

# Language report 1

Due: October 22, before 1:30pm

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The goal of this assignment is to develop an initial familiarity with a language that you are not a speaker of, based on original fieldwork with a native speaker.

You will want to have at least two separate meetings with your consultant of roughly 1.5 hours each, so plan accordingly! It may be beneficial to talk to us after collecting some basic data and begin to write up your report early, so you can go back to your speaker to ask more questions, if necessary.

☞ Below are some basic questions that can help direct your exploration. We do not expect your report to answer all of these questions; instead, use this as a guide and write up your findings. Include data (with three-line glosses) but also use prose to tell us what you were attempting to test and what the data teaches us. We imagine this will be 10+ pages. (10 pages is actually very short with three-line glosses.)

## Part 1: basic sentence structure

Find out what some popular names in the language are. Elicit a few intransitive and transitive predicates. Find out what word-orders are possible in simple declarative sentences.<sup>1</sup>

## Part 2: questions

What is the structure of *wh*-questions in the language? Try:

- Questions with *wh*-arguments (e.g. *who, what, which boy*) vs. *wh*-adjuncts (e.g. *when, where, why*);
- Subject vs. non-subject argument questions;
- Simplex *wh*-phrases (e.g. *who, what*) vs. complex *wh*-phrases (e.g. *which teacher, whose friends*);
- Short (phrasal) and long (full sentence) answers to such questions

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<sup>1</sup>If issues such as agreement or case come up, you do not need to develop full paradigms—though you are welcome to!—but only elicit what is necessary to answer the questions in the next sections.

## Part 3: focus

In addition to answers to questions, try to elicit meanings that English expresses using the exclusive focus-particle *only*.

- If there is a dedicated word or particle, what syntactic positions can it occupy? Is there a word order change?
- Is association with arguments the same as with adjuncts?
- Is association with a subject the same as with non-subjects?
- Does the construction have the same semantics as English *only*? (I.e. presupposition of prejacent and assertion of negations of alternatives; Horn 1969)

If translations for *only* are difficult to elicit, try eliciting translations to English *it* clefts (“It’s JOHN who came to school”) or dialogues with contrastive/corrective negation (A: “John came to school.” B: “No, JOHN didn’t come to school; MARY came to school.”)