A one page, dictatorial guide to LaTeX packages

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Last update: August 6, 2019

Summary

This is a list of the packages that are in my opinion the most useful for writing papers and theses in linguistics. I have made no attempt to justify the choices, but I find almost all of these packages essential in my own work. The essential packages and the basic linguistics packages (relevant to your particular field) should probably be loaded in every document you write. Unless noted, all packages are part of TeXLive and MikTeX.

1 Essential packages

- `geometry`
  set margins and general page layout
- `fontenc`
  accented characters in your output (pdfLaTeX only)[1,2]
- `fontspec`
  Used with LuaLaTeX or XeLaTeX only. Allows use of any font on your system.
- `fancyhdr`
  headers and footers[3]
- `array`
  improved tables
- `booktabs`
  nice looking tables
- `multicol`
  multiple column text
- `graphicx`
  inclusion of graphics
- `biblatex`
  bibliography and citations[4]

2 Packages for customizing the looks of things

- `titlesec`
  customization of all section titles
- `enumitem`
  customization of any list environment
- `setspace`
  double and 1.5 spacing
- `parskip`
  unindented paragraphs separated by blank lines

3 Font packages

- `newtxmath,newtxtext`
  Times (New) Roman (for pdfLaTeX)
- `libertinus`
  Linux Libertine fonts

4 Linguistics packages

- `gb4e`
  linguistic examples and glosses[5]
- `cgloss`
  improved glosses[6]
- `forest`
  syntactic trees[7,8]
- `tipa`
  IPA fonts (not recommended anymore. Instead use XeLaTeX or LuaLaTeX and use IPA directly in your document.)
- `OTtablx`
  Optimality Theory tableaux[9]
- `stmaryrd`
  semantics brackets
- `amsmath`
  improved math support; useful also for linguistics

5 Other kinds of documents

Book-length documents

- `memoir`
  this is a document class, and includes the functionality some of the packages mentioned above.
- `msu-thesis`
  this is a complete class for MSU Theses and Dissertations based on memoir.

Presentations

- `beamer`
  this is a document class for Powerpoint-like presentations

6 Drawing

- `tikz`
  Powerful drawing package (not for beginners)

7 Engine choice

- `xelatex` or `lualatex`
  I highly recommend using LuaLaTeX or XeLaTeX instead of pdfLaTeX.

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[1] Use `[T1]` option for most documents. [2] Do no use with XeLaTeX or LuaLaTeX. Use `fontspec` instead. [3] A good alternative is `titleps`. [4] Good alternatives are `natbib` or `apacite`. [5] I don't recommend using `covington` for examples. I'm also not a fan of `linguex`. [6] Available from http://www.let.uu.nl/~alexis.dimitriadis/personal/latex/. [7] load with the `[linguistics]` option. [8] A good alternative is `tikz-qtree`. [9] Requires document to be compiled using `latex+dvips` or XeLaTeX. Available from http://sanders.phonologist.org/OTtablx/