

Term Paper Assignment

1. Assignment

The term paper is intended to be a first exposure to doing phonology on your own, making use of first-hand data (from a living, fluent speaker). It should not be done exclusively from reference sources. The paper should not be too much longer than 8 printed pages.¹

Due date. The due date (revised) is 12/9 at 5:00 p.m. (Wednesday of finals week). Please submit both a hard copy and email me an electronic copy.

Choice of speaker:

- 1) The language can be a language that you speak, English included.
- 2) The consultant can be yourself (self-elicitation), or a classmate, or any fluent speaker of the target language.
- 3) If you've recently done a Linguistics 103 paper, you can use the same consultant, if he/she is willing and you're curious to follow up on the language you did. But be careful not to submit a 103 paper—this is a phonology course, not a phonetics course.

Recordings: If you wish, you can make a recording for your project (for which you may use a Linguistics Department sound booth²), but ideally the recording should be very short. Two minutes is a good target. If your original recording is a long session of naturally recorded speech, I won't have time to listen to it, but you can copy the important parts onto a second recording, or make sound files.

Sample papers. Two samples are posted on the course Web page (<http://www.linguistics.ucla.edu/people/hayes/120a/>).

2. General strategy

- Go for depth, not breadth. That is, think about narrowing your topic and doing what you do well/intensively.
- Be patient—and talk to us—in finding a topic. You want to find a fairly small, well-defined one, and there is no “recipe” as there is in Linguistics 103.

3. Possible topics

(1) **Replication.** Find a native speaker of a foreign language, a published description/analysis of *some aspect* of the phonology of the language, and see if the description can be **replicated** with data from your speaker. There are several possibilities. (a) Your speaker may behave *exactly* as predicted in your reference source material. In this case, concentrate on preparing a clear demonstration that the facts and analysis of your reference source are correct. (b) With luck, your speaker will be *different* in some ways from what your reference source describes. Provide a revised, or entirely new analysis that fits your speaker.

For some possible “replicatory” topics and reference sources on phenomena in various languages, go to the course Web page (<http://www.linguistics.ucla.edu/people/hayes/120a/>) and download **ReplicatoryTermPaperTopics.pdf**.

¹ Please use 12 point type, single or double spaced. If you want to double-space, then the length recommendation is 16 pages instead of 8. you can take more pages. Please don't use a small font.

² Ask Mr. Tehrani in Campbell Hall 2101F (Phonetics Lab).

(2) **Study of recorded data corpus.** Same as above, but instead of elicited data use a recorded sample of spontaneous speech. This is helpful in getting free variation.

(3) **Toddlers.** The speech of small children differs from that of adults in a way that is mostly predictable. That is, it is possible to write a set of phonological rules (often ordered) that predict the child's forms from the adult forms, up to the point of free variation. Find a child of the appropriate level to observe (intelligible, but with obvious differences from adult speech) and analyze and write a few of the rules governing his/her pronunciation. Give plenty of examples and derivations to justify your rules.

Data collection: a videotape of someone (e.g. you) playing with your research subject can give you a bunch of data to start with. Alternatively, you can play with your subject and take notes, though little kids sometimes don't tolerate the interruption very well. Finally, it is marginally possible simply to elicit data from toddlers. Some little kids will actually comply with a request of the type "Please say ____". If that doesn't work, you can dream up some sort of game that encourages kids to say particular words. Finally, it has been noticed that older brothers and sisters often are very good at persuading their younger siblings to do things. They are often good at translation, too, if you don't understand what your subject is saying.

An outstanding introduction to the phonology of toddlers is *The Acquisition of Phonology* (1973) by Neilson Smith; look at this before you proceed.

(4) **"Transfer"** Find a non-native speaker of some language who speaks that language with an accent. Record some natural speech from your speaker, or elicit individual words, or both. Determine the ways in which the pronunciation of your subject is different from native speech in the target language, and where possible relate the difference to the phonology of the native language of your subject. If some particular way is especially interesting, concentrate on it (see above: depth not breadth).

Warning: this topic, though often selected, seems to be *hard to do well*. It demands really solid knowledge of the phonology of the first language, which you should read up on thoroughly.

(5) **"Wug" testing.** Find a speaker of a language that has substantial alternations in paradigms which have been subjected to a published phonological analysis. Think up new nonsense words to test the validity of the analysis, and to see how speakers come up with underlying forms when not all crucial information is present. This can be done as part of a more general project. Wug testing is taught in Week 6 of the course; to get ready earlier read Chapter 9 of the text.

Some wug testing papers by me can be downloaded from the course web site. They give various hints about how to Wug-test.

(6) **Dialect imitation.** Find a speaker who can imitate another dialect of her language. Your goal is to analyze your speaker's imitation ability as a sort of "mini-phonology." For details on this topic (which is rather more technical than it might at first sound), go to the course Web page (<http://www.linguistics.ucla.edu/people/hayes/120a/>) and download *DialectImitation.doc* (or .pdf)

4. Reference sources

I will expect you to find and use at least one published, peer-reviewed reference source.³ You can use non-peer-reviewed sources (such as the Wikipedia or other web items), but as part of college training you should learn to find the real thing. You can use Wikipedia etc. as one way of finding peer-reviewed sources; also: (a) the **UCLA Library Catalog** (<http://catalog.library.ucla.edu/>); (b) **Google Scholar**

³ Peer-reviewed: this means an expert looked at the work and was in a position to reject it or enforce revisions. True of articles in scholarly journals and books published by academic presses.

(<http://scholar.google.com>); (c) **Google Books** (<http://books.google.com>) (d) **my office hours**. (e) *The World's Major Languages* (1987), by Bernard Comrie, Powell reserve desk.

5. Pedagogical goals of the assignment

No matter which topic you pick, a central goal should be **to show that you have learned something in the course**. Your paper should describe data systematically and, where possible with the theories you have, write formalized rules. It should not make mistakes like referring to letters rather than sounds, saying that a language is particularly “precise” or “beautiful”, or getting morphological and phonological rules confused. (Warning: reference sources sometimes do these things. Be careful!) 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, mechanics included.

6. Discussing your project

You should talk to me about your project before you start your research. You can do this in the class break, but it’s better to come to my office hours (MW 2-3, TTh 12-1, and by appointment), where I can access my books for more information.

Since Linguistics 120A is only the first course in the UCLA phonology sequence, 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 we can probably help.

It is a requirement (2% of final grade) that your term 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 records) 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.