

## Guidelines for Final Paper

### *Description*

For the final paper you will do a phonological description of a language you have never studied or worked on before. You will work one-on-one with a native speaker of the language. Your phonological description will be based entirely on your interaction with the speaker; do not use outside literature.

### *Picking a language*

You must pick a language that you have little or no knowledge of, though perhaps you have always wanted to study it. The complexity of phonological systems varies from language to language. You might want to consider what aspects of language are more difficult for you and choose a language with that in mind. For example native speakers of English might have trouble with a tone language like Mandarin – or perhaps you would welcome the challenge.

### *Picking a speaker*

This is really important. You must pick someone you can rely on for the rest of this semester. I would estimate meeting with the speaker at least once a week, perhaps twice toward the end of the semester. Be especially careful if you decide to work with a student, because you may need more meeting times at the end of the semester, right when your speaker might be busy preparing for exams, etc.

Make sure you work with someone who is truly competent in the language. Sometimes a person's first language is not the dominant language and sometimes people overestimate their abilities. You don't need anyone with a background in linguistics, but they must have a native pronunciation and a large vocabulary.

### *Meetings with your speaker*

Use the first session to find out about your speaker's language background:

*What is your first language? What other languages do you speak? What did you speak growing up? At what age did you move to the US? What language do you use most of the time now? ...*

Bring a prepared list of words for the speaker to translate and you to transcribe. Keep all transcriptions in a notebook (it's useful to number the transcriptions). You may want to record your sessions for reviewing your notes later, but keep in mind that these recordings will most likely not be good for acoustic analysis (checking for voicing, measuring vowel formants, etc.). It is not required, but if you want to do any sort of acoustic analysis let me know and we will figure out a quiet place and the correct equipment.

Start working on the inventory of sounds after the first session. Look for similar sounds and allophonic variation. In later sessions try to find minimal pairs to "fill out" the inventory of phonemes (if the language has a breathy voiced bilabial stop it might also have breath voiced stops at other places of articulation) and the distribution of allophones. **BE SURE TO REVIEW YOUR DATA AFTER EACH SESSION AND PREPARE QUESTIONS FOR THE NEXT SESSION.**

*What to include in the paper*

Your paper should be at least 10 pages double-spaced, though I am looking for quality not quantity. It should cover at least the following:

1. Short background on language  
Where spoken, number of speakers, dialects, etc.
2. Short background on speaker  
Where speaker learned language, when moved to US, etc.
3. Phonemic Inventory  
Include a IPA-like chart with all the phonemes you found  
Justify all your phonemes with (near) minimal pairs
4. Allophones  
Discuss any allophonic variation you found
5. Distributional constraints  
Discuss any restrictions on occurrences of phonemes (only word-initial, between vowels, after a nasal, etc)
6. Syllable structure  
What are possible onsets, coda?
7. Stress  
What is the stress pattern of the language? Always on initial syllable? Long vowels?  
Are there stress alternations?
8. Tone (if a tonal language)  
What are the tones? Distributions? Alternations?

In addition to this, you may want to look a bit at the morphology of the language and any alternations involved. It would be nice to collect some samples of phrases and look for phonological alternations at the phrasal level. If you have chosen a language with a relatively simple phonology, you should consider expanding into these areas.