

Here is an example of a good 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 good
- 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

Geoffrey Pullum, Arnold Zwicky

Auxiliary reduction (e.g. *she's for she is*) is well known to be blocked before sites of VP ellipsis (**She's usually home when he's*), pseudo-gapping (**It's doing more for me than it's for you*), wh-movement (**I wonder where he's now?*), etc. Most analyses connect this to empty categories. We show that this is incorrect.

Selkirk (*Phonology and syntax*, 1984:366) proposes a syntactic condition on prosody: Deaccenting is necessary for reduction, and a phrase-final monosyllable cannot be deaccented. Inkelas & Zec (1993) place the condition on prosodic (not syntactic) phrases, assuming the mapping principle that a dislocated syntactic phrase begins a new phonological phrase. Such accounts fail to predict correctly on comparative subdeletion (**She's a better scientist than he's [NP an [QP Ø] engineer]*) or examples with subject-auxiliary inversion (**He's taller than's his friend [AP Ø]*). Here the empty category or extraction or ellipsis site does not abut the auxiliary, yet still it cannot reduce. Inkelas & Zec posit (on rather weak arguments) dislocation in subdeletion and pseudogapping and thus predict the lack of deaccenting; but they must allow reduction in subject-auxiliary inversion sentences to get *Who's your friend?*, so they apparently cannot block **He's taller than's his friend [AP Ø]*.

Previously unnoticed is the relevance of rejoinder emphasis with too/so, as in *I am TOO gonna fix it!*. Reduction is blocked (**I'm TOO gonna fix it!*)--but here THERE IS NO DISPLACED OR ELIDED CONSTITUENT. This is the key to the constraints on auxiliary

reduction. A syntactic condition of rejoinder emphasis calls for light accent on the auxiliary verb and heavy accent on *too/so* (prosodic conditions of this sort on syntactic constructions are not uncommon). But since (as noted by Selkirk) an auxiliary can reduce only when completely stressless, the requirements of rejoinder emphasis and auxiliary reduction clash irresolvably.

All the other constructions mentioned above similarly require lightly accented auxiliaries. For example, the VP ellipsis construction could be described as one in which a VP contains nothing but a lightly accented head (applied semantically to a free variable over VP meanings). What this means is the distribution of reduced auxiliaries can be completely accounted for by Selkirk's stresslessness condition--except that there are certain left context conditions on cliticization (noted by Kaisse 1983), these being the only remaining syntactic conditions on reduction: Auxiliaries cliticize only to (1) subjects, (2) subordinators (*than, that*), (3) proadverbial *so*, or (4) wh-words.

Our analysis needs no special rule for auxiliary reduction at all. As a matter of morphology, the auxiliaries have (at least) two shapes, one when completely deaccented and one when accented, and the syntax of certain constituent types determines light accent on head verbs (something that has to be stated anyway). This analysis offers no support for traces; in fact if traces exist, then Selkirk's condition has to be modified rather awkwardly to say not just 'if it ends a constituent' but 'if it ends a constituent or has as its complement a case-marked trace.'

Comments on the Good Abstract Sample:

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

Auxiliary reduction (e.g. *she's for she is*) is well known to be blocked before sites of VP ellipsis (**She's usually home when he's*), pseudo-gapping (**It's doing more for me than it's for you*), wh-movement (**I wonder where he's now?*), etc. Most analyses connect this to empty categories. We show that this is incorrect.

- The phenomenon to be examined is made clear, with examples of three of the major constructions in which reduction is blocked. The examples simultaneously illustrate blocking of auxiliary reduction and remind the reader of what, say, pseudo-gapping is.
- The last two sentences of the paragraph alert the reader to previous accounts of the phenomenon and the alternative direction to be taken here.
- A general comment about the abstract as a whole: The authors do not coin acronyms for the phenomena under discussion (e.g. 'AR' for auxiliary reduction). This greatly improves the readability of the abstract!

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- This second paragraph cites two of the previous works on the topic, briefly stating their solutions to the problem.
- Constructions which are problematic for the previous accounts are mentioned, again with an illustration of each construction. In other words, even if one assumes that the conditions on auxiliary reduction make reference to empty categories, the previous accounts fail to block reduction in some constructions.

Previously unnoticed is the relevance of rejoinder emphasis with *too/so*, as in *I am TOO gonna fix it!*. Reduction is blocked (**I'm TOO gonna fix it!*)--but here THERE IS NO DISPLACED OR ELIDED CONSTITUENT. This is the key to the constraints on auxiliary reduction. A syntactic condition of rejoinder emphasis calls for light accent on the auxiliary verb and heavy accent on *too/so* (prosodic conditions of this sort on syntactic constructions are not uncommon). But since (as noted by Selkirk) an auxiliary can reduce only when completely stressless, the requirements of rejoinder emphasis and auxiliary reduction clash irresolvably.

- Here the authors introduce new data into the discussion: a construction with no empty category/extraction site in which auxiliary reduction is blocked.
- This construction suggests that any account of auxiliary reduction which appeals to empty categories is misguided. Instead, the authors offer a sketch of the prosodic requirements of this particular syntactic construction, which clash with the conditions required for auxiliary reduction.
- Note that the authors have signaled the importance of this new data by presenting it in a separate paragraph, highlighting the clause in which they point out there is no empty category, and stating explicitly that this (in their view) is the key to understanding the problem.
- These stylistic points not only make it easier for the abstract readers to appreciate the point of the argument, but they also suggest that the authors will succeed in making the oral presentation of this materials clear even to nonspecialists.

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nothing but a lightly accented head (applied semantically to a free variable over VP meanings). What this means is the distribution of reduced auxiliaries can be completely accounted for by Selkirk's stresslessness condition--except that there are certain left context conditions on cliticization (noted by Kaisse 1983), these being the only remaining syntactic conditions on reduction: Auxiliaries cliticize only to (1) subjects, (2) subordinators (*than, that*), (3) proadverbial *so*, or (4) wh-words.

- Having argued that rejoinder emphasis shows that the conditions on auxiliary reduction cannot crucially depend upon empty categories, the authors now reconsider the constructions containing empty categories, giving as an example the prosodic requirements associated with VP ellipsis.

Our analysis needs no special rule for auxiliary reduction at all. As a matter of morphology, the auxiliaries have (at least) two shapes, one when completely deaccented and one when accented, and the syntax of certain constituent types determines light accent on head verbs (something that has to be stated anyway). This analysis offers no support for traces; in fact if traces exist, then Selkirk's condition has to be modified rather awkwardly to say not just 'if it ends a constituent' but 'if it ends a constituent or has as its complement a case-marked trace.'

- In the concluding paragraph the authors sum up their general proposal and touch upon a larger theoretical question: the existence of traces.