A Short Guide to Course/Term Papers (Hausarbeiten)

1. Purpose and Type of Written Papers

The purpose of academic papers at a university is to train your scientific skills as well as to allow you to demonstrate that, in the course of your studies, you have acquired relevant academic competences.

By writing an academic paper, you shall demonstrate that you:

- have reached a certain level of expertise in your area of study (in this case, linguistics),
- can critically review and discuss a topic in linguistics,
- can recognise and formulate research questions about language and utilise suitable research methods to find solutions to them,
- can design and conduct an independent research project in linguistics, including data collection and analysis,
- can develop your own ideas in writing, and
- can produce a coherent text in compliance with the register/genre requirements for academic writing.

Academic papers range from short essays, course/module papers to final theses (BA or MA). The information below applies to all of them.

2. Choice of Topic

You should choose a topic that you are interested in. After you have chosen a topic, you should consult your supervisor and see whether they approve of it.

There are two major categories of topics:

1. critical analysis and discussion of literature about a subject,
2. an empirical study involving an analysis of authentic language data in accord with your research question.

At our chair, preference is given to topics that combine empirical and theoretical aspects; a mere review of literature (see (1) above) is insufficient. In any case, speak to your supervisor before you begin writing a paper.

For final theses, the topic should be broad enough to allow a critical discussion of different positions and to derive some generalizations. At the same time, it should be possible to finish the paper within the specified time and space limit. It goes without saying that you should already be familiar with the necessary methods of linguistic data collection and analysis beforehand.

3. Writing Style

Although your paper will be read by your supervisor, it should address a wider readership who has not attended the course but has basic knowledge of linguistics. Therefore, specific

terms that go beyond basic knowledge should be explicitly defined in the text. Any and all assumptions must be made explicit as well, and references must be complete.

The language chosen for the paper is usually English. Please make sure that you use proper scientific language. Careful proof-reading and checking of language and all formalities is necessary. If your paper shows too many formal inadequacies (this means the quality of your written English, too!), it will not be accepted.

4. Literature

If you base your paper on a seminar topic, you can take the literature discussed in the seminar as a starting point and then read more in the snowball system (see below). We will be glad to help you further when you have generated some basic ideas.

ATTENTION: plagiarism begins with literature research! Therefore,

- ideas from literature should be reported in your own words;
- any direct borrowing of words/sentences must be put in quotation marks, and you must acknowledge the complete source (see Style Manual for more information about citing and referencing sources);
- established literature management systems (e.g., Citavi) can make it easier for you (see tutorials offered by ZIM).

For more information about style requirements, citation and referencing of literature, etc. see *Style Manual* on the Chair's website.