

# Assignment 1

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Due Sept. 17 2013 Student Number: \_\_\_\_\_

The purpose of this assignment is to find out what people didn't know they know about their own language. What structures and combinations of sounds are acceptable for individual speakers of a language?

## 1. SOUND COMBINATIONS (20 POINTS)

The languages of the world exhibit lots of variation with respect to how acceptable different combinations of sounds are at the beginnings and ends of words. For example, in English, an /sp/ sound cluster can be at the beginning of a word. In Spanish, this is not allowed. As native speakers of a language, we are equipped with a grammar that determines which combinations of sounds are acceptable and which are not.

Imagine your job is to make up new names for new products. Which of the following possible names are acceptable words of English, according to the grammars of English speakers? Which contain impossible sound combinations either at the beginning or end of the word? If a name is acceptable, provide examples of real words that use the same combinations of sounds. If a name is not acceptable, explain which combination of sounds is not acceptable.

Word	Acceptable?	Examples or Problems
ex. srork	No	'sr' is not an acceptable at the beginning of an English word.
ex. flong	Yes	float, long
1. gasf		
2. splot		
3. ktpong		
4. lping		
5. gamp		
7. drzesp		
8. ngup		
9. spliksth		
10. zquisp		

## 2. GRAMMATICAL ACCEPTABILITY (10 POINTS)

The sentences *I'm finished my homework* and *I'm started my homework* have an interesting geographic distribution, similar to *I'm done my homework* as we discussed in lecture. Depending on where one is from, some speakers of English find both acceptable in casual conversation, some find just one acceptable, others find neither acceptable. For this question, you will have to ask **five native speakers** of English<sup>1</sup> how they feel about the sentences. Are they acceptable or not? **Fill in the table and answer the questions below.**

Try hard to consult with at least one native speaker of English who is **not** from Canada! **Tip:** Ask the question on Facebook, but don't be surprised if you get a lot of responses and only include native speakers!

**Informed Consent.** Because this assignment involves working with human participants, it's crucial that you give informed consent to the people you ask. You need to tell them what you'll do with the information you record and they need to agree to participate. In this assignment you will attain consent verbally. Read the following paragraph to your participant and ask them if they agree. Record that you've done so in the table.

By agreeing to take part in this study, you acknowledge that I may keep a record of your responses to my questions and the place where you grew up and acquired English. No other personal information will be written down or recorded.

If you use online means, be sure to include the following statement in your post:

By posting a response to this question, you agree to take part in this study and acknowledge that I may keep a record of your responses and the place where you grew up and acquired English. No other personal information will be written down or reported.

A.	Informed Consent?	<i>I'm finished my homework</i>	<i>I'm started my homework</i>	Where did the speaker grow up?
ex.	✓	acceptable	not acceptable	Toronto, Canada
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				

<sup>1</sup>Remember what we mean by "native speaker"!

B. Did any of the native speakers that you talked to offer alternative ways to say these sentences? What did they suggest? What other observations did people make?

C. Given your findings, summarize the use of these two sentences using the descriptive approach.

**Total points:** \_\_\_\_\_

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This assignment should be completed **on this sheet of paper** and handed in to your TA before your tutorial begins on Tuesday Sept. 17. Please print double-sided to save paper! If you are unable to hand in the assignment at the tutorial, you will need to hand it in to me, in my office hours, before tutorial starts. **No late assignments will be accepted.**

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