

**Writing like a linguist:**  
**Making fieldwork and writing assignments look more professional**

**1. General considerations**

**1.1. Introduce the language, not the informant.**

Say: “In Russian, person/number agreement is marked by suffixes.”<sup>1</sup>

Not: “My informant, Igor Ginzburg, tells me that person/number agreement is marked by suffixes.”

**2. Typographical Conventions**

**2.1. Use *italics* when citing or mentioning morphemes, words, or expressions (in English or another language).**

**Example:** In English, the auxiliary *will* indicates the future and the suffix *-ed* indicates the past.

**2.2. Use single quotes (‘’) when giving the translation of a word or expression.**

**Example:** Bengali has a few noun-noun compounds, such as *ranna masala*, ‘cooking spice.’

When writing about a language other than English, you should give translations of all “content” words. You don’t need to give translations of functional morphemes such as tense suffixes, but you should identify them.

**Example:** The Rumanian past tense suffix *-it* is used for all person/number forms.

**Or:** The suffix *-it* (PAST) appears after the verb root.

**3. Presenting Data**

You should guide the reader through the data you’re presenting. Charts are useful, but don’t depend on them alone. You should say what’s in the chart and/or refer to them, so that the reader knows why they’re important. Don’t present too much data at once (either in a single chart or in a few sentences). If you want to put in a complete chart of an entire paradigm or a similar large set of data, put it as an appendix at the end, which the reader can look at if they want to know more than what you chose to discuss.

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<sup>1</sup> If you want to acknowledge your informant(s) for their help, put in a footnote saying something like “Thanks to Igor Ginzburg for his help as a Russian informant.”