

# **Conlang questions from Describing Morphosyntax**

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# Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>Demographic and ethnographic information</b>	<b>3</b>
1.1	Name of the language . . . . .	3
1.2	Ethnology . . . . .	3
1.3	Demography . . . . .	3
1.4	Genetic affiliation . . . . .	3
1.5	The sociolinguistic situation . . . . .	3
1.5.1	Multilingualism and language attitudes . . . . .	3
1.5.2	Contexts of use and language use . . . . .	3
1.5.3	Viability . . . . .	3
1.5.4	Loan words . . . . .	3
1.6	Dialects . . . . .	4
<b>2</b>	<b>Morphological Typology</b>	<b>4</b>
2.1	Historical background and definitions . . . . .	4
2.2	Morphological processes . . . . .	4
2.3	Head/dependent marking . . . . .	4
<b>3</b>	<b>Grammatical categories</b>	<b>4</b>
3.1	Nouns . . . . .	4

# **1 Demographic and ethnographic information**

## **1.1 Name of the language**

1. What is the language known as to outsiders?
2. What term do the people use to distinguish themselves from other language groups?
3. What is the origin of these terms?

## **1.2 Ethnology**

4. What is the dominant economic activity of the people?
5. Briefly describe the ecosystem, material culture, and cosmology.

## **1.3 Demography**

6. Where is the language spoken?
7. How are the people distributed in this area?
8. Are there other language groups inhabiting the same area?
9. What is the nature of the interaction with these language groups? Economic? Social? Friendly? Belligerent?
10. In social/economic interactions with other groups, which groups are dominant and which are marginalized? How so?

## **1.4 Genetic affiliation**

11. What language family does this language belong to?
12. What are its closest relatives?

## **1.5 The sociolinguistic situation**

### **1.5.1 Multilingualism and language attitudes**

13. What percentage of people are monolingual? (Treat men and women separately)
14. What language(s) are people multilingual in, and to what degree?
15. What is the attitude of the speakers of this language, as opposed to other languages they may know?

### **1.5.2 Contexts of use and language use**

16. In what contexts are multilingual individuals likely to use the language described in this sketch? When do they use other languages?

### **1.5.3 Viability**

17. Are children learning the language as their first language? If so, how long do they remain monolingual?
18. What pressures are there on young people to learn another language or reject their own language? How strong are these pressures?

### **1.5.4 Loan words**

19. Does the lexicon of this language contain many words from the other languages? If so, in what semantic domains do these tend to occur?

## 1.6 Dialects

20. Is there significant dialect variation? What kinds of differences distinguish the dialects?
21. What dialect is represented in this sketch?

## 2 Morphological Typology

### 2.1 Historical background and definitions

22. Is the language dominantly isolating or polysynthetic?
23. If the language is at all polysynthetic, is it dominantly agglutinative or fusional?
24. Give examples of its dominant pattern and any secondary patterns.

### 2.2 Morphological processes

25. If the language is at all agglutinative, is it dominantly prefixing, suffixing, or neither?
26. Illustrate the major and secondary patterns (including infixation, stem modification, reduplication, suprasegmental modification, and suppletion)

### 2.3 Head/dependent marking

27. If the language is at all polysynthetic, is it dominantly "head-marking," "dependent-marking," or mixed?
28. Give some examples of each type of marking the language exhibits.

## 3 Grammatical categories

### 3.1 Nouns

29. What are the distributional properties of nouns?
30. What are the structural properties of nouns?
31. What are the major formally distinct subcategories of nouns?

Proper names, possessable vs non-possessable, count vs mass, noun class (If you have a noun class system, put it in the noun chapter.)

#### Distributional properties:

How nouns appear in phrases, clauses and texts

#### Structural properties:

internal structure of the noun, ie. case, number, gender

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