

## Details: Research Report (Paper 4)

People sometimes think of researchers as extraordinarily intelligent people who wear lab coats to work and play with mysterious chemicals. But all of us are, to some extent, researchers. We often conduct research before making “big” decisions: buying a new vehicle, moving to a new city, accepting a new job. We do informal research on a daily basis, too: investigating where we can get the best deal on meals, checking out our options for entertainment, and inquiring about the requirements for a particular course or assignment. In the college setting, more formal types of research are important. This project is an adventure in research—not just reading research that others have conducted, but also trying your hand at a small research project of your own design.

**Overview:** For this paper, you will investigate ways in which mass media sources communicate (explicitly or implicitly) about language variation. Your work will be similar to the types of research on media and language variation that are presented in “Teaching Children to Discriminate” (Lippi-Green), “Out of the Hood and into the News” (Lee), and “Leroy, Big D, and Big Daddy Speakin Ebonics on the Internet” (Kirkland, Jackson, and Smitherman). To complete this assignment, you will need to

1. Choose a research question regarding media communication about language variation.
2. Review research related to the topic in order to establish a context for your own research.
3. Conduct and document primary source research that works toward answering your research question.
4. Compose a paper that reports on the context, methods, results, conclusions, and implications of your research.

**Goals:** The main goals for this assignment are for you to learn more about:

- designing, conducting, and presenting primary source research;
- writing in academic situations where you are asked to analyze (e.g., to characterize, investigate, or examine), to understand (e.g., to explain, interpret, or connect), and to evaluate (e.g., to assess, critique, or judge); and
- developing an informed perspective on the nature and significance of mass media representations of language variation.

**Audience:** Choose a specific audience that would benefit from learning about your research. Within your paper, clarify why your research is important for readers, and make rhetorical moves that persuade your audience of the relevance and validity of your research. This is a writing-to-learn assignment, so you will also be one of the audiences for your work. Your classmates are another important audience for your writing, as one of your aims is to build our collective knowledge about issues relating to language variation. You may eventually post a polished draft of your research report to your Web portfolio.

**Procedures and Requirements:** Complete the following steps in order to investigate ways in which mass media sources communicate (explicitly or implicitly) about language variation.

1. Choose a mass media source that will be the subject of your research (tv, film, radio, newspaper, magazine, or Internet) and then narrow this to a particular venue, such as a particular tv show (or type of tv show) or a particular newspaper column (or type of article). Create a research question regarding media sources’ communication about language variation. (Your question should be related to the topics that you wrote about for Papers 2 and 3.) It may be helpful to create a question similar to those explored by Lippi-Green; Lee; and Kirkland, Jackson, and Smitherman. For example: *In what ways is <a particular aspect of language variation> portrayed <or discussed or exhibited> in <a particular type of mass media venue>?*
2. Review the tips on primary source research in *The College Writer* pp. 450-456. Then write a research plan in which you state your specific research question, discuss the significance of your question, indicate where and how you will collect data for your research, and explain how you will analyze the data that you collect. Submit your research plan for my feedback and approval.

3. Review scholarly literature related to the topic in order to establish a scholarly context for your own research. Make notes about the ways that your research is informed by or builds on others' work. Also note the ways that your research will extend or "fill in the gaps" in existing research on the topic. These notes will be helpful to you when you write the introduction to your research report, which should include a minimum of four scholarly sources. You are welcome to use sources that you included in Papers 2 and 3.
4. Conduct and document primary source research that works toward answering your research question. Follow the plan that you had approved by me for step 2.
5. Compose a paper that reports on the scholarly context, methods, results, conclusions, and implications of your research. Use APA-style documentation. The final draft should be 4-5 double-spaced pages of text and should meet the standards listed in the grading section below. Note the specific audience for whom you are writing at the top of the first page of your report.

You may choose the most appropriate format for your report. In class we will discuss the basic IMRAD structure and consider various papers as models—some that use IMRAD explicitly for formatting (see *The College Writer* pp. 556-564), and others that use IMRAD more subtly (see "Teaching Children to Discriminate" by Lippi-Green, "Out of the Hood and into the News" by Lee, and "Leroy, Big D, and Big Daddy Speakin Ebonics on the Internet" by Kirkland, Jackson, and Smitherman).

**Due Dates:** The final draft of this paper is due on Thursday, November 30. Due dates for workshop drafts are listed in the syllabus. Workshop drafts are important for you and for your classmates who learn with you. Each time that you come unprepared for a workshop will result in a .5 reduction (on a 4.0 scale) from your grade on the final draft of this paper.

**Grading:** The research report is worth 15% of your final grade. I will grade your project holistically, taking all of the components together into account—with attention given to content and rhetorical appeals as well as to structure, coherence, and conventions of format, style, grammar, usage, and documentation. A quality research report for ENG 101 will:

- ✓ Thoughtfully and skillfully explore a question regarding media sources' communication about language variation.
- ✓ Establish a scholarly context for the relevance and significance of the research in an introduction that integrates at least four relevant scholarly sources.
- ✓ Use appropriate and effective rhetorical appeals in the design and presentation of the research.
- ✓ Structure the paper in clear, cohesive manner that supports the purposes of the project and facilitate communication with the intended audience.
- ✓ Employ appropriate conventions of format, style, grammar, and usage to support the purposes of the paper and facilitate communication with the intended audience.
- ✓ Document in APA style all sources whose words, illustrations, or ideas are cited or used in the paper.
- ✓ Demonstrate an ethical approach to writing and research processes and products.
- ✓ Exhibit a developed and accurate understanding of the principles addressed in class, in the assigned readings and activities, and in my responses to your work.



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