

Some guidelines for seminar papers

Language Acquisition and Universal Grammar,
WS 2002/03, Pius ten Hacken

1. Choice of a topic

Compared to a topic for a presentation in the seminar, a seminar paper is intended to go deeper into the subject and to contextualize it more. Some examples of possibilities for our seminar are:

- a combination of two theoretical approaches, aiming at their comparison and evaluation, e.g. continuity vs. maturation;
- a combination of a theoretical approach with a data-oriented topic, elaborating the explanatory force and the problems of the theory, e.g. maturation and wh-questions;
- a combination of a data-oriented topic in L1 and L2 acquisition, focusing on similarities and differences in the acquisition processes, e.g. wh-questions in L1 and L2 acquisition.

This list is only meant to be suggestive. There are many other valid topics for seminar papers.

2. Structure of the paper

The paper must contain the following sections:

- 1 an exposition of the leading question (or a set of related questions);
- 2 the development of an answer on the basis of the literature consulted;
- 3 a conclusion, stating clearly to what extent the question chosen under 1 could be answered, how it could be answered, and what remains unsolved;
- 4 a list of references.

What is listed as 2 in the above list may in fact correspond to more than one section, depending on your topic and the way you treat it.

3. Practical points

A seminar paper is single-authored. Only one paper for a specific topic will be accepted. Topics are attributed on a first come first serve basis. For this reason, every topic must be approved even if it is clearly within the scope of the seminar and fits the guidelines in section 1.

The literature suggested for the presentations is in general not sufficient for a seminar paper. Extensions can be found by following up the references in these chapters and articles.

Before starting to write the paper, it is useful to show me the structure plan. This reduces the risk of having the paper rejected. Please note that from 24 January onwards I will not live in Switzerland anymore. After this date, contact is possible over email or when I am back for a visit. There is no fixed time limit as to when I accept seminar papers, but it is in your own interest not to wait for too long.

The optimal length of a seminar paper is 5000 words. Please use the word-count feature of your text processor to ensure that you remain within 10% from this target. In the printed version of the paper, please do not use fonts smaller than 12 pt Times for running text and keep a 1.25 inch margin on the left and right of every page.

In the text, you should refer to articles and books by mentioning their author(s), the year of publication, and (where applicable) the pages concerned. If there are more than two authors, you can use *et al.* following the first author.

In the list of references at the end of the paper, you should list all and only the publications referred to in the text. A reference in this section contains the full list of authors, the year of publication, the title, as well as data on how to find the publication. For a book this means the publisher and the place of publication. For a journal article, the title of the journal, the volume number, and the page numbers. For a book chapter, the editors of the book, its title, publisher, and place of publication, as well as the page numbers. For examples see the reference section of the course web-page.