

# Final project guideline

Language in Social Interaction I (Yoshihiko Asao)

June 1, 2015

## Deadline: August 3 (Mon) 11:59pm

There is no strict rule for the number of pages, but just as a rough guide, I expect a 10-page double-spaced paper. Submit your paper by email at: [asao@lit.nagoya-u.ac.jp](mailto:asao@lit.nagoya-u.ac.jp)

**Choose one of the two following options. You do not have to do both.**

## 1. Language variation

Come up with an hypothesis about language *variation*. Collect your own data to confirm your hypothesis.

Your hypothesis can be about differences between individuals, such as their native languages, dialects, age, and gender. It can also be about differences between situations, such as domain or register, topic of conversation, and communication means. There are two major methods for this project:

- You can have a questionnaire that directly asks whether your participants use (or know) particular linguistic expressions. This method is more appropriate when you are interested in names for particular ideas (e.g. words for “driving school”).
- Alternatively, you can collect real examples from recorded conversations. This method is more appropriate when you are interested in grammatical or discourse features that are difficult to introspect.

In the paper, you should report every data point you have collected (or its statistical summary) with attributes (such as gender, age, dialect) that you think are relevant. Your paper should not be just an impressionistic summary.

## 2. Language in interaction

Choose a linguistic expression that you think plays a role in organizing conversation. Record conversations, find the target expression and transcribe its contexts. Then, discuss what role it has in conversation. Examples from Japanese include -よね, -じゃないですか, -かも, てか, やっぱ, and なんか. Your target can even be intonation, breathing, or gesture (although they are more difficult to define and record). Before recording conversations, make sure to check if your target expression occurs frequently enough and is likely to yield interesting results.

The data below is a (fake) example of what your transcription should look like.

B: これだと ちょい目立ちすぎって [いうか

A: [ん::::

(1.8)

B: てか 別にこれ

(0.8)

B: いいんじゃないの 無くても

(0.3)

B: そこ [メインじゃないし

A: [そう

(0.3)

A: そうかも

## Notes

■ **Target language** You can work on any language, but you need to be sufficiently familiar with the language in order to analyze your data.

■ **Original data collection** Your project should involve original data collection of spoken language. In other words, your work should not be entirely based on texts searchable on the web, books etc. However, it is OK to include *some* written data to investigate, for example, stylistic differences between written and spoken language.

■ **Technologies for recording conversations** Unless you are interested in subtle phonetic features, you do not need fancy equipments to record conversations. A single laptop or smartphone with a built-in microphone is sufficient. However, please make sure in advance that your software can record sufficiently long conversations. Do not waste your participants' time due to technical problems.

■ **How many data points should we collect?** The amount of data you need depends on your research design, as well as the availability of time and participants. If your project is a simple questionnaire that just asks a couple of questions, you may want to have 20 to 30 participants; if your project is a detailed analysis of conversations, two or three conversations may be enough. Rigorous statistics is not required, but you should discuss potential problems of the limitation of your data. A single person from Kyushu cannot represent the dialects of Kyushu in general. Japanese students of Nagoya University are not representative of the Japanese people; they are highly skewed in terms of region, age, and educational background. If every old participant is female and every young participant is male in your data, you cannot discern if language variations you find is due to age or gender.

■ **Ethics (important!)** When you have a questionnaire, or record a private conversation, ask for permissions first. You should not secretly record a conversation even if you want to make it as natural as possible. Prepare a written form that clearly states what the data is for, and obtain the signature from the participants. For example, you should state that the data is only for the course project and will not be used for other purposes. You should not keep, copy or publish the data you have collected beyond the agreement.

Your data must be anonymized; personal information should not be identifiable from your report unless the participant agrees to disclose it. For example, if a personal name appears in a conversation, hide it or replace it with a pseudonym.