

# Checklist for term papers in linguistics

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*All of this you should already know from the library project you completed as part of your Introduction to Linguistics and the lecture(s) on seminar papers in your seminar(s). This list is **not exhaustive**, so please **read the relevant PDFs (again)**! This list is supposed to help you decide whether your paper is ready to be turned in and to remind you of the most frequent issues to be avoided.*

## Structure

- (1) Does your paper have a clear thesis statement or research question?
- (2) Do all paragraphs lead towards supporting the thesis/answering the research question?
- (3) Does your paper have an empirical core, where you present authentic language data and interpret them?
  - a. Do you have a quantitative part? (This may not be necessary, it depends on the topic.)
  - b. Do you have a qualitative part? (This is necessary for all topics I can think of. Provide authentic examples of some sort, and interpret them!)
- (4) Are all data presented relevant to the research question and interpreted in the text?
- (5) Do you interpret all figures/diagrams/tables/lists/examples for the reader, explaining their significance for your particular question?
- (6) Do you have a conclusion that fulfils all promises made in the introduction?

## Format

- (7) Have you put all word forms, all morpheme forms and all titles of independently published texts in italics *everywhere* in your paper?
- (8) Have you put all meanings and translations into single quotation marks?
- (9) Have you put all direct quotations in double quotation marks or formatted them as block quotations?
- (10) Have you put anything into double quotation marks that is not a quotation? If so, change that!
- (11) Are you talking about spelling/letters where you should be talking about phonemes or morphemes?
- (12) Do *all* in-text citations, direct as well as paraphrased, include the author's last name, the year of publication and the page(s) of the passage quoted?
- (13) Is the bibliography complete, and does it conform to the unified stylesheet for linguistics? (No, MLA standard is *not* what we want.) Especially, have you provided bibliographic information (editors/compiler, year, publisher...) for corpora and dictionaries as well?
- (14) Is all the literature citable? Specifically,
  - a. Are you using online dictionaries where you should be using the OED or Webster's?
  - b. Are you quoting *Englischhilfen* or some such where you should be quoting Quirk & Greenbaum or another standard reference grammar?

- c. Are you quoting dictionaries or webpages where you should be quoting definitions from the linguistic literature?

(15) Do all tables and figures have (numbered) descriptions?

### Language and style

- (16) Have you proofread your paper for typos and other errors?
- (17) Have you asked a competent writer of English to look over your paper? (Do this if you do not have a lot of experience with written academic English.)
- (18) Does your paper begin with “As a prospective teacher”? If so, re-write. We’re not primarily interested in learner problems, we want to study the English language in its natural habitat. (Didactic implications can be a welcome bonus/springboard into the matter, but not more.)
- (19) Do you have sentences like “Correct grammar is the key to speaking English fluently and confidently” or “For future teachers, it is paramount to understand all the rules of grammar perfectly” in your introduction? Delete them!
- (20) Does the word *nowadays* occur in your introduction? Replace by *in modern English* (i.e. ever since c. 1500), in present-day English, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century or some more precise term if you think that what you are describing is an innovation (however recent), otherwise delete.
- (21) Make sure you are using the words *corpus* and *corpora* correctly (*corpora* is the plural, *corpus* the singular.)
- (22) Are you using words like *rules*, *(in)correct* or *permissible*? If so, make sure your concept of language/grammar is a linguistic one.