

# Guidelines for Writing Seminar Papers in English Linguistics

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# 1 Purpose of a Seminar Paper

The writing of term papers serves several goals

- to increase students' expertise in some particular substantive area of linguistics.
- to sharpen students' analytic skills, such as finding, selecting and analyzing relevant information and convincingly communicating conclusions.
- to show that students are able to understand and critically evaluate linguistic articles, to contrast opposing views, to discuss methodology and results and to scrutinize reported results by means of actual language data.
- and ultimately to prepare students for a professional career requiring academic training.

## 2 Length of (Pro-)Seminar Papers

Papers which are shorter or longer than the recommended sizes will not be accepted. Word counts exclude the Contents and References sections. Please note that these numbers only refer to papers and final theses submitted for English Linguistics; for other "Schwerpunkte" in BA/MA Linguistik, the amount of words required may differ considerably.

### 2.1 Magister and Lehramt (nicht-modularisiert)

PS papers	4000 – 4500 words
S papers	6000 – 7500 words

### 2.2 B.Ed. and M.Ed.

PS papers	2000 – 2500 words
S papers	3000 – 3500 words

### 2.3 B.A. and M.A.

PS papers	3000 – 3500 words
S papers	5000 – 5500 words

### 2.4 B.A./M.A. and B./M.Ed. Final Theses

B.Ed.	8.000 – 9.000 words
M.Ed.	20.000 – 21.000 words
B.A. Linguistik	10.000 – 11.000 words
M.A. Linguistik	20.000 – 21.000 words

### 3 Organizing the Paper

Term papers should feature the following eight parts:

- Official cover sheet ('Deckblatt', [https://www.english-and-linguistics.uni-mainz.de/files/2021/02/Deckblatt\\_Hausarbeit\\_Klausur\\_Englisch-.pdf](https://www.english-and-linguistics.uni-mainz.de/files/2021/02/Deckblatt_Hausarbeit_Klausur_Englisch-.pdf))
- Title page
- Table of contents
  
- Introduction
- Theoretical Background/Preliminaries
- Data & Methods
- Results & Discussion
- Conclusion
- Bibliography

#### 3.1 The Title Page

Please create a nicely formatted title page which contains the following information:

Top left:

- Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz
- Department of English and Linguistics
- Type and title of the course (e.g., Proseminar Word-Formation)
- Lecturer's name (with academic titles)
- Semester

Centre:

- Title (and subtitle)

Bottom left:

- Your name
- Matriculation number (Matrikelnummer)
- Degree programme (e.g., B.Ed. English)
- Postal address
- Email address
- Date of submission

This page should have no page number.

#### 3.2 The Table of Contents

The table of contents indicates the structure of the paper and provides the page references for each subsection. Please generate this automatically with your word processor. The table of contents page itself should receive a roman page number. Note that *Gliederungsleichen* should be avoided:

1. Level one heading
2. Level one heading
  - 2.1 ~~Level two heading~~ (If there is no section 2.2, you do not need section 2.1!)
3. Level one heading
  - 3.1 Level two heading

## 3.2 Level two heading

4. ...

**3.3 The Golden Structure**

Empirical papers should follow the ‘Golden Structure’ detailed in the next subsections.

## 3.3.1 Introduction

- Informs the reader in concise terms what the subject of the paper is and why the subject is relevant.
- Summarizes the main insights into linguistic research discussed in the paper without going into detail.
- Clearly states your hypothesis or research question.
- Describes the structure of your paper.

## 3.3.2 Theoretical Background/Preliminaries

- This section should have an informative title. It should NEVER be called “Theoretical Background” or “Main Body”. Depending on your topic, it may be useful to divide this section into subsections.
- The section consists of a brief, critical survey of earlier work dealing with your subject. Its purpose is to situate your project in the context of existing work on the topic.
- Only include studies which are relevant to your research question and restrict your summary and discussion to the relevant points within these works.
- Report which terminology is used in the literature, how the subject matter is defined by each author, which theories or models are tested and relevant results.
- Explain how the studies are connected (e.g., whether and in which points they disagree or in which respects they complement each other). Avoid a string of unconnected summaries and instead structure this section by topic.
- Do not mention authors’ first names and affiliation or the titles of publications.

## 3.3.3 Data and Method

- This section provides information about the data you used and your method for analysis.
- Briefly document all the steps of your analysis, for example the corpus you used, which search string was employed to retrieve the data, on which grounds data-points were excluded, how you coded your data.
- Explain how variables were operationalised (your working definitions), for instance whether only the core modals were included in a study of modality or also semi-auxiliaries such as *going to* and *have to*.
- Provide examples.

## 3.3.4 Results and Discussion

- Here, you show that you are able to evaluate your material in as informed a fashion as possible, to view your data critically and to explain its significance.
- Providing the reader with representative examples is extremely important.

- Depending on your topic, you may also want to visualize your data in the form of tables and graphs (referred to as ‘tables’ and ‘figures’). There should always be a text explaining what the tables and graphs show. Concentrate on the bigger picture; do not every dip and bump in a curve but on the general trend. Do not begin this section with a figure or table; sections should always start with text.

### 3.3.5 Conclusion

- Sums up the main findings and presents possible conclusions.
- The conclusion must refer back to the introduction and explain in how far the research question was answered and/or whether the hypothesis was confirmed or refuted.
- Do not introduce any new literature at this point and do not discuss any results not previously mentioned.
- If you are aware of any shortcomings of your study, explain these here, but do not sell yourself short. It is not necessary to declare your results void simply because you had limited amounts of data at your disposal!
- Possibly also indicate further analyses that you think should be done in a follow-up study.

## 3.4 Bibliography

Lists all works directly or indirectly referred to in the text in alphabetical order in a single (!) list. Make sure that all references in the body of the text also appear in the bibliography and don’t forget to include references to your data (e.g., corpora).

## 4 Citation Style

### 4.1 A Book by a Single Author

Last Name, First Name (Year) *Title in Italics*. Place of Publication: Publisher.

Example:

Plag, Ingo (2003) *Word-Formation in English*. Cambridge: CUP.

### 4.2 A Book by Several Authors

Last Name, First Name; Last Name, First Name and First Name Last Name (Year) *Title in Italics*. Place of Publication: Publisher.

Example:

Quirk, Randolph; Greenbaum, Sidney; Leech, Geoffrey and Jan Svartvik (1985) *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language*. London/New York: Longman.

### 4.3 A Contribution to an Edited Volume

Author’s Last Name, Author’s First Name (Year) “Title of the Contribution in Quotation Marks”. In: Editor’s Last Name, Editor’s First Name; Editor’s Last Name, Editor’s First

Name and Editor's First Name Editor's Last Name (eds.) *Title in Italics*, Pages. Place of Publication: Publisher.

Example:

Baayen, R. Harald (2009) "Corpus Linguistics in Morphology: Morphological Productivity". In: Lüdeling, Anke and Merja Kytö (eds.) *Corpus Linguistics. An International Handbook* (Vol.1), 899-919. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

#### 4.4 A Paper in a Journal

Last Name, First Name (Year) "Title of the Contribution in Quotation Marks". *Journal in Italics* Volume (Issue): Pages.

Example:

Barker, Chris (1998) "Episodic *-ee* in English: A Thematic Role Constraint on New Word Formation". *Language* 74 (4): 695-727.

#### 4.5 A Grammar

A grammar should be cited just like a book:

Biber, Douglas; Johansson, Stig; Leech, Geoffrey; Conrad, Susan and Edward Finegan (1999) *Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English*. Harlow: Pearson.

Huddleston, Rodney and Geoffrey K. Pullum (2002) *The Cambridge Grammar of the English Language*. Cambridge: CUP.

Quirk, Randolph; Greenbaum, Sidney; Leech, Geoffrey and Jan Svartvik (1985) *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language*. London/New York: Longman.

#### 4.6 A Dictionary Entry/An Article in a Reference Book (an Encyclopaedia)

Try to find out the author of the entry so that you can cite it like any other contribution to an edited volume. Only if no information about the author of the entry is available, cite it as follows:

"Counter-insurgency". (1995) *Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary*. 5th ed. Oxford: OUP.

"Noon, n.". (2013) *OED Online*. Oxford University Press. <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/128198?rskey=4rB2Fs&result=1&isAdvanced=false> (accessed May 16th, 2013).

#### 4.7 An Online Source

Do NOT use Wikipedia or sources not subjected to careful editing by linguistic publishers and which do not adhere to the standard procedures of scientific publications.

Last Name, First Name (Year) "Title of the Contribution in Quotation Marks". *Title of the Website in Italics* Exact Date of Publication (if available). Link (access date).

## Examples:

Wallace, Gregory. (2012) “‘Obamacare’: The Word That Defined the Health Care Debate”. *CNN* 25 June 2012. <http://edition.cnn.com/2012/06/25/politics/obamacare-word-debate/> (accessed July 2nd, 2012).

Calhoun, Sasha; Carletta, Jean; Jurafsky, Daniel; Nissim, Malvina; Ostendorf, Mari and Annie Zaenen (2009) “NXT Switchboard Annotations”. *Linguistic Data Consortium*. <http://www ldc.upenn.edu/Catalog/CatalogEntry.jsp?catalogId=LDC2009T26> (accessed July 15th, 2010).

Language Technology Group of the Human Communication Research Centre at Edinburgh University and Linguistic Department at Stanford University. “Annotations”. *Switchboard in NXT*. <http://groups.inf.ed.ac.uk/switchboard/annotations.html> (accessed October 28th, 2010).

Preacher, Kristopher J. (2001) *Calculation for the Chi-square Test: An Interactive Tool for Chi-square Tests of Goodness of Fit and Independence*. [Software]. <http://quantpsy.org> (accessed August 22nd, 2011).

#### 4.8 Linguistic Corpora

*American National Corpus* (ANC) (2006) Second release. Linguistic Data Consortium

*British National Corpus* (BNC) 1995 BNC Consortium/Oxford University Computing Services

Davies, Mark (2008-) *The Corpus of Contemporary American English: 450 million words, 1990-present*. Available online at <http://corpus.byu.edu/coca/>

Davies, Mark (2010-) *The Corpus of Historical American English: 400 million words, 1810-2009*. Available online at <http://corpus.byu.edu/coha/>

#### 4.9 Bibliography – Tips and Tricks

- References should be listed with hanging indent.
- Pay meticulous attention to formatting, capitalization, etc.
- Titles of books and journals are put in italics, titles of articles are placed within double quotes.
- Always give the first names of authors and editors.
- Consistently capitalize content words in titles. Do not simply copy titles etc. from another source, otherwise you will end up with a hodgepodge of different capitalisation styles.
- Never abbreviate lists of authors with ‘et al.’ in the bibliography. Always list all authors and editors.
- If there is only one editor, the abbreviation is ‘ed.’, in case of several editors, the abbreviation is ‘eds.’.
- If a book has been published in several editions, mark this as follows in the bibliography (example is for a second edition): Jespersen, Otto (<sup>2</sup>1977) *Essentials of English Grammar*. London: George Allen and Unwin.
- Linguistic journals are NEVER cited as online sources. They are always cited as given above.

- If a text has been published as a pdf or online source and in print, make sure to provide the page numbers of the print version.
- Do not cite pre-print version such as those often provided on Academia etc. and never cite Academia as a publisher.

## 5 How to Cite Other People's Work in the Text

Citations are mandatory

- in order to allow the reader to explore the subject further by consulting the works cited and
- to avoid plagiarism.

Using information without acknowledging it is plagiarism. Plagiarism is a serious offense that ruins marks and even academic careers. Please note, a reference-in-text style is customarily used in linguistics. It provides the author's name and the year of publication in the text and does not use footnotes for bibliographic references. The complete reference is then given in the bibliography.

### 5.1 Academic Formulas

Academic formulas are expressions which are commonly used in academic texts. You will be expected to use these in appropriate contexts. However, many students feel like they are not allowed to use these expressions because they have read them in other works. So how do you distinguish between plagiarism (which is forbidden) and using academic formulas (which is required)? There is a simple rule of thumb: If an expression used in a text could be used in a wide range of texts about different topics, it is very likely an academic formula and does not have to be treated like a quote. If the passage is topic-specific, however, and you want to use it in your work, it must be treated as a direct quotation (see section 5.2). Below you find a list of some academic formulas:

- The present paper focusses on ...
- In other words, we are dealing with ...
- In this paper, I will argue that ...
- Additional support for this argument is provided by ...
- The database used for this study consists of ...
- While the focus is on ..., comparisons with ... will be made
- This paper is structured/organized as follows ...
- This section uses ... to investigate ...
- As a first step, it is necessary to ...
- It is reasonable to assume that ...
- In the case of ... we are dealing with ...
- I carried out a further investigation of ...
- The distribution of ... confirms to the expectations raised by ...
- We have seen that ...
- Recent research (on ...) has shown that ...
- in addition to ..., the following ... will be included in the analysis.
- In line with ..., we therefore expect ...
- The analysis distinguishes between ...
- This raises the question of whether ...

- In the case of ..., this would mean that ...
- While ... provides a large amount of evidence supporting his/her conclusion, his/her analysis shows a number of weaknesses.
- They conclude that ...
- Support for ... comes from ...
- Figure X shows/quantifies the effect of ... (on ...)
- Although the strong overall trend has been for .... to ...
- The ... differ in terms of ...
- The corpus data shows that ...
- The results in Table X confirm that ...
- (The evidence in) table 3 shows that ...

This website provides further useful phrases: <https://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/>

## 5.2 Direct Quotations

- After a direct quotation you insert the following:
  - Single author: (Plag 2003: 17)
  - Two authors: (Dalton-Puffer and Plag 2000: 35-36)
  - More than two authors: (Plag et al. 1999: 70-73)
- Provide exact page numbers, do not use ‘ff’.
- Never use ‘ibid.’.
- Short direct quotations are enclosed in double quotes.

Examples:

By counting the number of verbs entering the *way*-construction in three different semantic domains he observes that over the centuries it has gradually extended its use from “verbs which were somehow directly related to motion or path creation” to ones “which are only marginally or incidentally related to the actual expressed motion” (Israel 1996: 225–226).

As Warner (1993: 183) speculates, “the semantic coherency of the [Old English] modal group [...] was itself a factor which led speakers and learners to prefer developments of this group to other forms of expression”.

- Quotations exceeding two lines form a paragraph indented by 1 cm at the left and right margin. They are not enclosed in double quotes. ONLY in this case, is the full stop NOT placed after the citation information, but directly after the end of the cited passage (see example below).
- If you omit parts of the quoted text passage use [...] to indicate that something has been omitted.
- All additions to quotations not included in the original need to be placed in square brackets [ ].
- Errors contained in the original are marked by [sic].

Example:

In usage-based models,

[t]he basic units of grammar are constructions, which are direct form-meaning pairings that range from the very specific (words or idioms) to the more general (passive construction, ditransitive construction), and from very small units (words with affixes, walked) to clause or even discourse-level units. (Beckner et al. 2009:5)

Constructions are cognitively represented in the form of exemplars or exemplar clouds, which are “rich memory representations” (Bybee 2010:14), containing structural, lexical, phonetic, semantic and contextual information.

### 5.3 Paraphrases

- Whenever the thoughts of others are paraphrased (i.e., rephrased in your own words), the source **MUST** also be explicitly cited.
- In this case, you have several options:
  - You can either use ‘cf.’ in the citation bracket before the name of the author or
  - you use phrases such as “According to Smith (2006: 34) ...”, “Smith (2006: 34–35) argues ...”, “As Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 345) outline ...”.

Example:

The dynamics of the interlanguage are determined by the interplay of various learner-specific processes, strategies, and rules, which at one and the same time can be characterized as variable and as systematic (cf. Brown 1976: 84).

- It should be clear at any point within the text whose thoughts you’re citing. This means that only providing sources at the end of a paragraph may not be sufficient.

### 5.4 Citing Quotes by a Third Source

- Let’s imagine, you read the following passage in Youssef (2003). You realise that the part most relevant to you is the direct quote by Bertinetto (1994)
- Get the original publication by Bertinetto (1994)!!! Otherwise you risk playing a game of telephone (‘Stille Post’).
- Only if it is absolutely not possible to obtain the original, cite in the text: (Bertinetto 1994: 394 as cited by Youssef 2003: 97). Then include entries for BOTH publications in your bibliography.

Finally, there is the whole matter of inherent aspect. Bertinetto (1994: 394) argues, for example, that there must be a distinction between statives on the one hand and habituals and progressives on the other, since the term stative refers to an inherent quality, while the other two terms refer to grammaticalized aspectual categories. He notes:

Obviously, whenever a stative verb may receive either a progressive or a habitual reading there is a broad intersection of properties between these categories. This does not imply, however, that in all situations progressives or habituals share basic properties with statives. Indeed, statives as an aspectual

class, are compatible with just any aspectual value. (Bertinetto 1994: 394).

Source: Youssef, Valerie (2003) "How Perfect is Perfective Marking? An Analysis of Terminological Problems in the Description of Some Tense-Aspect Categories in Creoles." *Journal of Pidgin and Creole Languages* 18 (1): 81-105.

## 6 Layout

### 6.1 General Layout

- 1 ½ line spacing and full (i.e. left and right) justification (Blocksatz).
- Font size corresponding to Times New Roman 12pt.
- Margin of 4cm on the right, 3cm on the left, 2.5cm at the top and at the bottom
- New paragraphs are indented unless they occur immediately after a headline or after indented citation.
- Pages must be numbered, including the bibliography.
- Page numbering continues throughout the appendix (if you have one at all).
- Make sure that you use the same font throughout (i.e., use the same font for your text, the headings, the title, the page numbers, ...).
- Paragraphs over one page in length are usually too long; one-sentence paragraphs are too short. Each paragraph should have a topic sentence and several others that explain or develop that topic.
- Check for orphans and widows. An orphan is a single line which appears at the bottom of one page, while the rest of the paragraph is on the next page. Avoid widow lines as well, i.e., the last line of a paragraph should not be placed on the next page.
- Phonetic forms are enclosed in square brackets [ ], phonemes in slashes / / and morphemes in < >.
- Translations or meanings are given in single quotes.

### 6.2 Examples

- Examples within the running text are put in italics. (Example: It is not entirely clear how to mark *runner-up* for the plural.)
- Examples exceeding a phrase are separated from the running text and consecutively numbered.

Example:

(1) He had been runner-up on several occasions. (BNC A2E 288)

### 6.3 Tables and Figures

- Figures and tables must be separately numbered.
- Each figure/table must be given an informative title or description, also indicating its source.

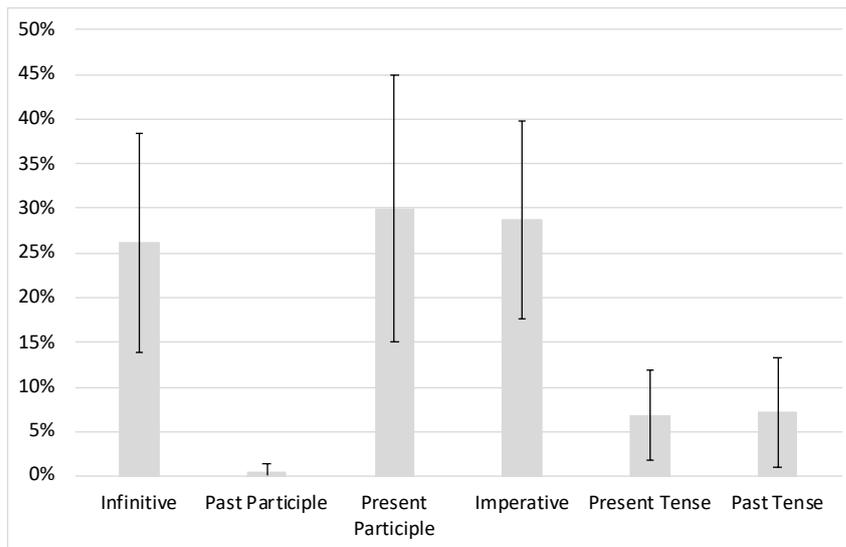


Figure 1: Word form of V *it up*; mean rates and standard deviation (based on Schneider 2022)

## 7 The Final Stages

### 7.1 Revision

- The language in your paper will also be graded and if it fails to comply with written linguistic standards, you fail the paper – no matter how brilliant the content. For this reason, check your work for typos, misspellings, formatting errors, etc.
- As regards orthography, consult the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) for British English and Webster's Third International Dictionary for American English.
- It is advisable to put the paper aside for a few days and re-read it later. Looking at it with 'fresh eyes' helps to gain perspective.
- Use the spell checker (but *de* *kn* *tr* *ss* *sp* *ch* *q* *u* *e* *r* *s* *to* *fin* *e* *d* *awl* *miss* *ste* *ak* *s*) and read the text again carefully before submitting the paper in printed form and additionally as a docx- or pdf-file sent per e-mail.
- Please name the document as follows: surname first name title of term paper.pdf (e.g.: Mustermann Mira An Analysis of Do-Support.pdf)

## 8 Correction Symbols

The following correction symbols are frequently used to highlight mistakes:

spelling	sp	graphemic error
punctuation	p	concerning missing commas, colons, quotation marks, etc.
		punctuation mistakes can be more severe in case of restrictive relative clauses
morphology	m	morphological error
syntax	s	mistake concerning syntax
		missing word
		word order
semantics	sem	wrong choice of preposition
		wrong collocation
		wrong choice of vocabulary/expression
pragmatics	pr	style/register
comprehension	compr	sentence is not comprehensible
formal	f	Formal error concerning citations, paraphrasing, bibliographical details, etc.