On writing an empirical paper

Length
c. 10-15 pages

Topic/Focus
- Choose a manageable topic
- Formulate a clear & concise research question. Give a rationale for it. Design your analysis towards it.

Structure
- Abstract (optional) gives preview of background, aims, data, methodology, findings, structure
- Introduction describes the background of your study, i.e., developments in research in relevant literature,
  - the aims you pursue in this study, i.e., the ‘problem’ your paper addresses
  (unanswered questions in the literature, underresearched phenomena, misrepresented phenomena, etc.), the hypothesis you wish to test out and the corresponding research questions you will address
  - the structure of your paper
- Data and methods describes in good detail the database your subset of data comes from, e.g., the BNC, its design, composition, etc.
  - describes the principles and techniques you’ve used in selecting your data subset, e.g. how you have identified indirect speech acts or politeness phenomena
  - addresses the limitations that apply to your data and methods, e.g., assuming your topic are insults, the impossibility to retrieve all instances of insults in the BNC
- Results presents your findings in as much detail as possible
- Discussion discusses and interprets your results in the light of theories, findings made elsewhere, etc.
- Conclusions summarizes what you’ve been doing in your study
  - describes what follows from your study
  - relates study to overarching topics/themes/issues in linguistic research
  - notes avenues for further research
- References contains an alphabetical list of all works referred to in the main body
  (see Style below)

Style
See stylesheets of linguistic journals (e.g., ICAME Journal, Journal of English Linguistics, etc.). Most importantly, observe the conventions for citation and referencing, as detailed in the stylesheets (for the guidelines of the International Journal of Corpus Linguistics see overleaf)

Footnotes
Please use footnotes, not endnotes.

Language
Use the BNC (via BNCweb) to check:
- grammatical and orthographic accuracy (Is there a plural to the noun ‘research’? Is it ‘attendance’ or ‘attendeance’?)
- phraseological idiomaticity (Is a study ‘made’, ‘done’, ‘carried out’, or ‘undertaken’? Is a study ‘big’, ‘major’, ‘comprehensive’, ‘large-scale’, or ‘detailed’?)
- generic appropriateness (Is ‘it’s’ or ‘it is’, ‘cos’ or ‘because’, ‘guy’ or ‘person’ more appropriate in academic writing?)

References
As a rule of thumb, read, cite and list in the paper at least five works
The following are the guidelines for REFERENCES for the International Journal of Corpus Linguistics (the guidelines follow the guidelines for APA 6 (http://www.apastyle.org/index.aspx)):

Citations in the text should follow the style (Brown 1989: 224-256). The reference section should list all and only references cited in the main text. References should be listed (1) alphabetically and (2) chronologically in the case of more than one publication by an author. Names of journals should be given in full with page references.

Examples:

Book


Article in journal


Article in edited book


Unpublished PhD thesis

Newspaper article

Website