Issues you might want to consider when looking at your LAP language

Introduction

(1) The name of the language and whether the name has any significance, where it is spoken, the number of speakers, if it is endangered or extinct.
(2) What is the language's genetic classification? What are related languages?
(3) What is the sociolinguistic situation like? Are there several dialects of the language, sociolinguistically speaking? Is the language used in a multilingual society? What percentage of the people are monolingual? Is it an official language? If it is used in a multilingual society, what contexts are speakers likely to use this language in? Is there regular code-switching, i.e., moving back and forth between the language and another language in discourse or even within the same utterance?
(4) Are children learning the language as their native language? What pressures are there on young people to learn another language?

Phonology

(5) Provide basic facts about the consonant and vowel system of the language. Highlight any interesting aspects in this regard.
(6) Describe most salient cases of allophony in the language.
(7) What phonological processes/phenomena is the language best known for?
(8) Comment on syllable structure. What phonotactic constraints are there?
(9) Is stress placement predictable?
(10) Is it a tone language? If so, how many tones are there?

Morphology

(11) Is the language dominantly isolating or synthetic? If synthetic, is it dominantly agglutinative or fusional? Make sure you give examples to illustrate the morphological typology of the language.
(12) What are the more common morphological operations in the language? Prefixation? Suffixation? Infixation? Circumfixation? Provide examples.
(13) Is the language mainly head-marking or dependent-marking or mixed?
(14) Does the language have incorporation, or compounding?
(15) What is the alignment (i.e., case and agreement) system in the language? Exemplify some intransitive and transitive sentences in the language. Notice that some languages have a split case and agreement system, as we mentioned in class. If your LAP language is of that sort, explain the basis of the split in the language (e.g., tense/aspect, semantics of the verb, pronoun vs. NP?).
(16) Any interesting observations on the tense system? Aspect? Mood? Modality?

Syntax

(17) What is the basic word order in the language? Indicate which parameters among those we talked about are relevant, and what their settings are.
(18) Are other word orders possible? If so, state the conditions under which these other orders occur.

(19)   Is the language uniformly head-initial or head-final or mixed? Consider the position of main verbs with regard to auxiliaries, objects with regard to verbs, adpositions with regard to NPs, determiners with regard to NPs, etc.

(20)   How are yes-no questions formed in the language? How are wh-questions formed? What is the setting for the wh-parameter?

(21)   Are there serial verbs?

(22)   Is it a null subject language? If so, does it have rich morphology on the verb like Italian, or is it of the Chinese-type?

General comments on content and format

(23)   Make sure you give examples to illustrate each linguistic fact you cite. Linguistic analysis is fundamentally based on illustrating data. Without data, how could anyone verify what you are saying?

(24)   This is not expected to be a comprehensive report on the language. Please be selective on what facts about your LAP language you want to highlight. You cannot possibly try to cover everything about the language in a 10-page report.

(25)   This is also meant to be a descriptive report, but with clear reliance on linguistic argumentation (drawing generalizations from a set of data and accounting for any apparent exceptions), in the very same way we did in class as well as on homework/exams.

(26)   You may consider dividing your report into sections if you want. This is the norm in linguistic papers.

(27)   For documentation, linguists typically use the APA (American Psychological Association) system. When citing a reference, simply write the last name of the author(s), followed by the publication date of the reference between brackets. For example:

> In Chomsky (1965), a distinction is made between three levels of adequacy for grammatical theory: observational adequacy, descriptive adequacy, and explanatory adequacy.

If you are quoting exact words, then add the page number(s) after the publication date, e.g., Chomsky (1970:33).

(28)   Use a font size of 12, with 1.5 spacing. You may use either footnotes or endnotes. The report should be 10-page long, excluding the reference page(s).