

*Here is an example of an unacceptable abstract, cited from LSA (Language Society of America) Model Abstracts (<https://www.linguisticsociety.org/resource/model-abstracts#Unacceptable>).*

**TASK :**

- Read this abstract
- Write down your evaluation on this abstract, and at least two reasons why this abstract is unacceptable
- Then exchange your answers with your classmate to review his/her comment on this abstract

Licensing of prosodic features by syntactic rules: The key to auxiliary reduction

This paper will discuss the phenomenon of auxiliary reduction, a topic which has been treated by many syntacticians and phonologists. We will show that traces do not exist and that any theory assuming traces is gravely flawed and must be abandoned. We will propose that in the morphology, every auxiliary has two shapes, one when the auxiliary is completely deaccented and one when the auxiliary is accented. (There may be more than two shapes for the auxiliaries.)

Constructions such as VP ellipsis and *wh*-movement in which auxiliary reduction is impossible are ones in which only the accented form of auxiliaries may appear, due to syntactic conditions on accent patterns and on what may serve as the host for a clitic. This also handles comparative sub-deletion and pseudo-gapping, which have been claimed to involve dislocation in order to preserve the generalization that when there is an empty category next to the auxiliary it cannot reduce, which is not necessary with our proposal. It may also be noted that our solution will account for the impossibility of auxiliary reduction before emphatic *too* or *so* in rejoinders and in comparative constructions with subject-auxiliary inversion.

In conclusion, the results of this paper will have profound effects on linguistic theory in general.

## Comments on the Unacceptable Abstract Sample:

### **Licensing of prosodic features by syntactic rules: The key to auxiliary reduction**

This paper will discuss the phenomenon of auxiliary reduction, a topic which has been treated by many syntacticians and phonologists.

- Future tense is a bad sign; is the paper not written yet?
- No example given of the construction.
- No specific citations of previous work.

We will show that traces do not exist and that any theory assuming traces is gravely flawed and must be abandoned.

- Sweeping claim and tendentious, obnoxious tone.
- Writer assumes that readers know that many previous accounts appeal to the mechanism of traces, instead of making the connection explicit.
- No specific criticisms are made of the earlier accounts.

We will propose that in the morphology, every auxiliary has two shapes, one when the auxiliary is completely deaccented and one when the auxiliary is accented. (There may be more than two shapes for the auxiliaries.)

- Solution given here with no preamble.
- Hard to see why this solution is justified.
- The issue of the number of shapes of each auxiliary is given more prominence than it is worth.
- The parenthetical comment is distracting.

Constructions such as VP ellipsis and *wh*-movement in which auxiliary reduction is impossible are ones in which only the accented form of auxiliaries may appear, due to syntactic conditions on accent patterns and on what may serve as the host for a clitic.

- Only vague reference is made to the relevant syntactic conditions; compare the good abstract, where the accent patterns of two constructions are described and the possible hosts listed (with a specific reference to earlier work).

This also handles comparative sub-deletion and pseudo-gapping, which have been claimed to involve dislocation in order to preserve the generalization that when there is an empty category next to the auxiliary it cannot reduce, which is not necessary with our proposal.

- No examples of the syntactic constructions referred to.
- No specific citations of others' work.
- Stylistic problems such as run-on sentences and vague pronominal reference make the abstract more difficult to follow.

It may also be noted that our solution will account for the impossibility of auxiliary reduction before emphatic too or so in rejoinders and in comparative constructions with subject-auxiliary inversion.

- The rejoinder construction is the key point of the paper! In the good abstract it is given central prominence, but here it is buried and could easily be missed.
- No example of the construction in question.
- Writer should state explicitly that no empty category can be posited as the explanation for this instance of blocked auxiliary reduction.
- The inversion facts raise problems for analyses appealing to empty categories, and they also deserve more than an offhand remark in the abstract.

In conclusion, the results of this paper will have profound effects on linguistic theory in general.

- Inflated, empty conclusion.