

Assignments in English

PART 1. INTRODUCTION: OVERVIEW OF LINGUISTIC METHODS. THE SCIENTIFIC PROCESS.

Allwood Chapter 1:

1. Write a short (1/2 page) description of a linguistic phenomenon that demands both understanding and explanation.
2. Sketch (1 page) an investigation that demands a combination of at least 6 of the methods mentioned in the overview of methods.
3. Discuss how the investigation in 2 fits with the 10 types of study mentioned.
4. Which ethical problems arise in your investigation?

Allwood Chapter 2:

1. Make a time and work plan for your sketched investigation.
2. Make a literature search for relevant literature for the investigation.

PART 2-3. PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE - STEP 1 Presentation/lecture material

Ontology:

1. Try to give at least two examples of views (concepts, beliefs) within linguistics that presuppose some type of ontological assumption.
2. Formulate a problem in linguistics that requires an analysis of ontological assumptions.

Epistemology

1. Formulate two epistemological problems of relevance for linguistics.
2. Is there any certain knowledge in linguistics? If yes, what is it?
3. How does what is believed to be knowledge within linguistics arise? Try to identify both empiricist and rationalist parts.
4. What type of “knowledge interests” occur within linguistics?
5. How is knowledge justified within linguistics? Consider both the normative question of how it should or ought to be justified and the descriptive question of how it is actually done.
6. Give examples of some definitions within linguistics and discuss what types of definitions they are.

7. Give an example of a taxonomy from linguistics and discuss to what extent it meets the normative requirements on a taxonomy.
8. Give an example of a linguistic theory and discuss how well it meets the normative requirements on a theory. (Include in the discussion also such requirements as axiomatizability, verifiability (falsifiability).
8. What is the purpose of theories in linguistics?
9. What schools in the philosophy of science have left traces in linguistics?
10. Formulate an ethical and an esthetical problem in linguistics.

Allwood Chapter 3:

1. Formulate a research problem and determine all key concepts that occur in the problem by defining them with necessary and sufficient conditions.
2. Then try to exemplify the concepts by providing prototypes, ideal types or stereotypes for them.
3. Now try to operationalize the concepts.
4. Does the word class system break the ideal conditions for a taxonomy? If no, try to demonstrate why not. If yes, try to adjust the taxonomy so that it meets the conditions.
5. Formulate 3 theoretical linguistic claims and mention some ways in which they can be justified.
6. Give an example of an axiomatic linguistic claim and deduce a theorem from it.

PART 4. WORK WITH INFORMANTS – LANGUAGE ELICITATION

Allwood Chapter 5

1. Criticize the dichotomy partial versus complete language description.
2. Discuss who should be chosen as informant(s) for a language description of Swedish.
3. Explain briefly the different types of elicitation.
4. How does the language eliciting linguist affect the language material?

PART 5. INTERVIEW, QUESTIONNAIRE AND OBSERVATION

Allwood Chapter 4:

Take a research problem from the assignments above.

1. How will you do the selection for carrying out this project? How will you fulfil the requirements of representativity and validity?

2. Which role will observations play in the data collection? Which type of observations will you make and how will they be registered? If you do not plan to use observation methods at all, try to think of a related research questions where observation could be used. Describe this related question and motivate why observation is not suitable for your chosen question.

3a. Which role will interviews play in your data collection? Which type of interviews will you perform and how will the content be registered? Will you use self confrontation? Why or why not?

3b. If you don't plan to use interview methods at all, can you think of a related research question where interview could be suitable? Describe this related question and motivate why interview is not suitable for your chosen question.

4. Will questionnaires for your research project? Why or why not? If yes, which type of questionnaire and why this type?

5. Will your research project use a combination of methods? Which? Describe in detail how you plan to collect your data or why you do not plan to collect data with any of these methods.

PART 6. EXPERIMENTAL METHODS

Allwood Chapter 6

(Choose two of the three assignments below.)

1. Take a journal that publishes experimental studies (for example Journal of Applied Psycholinguistics, Language and Mental Processes, Brain and Language, Journal of Child Language etc.) and read carefully a paper using an experimental method. Summarize the design. What could be criticized in the design or performance of the study.

2. Design an experimental study of how something affects language behavior or how linguistic factors affect for example memory, cognition, willingness to act etc. Describe your design from the original research question to the formulation of the testing implication!

3. Take a non-experimental linguistic study (which you have seen in a journal, book chapter etc.) and try to find hypotheses from it that can be tried experimentally. Maybe you have to reformulate the basic research questions to make it possible to investigate with an experiment. Describe what you would do.

PART 7. AUDIO AND VIDEO RECORDING, TRANSCRIPTION AND CODING

Allwood Chapter 8b

Discuss the following questions:

1. How does the question of ecological validity affect your study? How does this question affect which methods you choose?

2. Documentary films of catastrophes can give valuable clues to for example emotional prosody. For American English there is an abundance of material from New York September

11, 2001. Should one impose ethical limits for how researchers use this material and in that case which limits?

3. Is it unethical to attend a funeral with a hidden audio-recorder in order to record the voices of mourning persons? Is it unethical to attend a funeral with a clearly visible audio-recorder, explain to the mourning persons that you are performing an investigation and ask for permission to record their voices?

Allwood Chapter 9

1. According to the authors, transcriptions can be classified in four different ways. Which? Discuss potential problems with this classification and alternative ways of classifying transcriptions.

2. Which different levels of detail do the authors distinguish for transcription of verbal behavior? How can you make a similar division for transcription of nonverbal behavior?

3. What is the difference between orthographic and phonetic representation of speech and how do these ways of representation relate to the different levels of detail discussed in question 2? Can you imagine other systems of representation for verbal behavior?

4. Make up a representation system of your own for (certain aspects of) nonverbal behavior. Discuss how this representation system can be combined with representation of verbal behavior in a unified transcription format.

Transcription exercises

1. Transcribe 3 minutes of a tape recording with Modified Standard Orthography (MSO) according to Transcription Standards (Nivre 1999).

2. Transcribe the first 10 lines with IPA (phonematic or phonetic).

Allwood Chapter 10

1. Which theoretical purposes can, according to the author, be connected to coding of empirical material? Try to give examples of other theoretical purposes that can be relevant.

2. What do the following concepts mean in connection with coding?

- a. coding unit
- b. category
- c. taxonomy
- d. coding schema

3. Which different ways exist for justifying codings? Give examples.

Coding exercise

Code feedback according to Nivre, Allwood & Ahlsén (Interaction Management: Coding Manual) in the transcription that you produced in the first transcription exercise.

PART 8. CORPUS METHODS

Allwood Chapter 7

1. Which questions should, according to the authors, be considered when collecting a corpus? Do you think that the authors have omitted some important questions?
2. Explain briefly the following concepts in corpus linguistics:
 - a. frequency listing
 - b. concordance
 - c. automatic word class tagging
 - d. parsing

PART 9. FORMALIZATION

Allwood Chapter 11

1. What does “formalization” mean according to the authors? Which are the advantages of a formalized theory compared to a non-formalized theory? Disadvantages?
2. What is a “formal” system? Explain and give examples.
3. What does “model theory” mean? Explain how you can use model theory to characterize concepts like “soundness” and “completeness” in connection with formal systems.

PART 10. STATISTICAL METHODS

Allwood Chapter 12

1. Which are the two basic types of statistics? Explain what the difference is.
2. Which different types of variables does one usually distinguish in statistics? Give an example of your own for each type of variable.
3. Explain what is meant by frequency measure, position measure and spreading measure (frekvensmått, lägesmått och spridningsmått).
4. How is an hypothesis testing made? Explain the basic line of thought without bothering about the technical design.

Exercises in statistics

1. Use a statistics program and feed in some data of your own choice with at least one nominal variable and at least ten observations. Create a frequency table over your data.
2. Use a statistics program and feed in some data of your choice with at least one numeric variable and at least ten observations. Calculate suitable measures of position and spreading (läges- och spridningsmått) for your data.

