all!) The paper should be roughly 5–8 pages.¹ Note that, in contrast to the Phonology Paper Assignment, the Syntax Assignment consists of a very clearly delineated set of tasks.

Choice of Language/Speaker.

- 1) The language should NOT be a language that you are a native speaker of.
- 2) The consultant should be a fluent, native speaker of the target language.
- 3) If possible, choose a language that is not closely related to your own. (Some languages which I have seen projects done on are: Chinese, Arabic, Hebrew, Japanese, Hindi, Korean, Malay, Swahili, Thai, American Sign Language...)

YOUR TASKS (Do both A and B):

A. Identify the basic order of syntactic constituents of the language

1. Is the language SVO (subject-verb-object), as in English; SOV (subject-object-verb), as in Japanese; or something else?
2. Are syntactic constituents head-initial or head-final? (Remember that in some languages, headedness is not always consistent across all syntactic categories. For example, a language may be head-initial in all categories except NP.) Be sure to check the headedness of all of the following: NPs, PPs, VPs, IPs, and CPs (where possible).

For each question, give specific and relevant examples to support your answers. Your examples should include tree structures.

Part B. Questions

1. Determine the basic structure of Yes/No Questions in the target language. Are Y/N Questions in the target language different from Y/N Questions in English? If so, how?
2. Describe the process of WH-movement in the target language. Find evidence to show whether or not WH-movement in the target language obeys the subjacency constraint.

In writing up your findings, be explicit! Include a definition of relevant syntactic constraints or principles, explain what the predictions would be in terms of grammaticality, assuming the constraints or principles hold in the target language, and provide actual examples showing whether or not the predictions are borne out. You should include syntactic trees as part of your discussion.

¹ In 12 point type, single spaced. If you double-space your paper (which is actually preferred), you can hand in more pages.

Feel free to mention/discuss any other intriguing or puzzling properties that you discover during your research.

You should talk to me about your project before you start your research/fieldwork.

It is a requirement (5% of the final grade) that your paper topic be pre-approved by me.

Approval is obtained when I utter the words to you "I hereby approve your topic." I will utter these words (and record it in the grade spreadsheet) after (a) you've told me what you are going to work on; (b) I've decided it's doable; and (c) I've given whatever advice I can think of.

The central goal of your paper should be **to show that you are able to apply some of the analytic techniques that you have learned in Linguistics 101**. Your paper should describe data systematically and explicitly. Papers will be graded (by me) on how much they show that you've learned something, and on thoughtfulness, organization, imagination, and quality of writing.

FYI: Good sources for reference material on your target language [although you do NOT need outside references for this paper assignment]: (a) the UW MadCat Library catalogue; (b) The MLA Bibliography (this allows you to search through individual articles, and may be accessed from the UW Library website; look for the databases under "Journals, Magazines, and Newspapers"); and (c) *The World's Major Languages*, by Bernard Comrie.

NOTE: Since Linguistics 101 is only an introductory level course, there's lots of stuff you haven't been taught, and therefore some of the reference sources will contain things you don't understand. Bring the book to office hours and I can help.