

## LING 2208

### Linguistic Projects – but how?

#### How we go about this.

- Everyone thinks about a proposal for a project and briefly report separately on his or her project ideas.
- Choose any topic that relates to linguistics or a linguistic application (TypeCraft, Praat other tools...). Just be sure your focus remains on issues relating to language, and you don't get too far away from it if your topic involves other areas such as computation, social studies or anthropology. For example, "how to design a parser" or "the music of the Ewe people" would not be acceptable unless you were analyzing the language that you want to build a parser of or relate musical structure to language structure. To understand something about spoken or written language that prior was not, or only poorly understood is the goal of a linguistic project.
- The audience for your project proposal is this class. We will discuss your suggested project next week. All project have in common that they will use Simon's cat as one of the primary sources.
- Do not plagiarize (obviously). If you use anything in your reports that you did not write yourself, or quote from any of your sources in written material you submit, be sure to acknowledge where you got those words or ideas.

#### Here some suggestions for a topic (totally random!):

- Focus on some specific features of a language that you have excellent knowledge of. Use your mother tongue. Use a language that you have studied for a long time. Choose a linguistic field, that is concentrate on either phonology, syntax or semantics. Decide on the interfaces you would like to consider. acoustics/phonology, phonology/morphology, morphology/syntax etc. Consider a language model that you might be interested in.
- select primary data
- decide on your methodology

#### Usage a Language Model (Linguistic Theory):

- Collect published information on your topic. Start from a text book in your field of choice and find the "trend setters" and the "old hands" in 'your' field.
- Explore the controversies. Try to pin down the questions. What does the community of researchers consider as an open question.
- Make sure that you scan recent research.
- Compare different grammatical approaches (traditional, structural, transformational, case, or others) by showing how those grammars would account for specific types of structures.

## **Methods and Resources:**

The projects should not be just library research reports and no one is expected to do extensive research, although background reading may help you focus on a topic or provide crucial ideas and information to be used in your toy project. Even if most of your material comes from books or journals (secondary research), you need to do primary research or "hands-on" work yourself. Projects might involve use of interviews, surveys, using questionnaires, scanning the net for natural texts in your language, recording people, etc. Even though the focus should be narrow leave yourself enough time in case you want to send for information, arrange for interviews, etc.

If you approach any real people for information or assistance do so with courtesy and tact. Some people are very self-conscious or defensive about their language. You don't want them to get the impression you are spying on them or trying to criticize their language or their background. Socio-linguists have spent decades refining their methods for collecting data because direct questions about language create an environment in which people cannot report accurately on their own natural usage, and there are many controversies surrounding the teaching of formal grammar and other language skills in the schools. Think in time about how to overcome this barrier. We will look at some of these methods during our course.

Creative approaches and original hypotheses are welcome, but you are not expected to create original methods or theories at this level of your studies. Feel free to borrow the ideas or methods of experts and practitioners, and then look for your own examples or test the method on your own samples. You may find that what you learn about the difficulties and complexities of gathering valid data is as important as 'applying a theory. If you plan a project that does not succeed in getting the results you expected, report on what you did learn about the methodology, and note down which data you would have needed, etc.

## **Proposal for Project in Linguistics**

Name:

Topic:

Statement of the problem addressed in the project:

Procedures and Methods to be used:

Resources to be used :

This worksheet is based on work by Tina L. Hanlon's teaching material used for her course Guidelines for Linguistics Projects, Spring 2010 English 336: Linguistics. Ferrum College, Virginia, USA.  
<http://www.ferrum.edu/> (Accessed 24.01.2011)

