

English 301/Linguistics 394
Robin Queen & Anne Curzan
Winter 2006

Paper One: Investigating a linguistic question/hypothesis through the collection and analysis of data

The Assignment

For the first longer paper, you will investigate a linguistic question or hypothesis about language and gender contained in the readings for the course or related to the topics in the readings or in our class discussions. Language and gender research is a relatively new field, and there is an ongoing need to test existing hypotheses and follow up on questions about language usage. All of you have the potential to make genuine contributions to our understanding of how gender plays out in speakers' usage of—as well as grammarians' prescriptions for—the English language. The argument of your paper, therefore, will be drawn from the data that you collect and will either provide a preliminary answer to the question or a response to the hypothesis.

Format Requirements and Due Dates

- Length:** 4-5 pages (1½-spaced), Times font (11- or 12-point), 1” margins
- Format:** Please use MLA or LSA parenthetical format for citing secondary material; use footnotes for notes about terminology and interesting, relevant side notes. Be sure to include: (1) at the top: your name, the date, your section number, and a title for the paper; (2) at the end: a Works Cited, formatted according to the MLA or LSA guidelines. You are welcome to use subheadings such as “Methodology,” “Survey Results,” “Discussion,” etc.
- Due dates:** By Jan. 24, you must e-mail your GSI with: (1) the question and/or hypothesis that you plan to investigate; (2) a preliminary description of your research methodology. On Feb. 3, in section, the final draft of the paper is due.

Criteria for Evaluation

A successful paper will present a thought-provoking, convincing academic argument that is clearly organized, well supported by specific linguistic evidence, and well written in terms of style.¹ One critical part of a successful academic argument in this paper will be supporting it with critical *analysis* of the linguistic information you find in various resources and in surveys, in addition to detailed *descriptions* of that information. In other words, the paper should present the linguistic evidence clearly, explain what the evidence reveals about current usage, and demonstrate the evidence's relevance to the overall argument of the essay.

Research Process

Here are three key steps to starting your paper:

- Choose a question or hypothesis that you are *genuinely interested* in investigating.
- Make sure that the question/hypothesis you are investigating is narrow enough to cover within the time and page-length constraints of this assignment.
- Determine what methodology you will employ to investigate this question/test this hypothesis.

¹ For those of you who like to play with words and/or style, you are welcome to do so in this essay as long as it serves to make the paper more effective in presenting the argument and engaging the reader.

There are **two main methodologies** that you will want to consider for the primary research for this paper:

1. **Conducting a Survey:** If you are pursuing a question that concerns the usage patterns and/or opinions of Modern English speakers, you might want to design a survey. You need to think through the questions you ask carefully, as the results you get will only be as good as the questions you ask. You always want to be careful not to be obvious about the exact focus of the survey or it may skew your results. On the survey, be sure to ask for relevant demographic information (these will vary depending on the focus of the survey), such as age, gender, profession, etc. We are happy to consult with you about survey design.
2. **Carrying out Corpus Searches:** If you hope to describe language in use, you can search some of the linguistic databases on-line (both historical and contemporary) to see if/how/where a construction occurs. Of particular use will be the Michigan Corpus of Academic Spoken English; you can also access a sampler from the British National Corpus and a vast array of magazine and newspaper articles in Lexis-Nexis. (All these sites are linked to the “Electronic Resources for English Language Study” web site, which you can find in the Longer Papers folder on CTools.)

Feel free to use charts and graphs to represent your findings, when appropriate. If you conduct a survey, you should also include a sample survey as an appendix to the paper. Depending on your topic, you may also want to consult a range of dictionaries and/or grammar books (or style guides) to see how lexicographers and grammarians have handled the question. If relevant, you can also interview speakers. All of this primary research should be complemented by material from the research that we have been reading—as well as other secondary material if you are interested in reading more.

Notes on the Format for Writing about Words

In writing about words, there are specific conventions to follow: italicize words when you refer to them as words (rather than using them to refer to their referent); use single quotes for meaning; use double quotes for quotations, examples, etc. So, for example:

The word *meat* used to mean ‘solid food,’ which explains the origins of the phrase “meat and drink.” In its current meaning, *meat* is often associated with the words *red* and *white*, in order to differentiate among the flesh of different animals.

The Old English word *wer* ‘man’ has disappeared from the language except for the now opaque compound *werwolf*.

Most style guides do not include information about how to cite dictionaries. If you are using dictionaries for this paper, you do not have to cite page numbers, but you should always be sure to identify the source dictionary, either in the wording of the sentence or in parentheses after the relevant quotation or definition. All dictionaries should appear in your works cited; here are some sample entries:

Dunlison, Robley. *A Dictionary of Medical Science*. 21st ed. Philadelphia: Lea Brothers, 1893.

Farmer, J. S. and W. E. Henley, eds. *Slang and Its Analogues*. 1890-1904. New York: Arno Press, 1970.

Relevant Links

MLA style guide: <http://www.lib.umich.edu/ugl/guides/citationguide/acrobat/MLA5thed.pdf>

LSA style guide: <http://www.lsadc.org/info/pubs-lang-style.cfm>

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Paper 2: Short Literature Review

Due Feb. 24 (or before)
Approximately 3 pages (1½-spaced)

This essay should synthesize the treatment of a specific topic related to language and gender in three different scholarly sources. The paper should have an overarching or central argument drawn from your examination of how these three sources address the question or topic. The body of the paper should summarize the sociolinguistic question/topic and then support the central point by comparing and contrasting the three articles, paying more detailed attention to points you found of particular interest—perhaps because you that material especially thought-provoking or questionable/unconvincing or rich in terms of further study. (Note: If you find a single author book on a particular topic, you can count that as two sources.)

Sources could include journal articles, book chapters or on-line articles. You can focus on any topic you think is interesting. Here are some suggestions to get you started, but you can also consult with Anne, Robin or your GSI about refining a different topic:

- Language, gender and some specific ethnicity
- Gender and interruptions
- Language and sexual orientation
- Language, gender and bilingualism
- Gender and intonation
- Language and transsexuality
- Language and masculinity or femininity
- The language of female hip hop artists
- The “difference” model of language and gender
- Language, gender and power
- Gender and Politeness
- “Women’s” languages in science fiction
- Language, gender and sexual orientation in a sitcom like *Will and Grace*
- Language and gender in the classroom.
- Feminist language reform
- Language, gender and childhood socialization
- Language, gender and adolescence

To do this assignment, you will need to search one or more on-line databases (the MLA and the LLBA databases will be your best bet, though you can also look through the bibliographies of the sources you find) and possibly google your topic on the Internet (using scholar.google.com is also a great source). You should amass at least 3 sources. If you are unsure whether a source is a scholarly source, check with one of us.

In choosing the essays, you should keep the following in mind:

- Essays from the assigned readings should only be used for this assignment as additional essays.
- Scholarly essays typically have the following characteristics: they have footnotes/endnotes; they have a bibliography; they have an abstract preceding the body of the article; the author is affiliated with a university and that affiliation is attached to the author's by-line. Scholarly essays are typically not found in daily or weekly newspapers or magazines.
- Non-scholarly sources typically don't include footnotes/endnotes; a bibliography or mention of the author's affiliation (in fact, sometimes the author is not even mentioned). Examples of non-scholarly sources include newspapers, magazines, some kinds of web sites and television/radio broadcasts

Formatting:

- Your paper should have 1-inch margins all around.
- Your paper should use 11 or 12-point font (preferably Times).
- Your paper should be 1 ½ spaced.
- New paragraphs should be indented.
- There should not be blank lines between paragraphs.
- You should use in-text citation format (see MLA, LSA or APA guidelines)
- Quotations that are over 3 lines long should be blocked
- Footnotes should be used for comments about terminology, original versions of quotations not originally in English, or interesting side comments.
- Your works cited should follow one of the style guides below.

MLA style guide: <http://www.lib.umich.edu/ugl/guides/citationguide/acrobat/MLA5thed.pdf>

APA style guide: <http://www.lib.umich.edu/ugl/guides/citationguide/acrobat/APA5thed.pdf>

LSA style guide: <http://www.lsadc.org/info/pubs-lang-style.cfm>

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Paper Three: Analysis of your Recorded Conversation

Due: Friday, March 31

For the third paper, you will analyze aspects of your tape-recording within the framework of the readings that we have been doing about how men and women communicate in conversation. Over the past few weeks, we have read articles that have proposed numerous hypotheses and arguments about the communicative strategies that men and women employ when they talk and why. There is a clear need for more studies that continue to investigate these hypotheses to see whether they hold true with more data (particularly data that involves non-white, non-middle class speakers); whether the patterns that these articles describe appear to be more complicated; whether there are new patterns that are worth investigating, etc. In this paper, you will construct a coherent argument based on your data and analysis that relates to specific hypotheses and conclusions in the relevant course readings.

You will need to select probably between one and three features to analyze so that you can be detailed and thorough in your analysis. What will you write about? Remember Pamela Fishman's note at the beginning of her article: "I had some ideas of what to look for, but generally my categories and concepts developed out of the conversations on the tapes" (92). As you listen to your tape over and over and begin analyzing one or more features that seem of interest, you will start to realize which features will be most productive for analysis (and they may well be different from where you begin). The paper should include and analyze multiple excerpts from the tape-recording.

Length: 4-5 pages (1½-spaced, except excerpts from the tape, which should be single-spaced), Times font (11- or 12-point), 1" margins

Format (general): Please use MLA or LSA parenthetical format for citing secondary material; use footnotes for notes about terminology, interesting and relevant side notes, etc. Be sure to include: (1) at the top: your name, the date, your section number, and a **title** for the paper; (2) at the end: a Works Cited.

Format (specific): For these papers, you should use a more "scientific" format, similar to the format of many of the articles we have been reading (e.g., Coates, Pilkington, West, etc.). So please use section headings, and follow this general outline:

- Introduction
- Discussion of features/topics that are relevant for your analysis (this section will probably involve, among other things, a brief survey of the relevant literature)
- Methodology
- Results with specific excerpts of discourse and some discussion of these results (this section can be divided up however is most appropriate)
- Optional more general discussion section (this may be helpful if you are examining several features or contrasting two tape-recordings and you want to bring the discussion of multiple results sections together)
- Conclusion
- Optional appendices (if you want to include longer excerpts from your tape-recordings, additional charts, etc.)
- Works Cited

** Please turn in your tape with your final paper, and please cue it to a particularly relevant excerpt. **