

LING 5701 PSYCHOLINGUISTICS

GUIDELINES FOR ABSTRACT, REFERENCE LIST, ANNOTATIONS, EXAMPLE MATERIALS, AND TASK DESCRIPTION

Abstract.

The abstract should be a statement about the linguistic problem that interests you. Give one or two examples of the alternation(s) you are interested in – e.g., if you are interested in the relative difficulty of processing words with iambic vs. trochaic stress patterns in English, give an example of each (INSight vs. incITE), and discuss relevant linguistic aspects (trochees are more frequent than iambs, iambs are more likely in verbs than in nouns). State your view of the source of associated processing disparities, e.g. a probabilistic model of lexical look-up that assumes English words begin with stressed syllables would predict longer access times for words that carry stress on the second syllable. Suggest a task that might be useful for investigating the problem (e.g. lexical decision). Mention variables that you hypothesize will influence the data you collect with your task (e.g. syntactic/prosodic location of the critical word in an utterance). I will comment the abstract and return it to you – the main point is to work on a problem that interests you, and to begin formulating an experimentally-oriented plan. It is a reasonable option to propose a ‘followup’ experiment to extend the findings from a paper we read in class. It is also appropriate to propose an expansion of your own currently existing work (but it is not appropriate to re-use an existing completed study or the design from an experiment that is already in progress).

Reference list.

List 5 –10 relevant papers. The list need not be exhaustive. Papers may be ‘classics’ or recent working papers, but should give relevant background. It is reasonable to include a paper whose main relevance is that it describes the task. I will look through your references and comment about their appropriateness and/or suggest additional articles.

Annotations.

Annotate your references. This is meant to be a prelude to writing the background/logic of your proposal, and also a record of what you found useful. For each article, note the main theoretical arguments and/or primary research findings that are relevant for your proposed work. If there are particular facts or principles you could imagine yourself wanting to re-access, note these. There is no length restriction on annotations, but they should not be cursory.

Example materials set.

List the conditions you plan to present (e.g. trochaic, iambic). Give a set of materials, approximately six items per condition, that exhibit the alternation(s) you want to test. Describe any manipulations you would plan to carry out on the items, such as phonetic measures or digital editing to control for the physical aspects of a stressed vs. unstressed syllable. Give an example for each of your conditions for each item. If you are testing words in context, give carrier sentences you plan to use. If you will have control conditions (e.g. for an experiment with minimal stress pairs, you might want an equal or larger number of iambic and trochaically stressed words that do not form minimal stress pairs), give example control items. Prepare the set as though you were about to run the experiment. You need not pilot the items to insure they meet the conditions you propose, but if such piloting will be needed, explain the process you would carry out to do this. (Here, if you were not sure about the stress patterns usually assigned to the words by native speakers, or if you were not sure participants would be familiar with low-frequency items, you might first collect familiarity norms and stress judgements on the words in your list.)

Task description/Methodology.

Describe the task you plan to use. An easy way to describe the important parts of the task is to imagine yourself as a participant and describe what you would experience in chronological order with reference to the materials and the apparatus. Use method and procedure sections from the articles we have read in class as a guide to level of detail and what to include. Include instructions to the subject, the modality of presentation (visual or auditory), the number and type of experimental and control items each subject would experience, and the response options. For a lexical decision task, you would include information such as that subjects would be instructed to respond as quickly as possible, that they would respond yes to words and no to non-words, any time-limit on their response, and whether there would be feedback to participants about the latency and correctness of their response. Describe any secondary task and its purpose, such as having them monitor for a particular semantic type of word in order to insure lexical processing. Describe other manipulations, such as having trials that a subject missed repeated at the end of the list. Describe the dependent measure, e.g. for lexical decision, the dependent measure is reaction time measured in milliseconds from the onset of the word to the participant’s button press. If there will be groups of participants, describe the differences among groups. For example, in a 2-condition lexical decision experiment, there might be 2 groups, where each group saw half trochaic and half iambic items, but no participant saw both members of a minimal stress pair.