

Language Presentation (scheduled for **August 17th**, Friday)

Purpose:

The purpose of this project is for you to apply the concepts and terminology we have learned in this class to investigate a language, and also to learn more about the diversity as well as similarities of human languages.

Procedure:

1) Selection:

You'll be working in a pair. Find a partner, and decide on a language other than English that you want to work on. You do NOT need to pick a language that is unfamiliar to both of you, but you must make sure that both of you can make a similar amount of contribution to the project, since the partners will receive the same grade. For example, if one of you knows a lot about Spanish while the other doesn't, it could be difficult to make the amount of contribution equal.

2) Research:

As a second step you need to do some research on the language you have chosen. This research can be of two kinds ((a) is obligatory!).

- (a) You can go to the **linguistics literature** (e.g., journal articles/books on descriptive linguistics (reference grammar), typological literature, etc.) and read about the language of your choice. See the list of suggested languages below. For these languages, I can give you a book chapter that describes their general linguistic properties. But this is just a starter – you are encouraged to look for resources on your own, and I encourage you to read the suggested reference in particular.
- (b) You can collect actual data from a native speaker informant and analyze them yourself.

Note 1: Language teaching textbooks are not very reliable sources – they are often limited in scope, or full of prescriptive grammars. If you want to use examples from such sources, you should try to verify what the textbook says with a native speaker informant.

Note 2: Use Google and Google Scholar to search for more references!

In your **introduction** you should give us some **brief** background knowledge, e.g., where this language is spoken, what language family does it belong to, etc.

The **main part** of your research/presentation will have to cover **the following areas**:

- (i) phonology/phonetics
 - (ii) syntax (and morphology)
- (i.e., You don't need to talk about, say, the writing systems used in the language of your choice)

Specifically, you should (try to) *minimally* include topics like the following, which we (will) have discussed in class. If there is too much to choose from, then pick aspects of the language that are not present in English.

- (i) phonology/phonetics
 - phonetic inventory
 - phonological rules on articulatory processes
- (ii) syntax (and morphology)
 - word order and phrase structure rules
 - how yes/no or *wh*-questions are formed
 - how agreement/tense is marked (or whether your language has such markings at all)
 - (optional) other transformation rules or constructions unique to the language of your choice

However, you can certainly go beyond topics we have covered in this class, but make sure you will present them in such a way that they would be understandable for your classmates.

In presenting the properties of the language of your choice, you **must include actual language data** in order to support your claims. If possible, try to compare your language to English in the properties you examine.

3) Presentation:

Your presentation should be about *15-20 minutes long* (minimum 10 minutes). I will be very strict about the length of the presentation, and I will stop you after 20 minutes, even if you are not finished. So it might be a good idea for you to practice your presentation beforehand.

It is essential that you *provide a handout* or *use powerpoint*, so that it is easier for us to follow and understand your presentation. If you want to use powerpoint, do let me know in advance so I can bring a project to class. Also, let me know if you'd like to use my laptop for presentation.

Feel free to make an appointment and consult me if you have questions, or have me look through your handout/powerpoint files!

Some suggested languages and resources:

Note: The ones marked with * are not in the library. I have a copy of the ones marked with **, and I can lend them to you.

Arabic:

Ryding, K. C. (2005). *A reference grammar of modern standard Arabic*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Abu-Chacra, F. (2007). *Arabic: An essential grammar*. New York, NY: Routledge.

French:

*Jones, M. A. (1996). *Foundations of French syntax*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kayne, R. (1975). *French syntax: a transformational cycle*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

German:

Sussex, R. (2007). *The Germanic languages*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hindi:

Masica, C. (1991). *The Indo-Aryan languages*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Japanese:

Shibatani, M. (1990). *The languages of Japan*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

**Tsuji-mura, N. (1996). *An introduction to Japanese linguistics*. Oxford: Blackwell publishers.

Vance, T. (1987). *An introduction to Japanese phonology*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Korean:

Sohn, H-M. (1999). *The Korean language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Russian:

Sussex, R. (2006). *The Slavic languages*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Spanish:

Zagona, K. (2002). *The syntax of Spanish*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Turkish:

**Underhill, R. (1976). *Turkish grammar*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

As I noted above, I can give you a general introductory description of these languages from the following book:
Comrie, B. (Ed). (1990). *The world's major languages*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.