

Final project information

I. Overview of project phases

Projects may optionally be carried out in **groups** of two students, except that every student will turn in an individual article summary.

Project phase	Grade component	Deadline
• Article summary	5%	M Oct 26
• Topic proposal	5%	W Nov 4
• Methodology plan	10%	F Nov 13
• Presentation, slides, data appendix	15%	F Dec 4
• Revised slides	5%	W Dec 9

More detailed **grading criteria** for project components will be provided separately. Please see “Course information & policies” document for **deadline extension** policies.

II. Structure of the project

The projects for this course will fall into one of two general types. Both types will involve *both* **Japanese language data** and **linguistic theory**, but the relative emphasis differs. See also the separate handout “Choosing a structure for your project” for concrete tips.

- Most students will carry out a **data-focused project**: Collect data yourself (from native speakers; from websites or corpora; from Japanese-language books, magazines, audio, or video; etc.) and present a linguistic analysis of that data. Some ideas:
 - More fully test a linguistic claim or proposal that has been discussed in class, in a reading, or in a source that you find.
 - Examine a linguistic area that has not been covered in class.

Your project will have at least one **linguistics reference source** as a starting point, to provide a framework for your analysis of the data. The data that you collect will be **quantitative**: you will form a hypothesis about how often some data pattern occurs, and you will test that hypothesis by collecting, categorizing, and quantifying data. (Statistical analysis is not required, but if you feel comfortable, you can include this.)

- The second option is to carry out a **theory-focused project**:
 - Summarize two competing linguistic models or proposals and compare their success in dealing with some phenomenon in Japanese.

This project type may also involve original data collection, but if your paper has a significant linguistic-theory component, you are allowed to use examples or data sets compiled by linguists in prior work.

This option is most likely to work well for you if you already have significant background in the area of linguistic theory that you plan to work in (and may be particularly appealing if you do not also have Japanese language background).

A. Choosing a topic

If you don't already have a topic in mind, here are some suggestions for finding one. I am happy to meet about topic ideas and help you brainstorm—**before** the proposal deadline!

- Look at the **reserve readings** and the **optional advanced readings** to see if any topics spark your interest.
- If you are **studying Japanese**, think about some aspect of the language that particularly puzzles or interests you and use that as a starting point.
- If you are **studying linguistics** outside this class, think about what area of linguistics interests you most, and look for Japanese phenomena in that area.
- Take a claim we have seen made about some aspect of Japanese structure and think about how you would collect data to **test that claim** for current speakers.

B. The article summary

- **Choosing an article:** Once you have a (potential) topic in mind for your final project, your next step is to find a *published* linguistics article that is related to your topic. Here are some examples of what “related to your topic” might mean:
 - An article about Japanese linguistics that provides background in linguistic theory
 - An article about a linguistic analysis of another language, or about a more general linguistic topic, that you plan to apply for analyzing Japanese
 - An article about Japanese linguistics or general linguistic theory that presents a viewpoint that you plan to argue for or against in your final project

The “Suggested Readings” sections at the end of each chapter of Tsujimura (2014), *Introduction to Japanese Linguistics* (on hard-copy reserve for the course), are a good place to start looking for relevant articles. You can also look at the bibliography in other reserve readings. For tips on additional ways to search for linguistics articles, see: <http://users.castle.unc.edu/~jlsmith/refsearch.html>

There is no official **length requirement** for the article, but it needs to be one where the main point (or one of the main points) can be discussed and the supporting evidence explained in about 4–6 double-spaced pages. As a rough estimate, an article shorter than 10 pages may not give you enough information to work with, but it depends on the article.

I am happy to consult with you about your article choice. You are **strongly recommended** to confirm your article choice with me, perhaps by e-mail, **before** you begin writing your article summary. Note that the article must be **published**; finding it online is fine, but it must have a bibliographic citation (although this may be a citation to an online publication or repository).

- **Writing the article summary:** The **goal** of the article summary is for you to demonstrate to me that you understand and can clearly explain what the author's (main) point is and what evidence or argumentation the author uses to make that point. You may not have space to summarize everything discussed in the article; decide what is most important **in the context** of your final-project topic.

The article summary should be approximately **4–6 pages long, double-spaced**. It should be in your **own words**, except for short quotations if necessary (which should be indicated with quote marks or block-quote indentations). Don't just put together five pages of excerpts from the article—instead, **convince me that you understood it**. At the end of your article summary, include about one paragraph where you state a **preliminary topic** for your project and explain how the article is **relevant** for that topic. Also include the **full bibliographic citation** (using this [citation format](#)), as well as a **link** to your article (use the DOI if possible).

C. The project proposal

Your proposal should describe the **research question** that will be addressed in the project and explain what **procedure** will be followed to try to answer that question. When I read your proposal, I will check to see whether the proposed project is of an appropriate scope, and if not, I will make suggestions for ways to adjust it. I may ask you to meet with me for a conversation as part of this process.

The proposal should include:

- One or two paragraphs explaining what **research question** your project will ask and what information it will use to try to answer the question.
 - You must **back up your research question or hypothesis with a citation** from the linguistics literature. Interested in examining the vowel devoicing rule? Find a journal article that examines vowel devoicing and **use its results or claims** as a starting point for your own research question or hypothesis. If possible, find this background reference early and **use it for your article summary assignment**.
 - State whether you plan to do a **data-focused** or a **theory-focused** project. (See the separate handout “Choosing a structure for your project”.) Then, also:
 - For a data-focused project, **what kind** of data will you examine? How will you **collect** or obtain your data? What will you do with your data—how are you going to turn what you have collected into **numbers**, and what **comparisons** will you make with those numbers in order to answer your research question?
 - For a theory-focused project, what **area** of linguistic theory will you be working in? What are the different **theoretical approaches or proposals** you will be comparing? What is the point of **disagreement or controversy** that you will be addressing? Where will your language **data** for testing the theories come from?
 - Remember to include **linguistics concepts and terminology** from class in your discussion whenever possible. Show me what you have learned this semester.
- A list of at least **three references** that seem relevant (not including required course readings, but optional advanced course readings are allowed). With each reference, give a brief **explanation** of why it is or seems to be important for your project.
 - One of these references may be the article you have used for your article summary.
 - Not all of these references have to appear in the bibliography of the final version of your project, since your focus may shift. However, the final version must cite at least *one* linguistically relevant source; at least *two* for a theory-based project.

D. The methodology plan

This stage of the project expands on the initial methodology sketch you included in your project proposal. Your methodology plan will **incorporate feedback** from me about the scope and focus of the project, and it will provide the **full details** of how you plan to carry out your project.

- Lay out everything you plan to do in order to collect, analyze, and interpret your data.
 - **Data collection procedure:** For example, what sentences will you ask native speakers to read or judge or respond to? What media sources or files will you code, and what are your criteria for assigning a code to a linguistic phenomenon? What corpus queries will you run, under what settings?
 - **Data analysis procedure:** Once you have your speaker responses, acoustic measurements, codes for linguistic observations in media sources, corpus results, etc., how will you count them and make your quantitative comparisons?
 - **Interpretation of results:** How will your quantitative comparisons relate to your original research question or hypothesis? What answer to your question is provided by different possible quantitative results?

E. Presentation and project documents

You will carry out your methodology plan and prepare a **presentation** to report on your results to the class. Presentations will be approximately 15 minutes long, depending on the number of project groups, and will include a set of **slides** to communicate key information to the audience. You will also prepare a **data appendix** to document details of your project that are not appropriate for the presentation slides (such as raw data).

F. Revisions

After the presentation, you will receive feedback about the content and structure of your project. You will have the opportunity to submit revised slides (and/or data appendix) that incorporates this feedback. Submitting revisions is optional; if you choose not to submit them, your original slides and data appendix will be evaluated again at the revisions phase.