
Term Paper Assignment

Phonology 2 – Ling 608

1 Task

Select a language which has a reasonable amount of phonological research literature (that is, more than one source). Write a paper consisting of roughly two equal parts: (1) a brief review of the basics of the phonology of the language, outlining the principal topics of interest; (2) a discussion of how data from this language could be made to bear on any issues taught in this course or in the Phonology 1 course. The finished paper should be no more than twenty pages long.

The idea is to have an exercise in alternating your attention between typical theoretical discussion (often with idealized, carefully selected data) and the detailed data from empirical studies (which almost always involve complication).

Part 2, the theoretical part, can either focus on just one issue (and thus constitute the core of a research paper), or can cover several, as you please.

2 Schedule

To keep things moving along (and to avoid Incompletes), I'm asking you to adhere to the following due dates:

02/27: Assignment #1. Have your language selected and do a literature search. Hand in a list of references. Make an appointment to meet with me during weeks 2 or 3 and show me a couple of the references.

03/26: Assignment #2. Provide (basic) phonological description of the language (segmental inventory, basic phontactics, processes, etc.)

4/30: Assignment #3. Make a 5-10 minute presentation to the class describing an interesting phonological process in your language, and some discussion of why it is interesting. E.g. is it a problem for a particular approach? Is one analysis more insightful than another?

05/30: Paper due (Friday of finals week).

You are **encouraged** to visit with me prior to these deadlines to discuss your language and your ongoing work.

3 Exemplification

If you were doing Japanese, the descriptive section might cover:

- phoneme inventory with chart
- issues of marginal phonemes like /ϕ/, from massive borrowing
- strict syllable canon, with “required homorganic” codas
- verb stem alternations: the 11 possible underlying final consonants of verb stems, and how they alternate
- alternations in compounds: Rendaku and Lyman’s Law
- pitch accent: phonemic status, rules governing accent in verb paradigms and compounds (just a sketch as this system is huge)
- phonologically interesting morphology: diminutive formation; palatalization in mimetics

None of this can be covered in great detail, especially given that the discussion would be very dry without inclusion of examples. Instead cite references where the details can be found.

The “relate the language to material in the course” could be about anything; here are some possibilities for Japanese. They may not make sense to you before the relevant material is covered; they are only to give you an idea of possible questions to ask.

- Japanese and feature geometry: what theory can accommodate the two ways that the coda nasal assimilates to /s/ (i.e. becoming either the stop [n] or fricationless nasalized [̃])
- Rendaku and the theory of rule locality: Can a distal voiced obstruent be “seen” as clearly as a local one?
- Mimetic palatalization: given the power of OT, is it possible to dispense with the underspecification assumptions (problematic for Richness of the Base) assumed by Ito and Mester’s 1989 article in *Language*?

Term Paper Assignment #1

Due: 2/27/2008

Provide the following basic information about the language you are looking at.

1. Language
2. Where is language spoken?
3. How many speakers?
4. What language family does it belong to?
5. Provide a list of sources. Good sources are grammars, dictionaries and dissertations. Original data sources are a must. If your only sources are theoretical papers which regurgitate language data from earlier sources, that's trouble! Please also indicate whether the sources are currently in your possession or not.

If you are having trouble choosing a language come see me. Generally it is a good idea to pick languages that are not super well-studied like English or Japanese, or ones with little resources (like Simbo (Austronesian)). This leaves lots of good options: languages of Africa and native American Indian languages offer plenty of good choices, as well as Austronesian languages.

If you are having trouble finding good sources are uncertain if a particular source is worth it, see me.

Do not wait to the last minute!!

Term Paper Assignment #2

Due: 3/26/2008

Provide the following information about the language you are looking at.

1. Basic Facts

- (a) Provide the consonant inventory. Be sure to use a standard chart and IPA symbols.
- (b) Present any special or unusual consonant sounds and/or distributional patterns you observe (e.g. geminates, clicks, etc.).
- (c) Provide the vowel inventory. Be sure to use a standard chart and IPA symbols.
- (d) Present any special/unusual vowel sounds and/or distributional patterns you observe (e.g. contrastive vowel length, nasalized, etc.). item

2. Syllable Structure

- (a) Provide a list of the syllable types found in the language, with an example of each.
- (b) Comment on any distributional restrictions on the segments in the onset, nucleus and coda positions.
- (c) If there are clusters in the onset or coda, comment on the extent to which they observe the Sonority Sequencing Principle. Be sure to provide illustrations of your points.

3. Phonological Processes

- (a) Present a phonological alternation involving consonants and provide examples of it.
- (b) Provide a phonological alternation involving vowels and provide examples of it.
- (c) Describe some other phonological process (such as stress, tone, syllable structure, etc.) and give examples of it.

Term Paper Assignment #3

Due: 4/30/2008

Present, for 5-10 minutes, an interesting phonological process in your language, and some discussion of why it is interesting. E.g. is it a problem for a particular approach? Is one analysis more insightful than another?

It is a good idea to prepare a handout and practice beforehand. Remember Pullum's 5 golden rules:

<http://people.ucsc.edu/~pullum/goldenrules.html>.