

## MEMO: GUIDELINES FOR WRITING ARTICLE REVIEWS

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### PURPOSE

- Engagement in class issues: an in-depth reading of a linguistics article can greatly enhance understanding of the issues discussed in class
- Feed into a research paper: nice purchase of a contemporary article can also feed into research activities in that it provides the necessary background, and may identify problems or 'loose ends' that can be taken up in a separate paper

### FORMAT

The review should be long enough to satisfactorily complete the work outlined below, but no longer than 3 pages (single space). Do not use a cover page. The review will also be type-written, and the work will be organized into the sections given below. Finally, it is usually the case that writing and re-writing a review reduces the excess verbiage and achieves a sharper focus, which can lead to higher marks.

#### Part 1: Summary

What is the article about and what are the findings? Give a crisp summary of the article, roughly a full page, making sure that you include an explicit statement of the conclusions and how they were reached.

#### Part 2: Critical analysis

In this section, approximately two pages, discuss an open issue or problem raised by the article. This issue or problem may even be directly stated in the article. For example, are there empirical problems with the analysis, or unexplored implications that stem from the assumptions inherent to the analysis? How does the analysis compare with other plausible alternative analyses? Engage your reader by developing one specific idea in some detail, or (less ideally) two related ideas. Establish a clear point first, using careful and fully fleshed out argumentation, before moving to new points.

### SELECTING AN ARTICLE TO REVIEW

Since the reviews support class activities and a research paper, start with articles that are either on the syllabus or in the reference sections of those papers. The instructor can always suggest good articles to review, as can your graduate student colleagues. Also, keyword searches of Google Scholar can be very useful in finding related articles. However, try to avoid papers that are greater than 50 pages (though sections of monographs are fair game), or that contain an excessive amount of technical jargon, i.e., terms without explicit definitions in the piece, as these things create obstacles in the early stages of a project. Do not avoid older papers—some of the most interesting issues in linguistics were discussed in the 60s and 70s.