

Module 2 Assignment Bundle and Instructions

Your Task:

Write a persuasive essay on a topic you are learning about in your disciplinary field of study.

You chose your major, your field of study, for a reason, right? Think about that reason for a moment. Pause and reflect upon what it is you love about your field of study. What was it that first called you to the vocation, the disciplinary field? What specifically is so compelling to you about your field of study that you would like to spend your life as an educator, or a physicist, an economist, a CEO, a social worker, a psychologist, a dancer, an artist, a sociologist, an anthropologist, an historian, a political scientist, a biologist, a kinesiologist, human resources specialist, a damage control expert, a coder, a criminologist, a linguist, a marketing expert, a chemist, a philosopher, a film-maker, a musician, a writer, a professional writer?

What called you to the field? What sparked the urgency to study in the field? And what specific topic - or issue, or theory, or concept, or equation, or approach, or way of seeing – has caught your attention since you have begun studying in your field.

Instructions:

Choose an essay from any one of your current – or past – university courses on a subject matter in your particular field that interests you, that you find compelling, fascinating, intriguing, disturbing, eye-opening, mind-blowing, and return to it, re-invest in it to not only understand it more, but to explore further why it matters, why it matters to you, why it matters in 2021. It has to be a peer-reviewed essay in a journal, or an essay on your syllabus. You're going to "think with" that essay as you develop an argument that persuades someone who is not in your field of study why the topic, concept, equation, approach, theory, or way of seeing is important to your discipline. Why, in other words, is the essay's argument, concept, theory, methodology, important?

Using the rhetorical appeals, create a balanced stance, a persona that positions you as an expert who is writing for an audience of non-experts. Assume the role of expert and use – perform - the available rhetorical acts of persuasion we'll be studying in the next weeks to develop a critically insightful essay that will effectively persuade your audience to understand the "conversation" that is happening in your field about the topic and how and why that "conversation" matters to the field, to you, to your audience, to the world.

You are going to develop a thesis that not only promises to demonstrate why your theory or concept or equation matters, but also how it has implications for the future: how might the theory or concept or equation you are writing about make us better? How might it, once we read about its significance, its implications, change our thinking or change our habits, behaviours, even beliefs, and make us be better and do better? More critically aware? More empathic, ethical? More socio-politically astute? More ecologically mindful? More collaborative? More connected? Even more playful?

On the first page of your argument, before your introductory paragraph, provide bibliographical information of the essay you are "thinking with" – if you are unsure about the essay you've chosen, talk to your TA. You only need to use this one source to develop your argument; you may, if you like, also

use other sources, but your informed opinion and your persuasive voice should shape the majority of the argument.

Essay length: 1000 words, 12-point font, double spaced.

To write a persuasive argument based on your chosen topic, you will need to:

- Provide proof that your topic is an issue in your field of study (see above)
- Develop a specific thesis
- Organize your main points in the most persuasive order, which means deciding what order works best for your argument
- Consider what balance of ethos, logos, and pathos works best for your argument
- Use a variety of sentence structures
- Craft clear, cliché free prose and avoid overly wordy, redundant, or vague phrasing; make every word count and every sentence meaningful
- Search for the best nouns, verbs, and adjectives for your purpose – every word should be working strategically for you and your argument.
- Select the best examples of quotations or points from your source text
 - Contextualize quotations or paraphrases – quotations and paraphrase don't stand on their own
 - Ensure that your voice is the main voice of the argument, which means that you shouldn't overuse quotations and that your points should be presented with confidence and conviction
 - Incorporate and cite any and all secondary sources according to MLA citation guidelines

Academic dishonesty will be treated seriously.

Thesis: You will develop a thesis based on your chosen topic. To “prove” or support your thesis, you will use your secondary source, yes, but your own point-of-view should be your main means of persuading your reader. That is, don't be afraid to have an informed opinion.

You should be arguing for something you think is right or true or necessary and not just restating someone else's argument.

Style: avoid “academic-ese” – that is, do not use overly formal language that distracts from the point you are making. Do not use “filler” phrases like “due to the fact that” or “in the following quotation x argues that”. Think, instead, about how to write persuasively to engage your reader and convince her of the power of your argument so that she can think differently about your topic - or even change her behaviour or actions as a result of reading your persuasive argument. And yes, you can use the pronoun “I”.

Chi Luu, “Lingua Obscura: Young Women’s Language Patterns at the Forefront of Linguistic Change”. *JSTOR Daily*, 2015, <https://daily.jstor.org/young-womens-language-patterns-at-the-forefront-of-linguistic-change/>.

So, Like, What's With All the Sexism? Young Women Are Linguistic Leaders.

Beyonce said it. Linguists say it: girls run the world (of language).

Lately, I've been, like, thinking about the way I speak: my language. How do others perceive me from the way I talk? Are my quirks and quips such as my "hmms", or my "uhms" between sentences, being, like, judged? Do I prolong too often the final syllable that I slur it ouuu? Do I, like, add in "like " unconsciously between words? *Why do I talk the way I talk?*

Linguistic descriptivists remind us that language is always evolving. Language is, itself, evolution. The change is progressive: it's normal and natural. New registers and dialects will emerge and merge into a language, and new words and dictions will arise from these changes. But what exactly brings about these changes? *Who* is behind these linguistic evolutions?

Who run the world? Yes, Beyonce said it: girls. According to many socio-linguistic studies published over the years, it's young women who are the ones dominating the forefront of language change. The Tagliamonte and D'Arcy study explains that, because women *tend to be* the primary caregivers, their children end up adopting their linguistic patterns, which subsequently diffuse into mainstream speech as they grow older. In other words, language changes are female dominated. [*"Female-dominated language" in a "male-dominated society". Ironic, isn't it?*]

Yet most often, the speech and language patterns of these young women are met with disapproval. Take the examples of features such as the "like" fillers: a constant repetitive use of "like " in between words; or the use of uptalk: a rise in intonation turning a statement into a question; or the vocal fry: a creaky-like voice produced by vibrations in the larynx during speech. Many linguistic studies have observed that young women often encounter negative attitudes towards these features. These linguistic features used by young women, like me, are being met with criticism---and even mockery--- as some say young women are negatively influencing the collective speech. Some even say that we are ruining language. They say that

the way we talk is supposedly inept or unfit for language use. They say that young women should **fix** the way they speak, that we should, apparently, speak the way all should speak: the standard language.

[Now, before I move forward, I'm not saying that we should get rid of "the standard language" or that everyone should speak with uptalk, vocal fry and say "and she was, like, yeah, like..." every five seconds. Prescriptive language exists too: it coexists- along with descriptive language and can be useful, even necessary, within our language. But what I would like for you to ponder on is the origin of the standard language, of its history, of its creators, and most importantly- of its institutionalized practices on language, and its power of influence over the more marginalized social groups that exist within our culture.]

So, the standard language subdues (or is trying to subdue) young women, *a more marginalized social group*, to conform to their use of language in order to be respected within the societies of language, business, and *power*: these domains that the kingdom of the standard language rule. The question being asked is: Why are young women's speech and linguistic patterns *perceived as a threat* to the standard language? Descriptive linguists affirm that these feminine linguistic patterns are innovatively evolving language, in which users will eventually, and almost inevitably, adopt these features. Yet these linguistic features are still viewed in a negative light, and the negative attitudes are *upholding* inequality towards young women; inhibiting them from being treated justly in positions of authority, of education, and of other positions within their communities. Millar (2015) from ABC labelled vocal fry as a **"debilitating speaking disorder afflicting North American Women...[that] vocal fry will destroy your vocal folds and your job prospects"**. A 2014 linguistic study observed samples of a young woman's voice using vocal fry compared to a man's voice using vocal fry speaking the exact same sentences and revealed that it was the young woman's speech that was more commonly perceived in a negative way. Based upon the young woman's speech, her character

was perceived by employers as “less **competent, less educated, less trustworthy, less attractive, and less hireable**” (Anderson, et al.). [*Wow...*]

The truth is that, as Chi Luu asserts in her article *Lingua Obscura: Young Women’s Language Patterns at the Forefront of Linguistic Change*, “**sexism plays a role in how the speech of young women is perceived**”. And this stems from the dominating standard language ideologies, rooted in patriarchal history, in social domination, in upper-class institutionalized ideologies, and in the hierarchy of power within our culture.

It is evident, I think, that there exists an *underlying sexist lens* within the common view dominating language perception, which is targeting young women who use these linguistic features. As a more marginalized social group, we are already labelled with several negative perceptions and judgments, and so, our language patterns are more conspicuous, more susceptible to censure and criticism. The perception towards young women and their language has always been negative. McCulloch expertly explains sexism in the perception of young female language use:

“Our society doesn’t dislike young women’s speech because of anything inherently bad about vocal fry, or uptalk, or “like”. Rather, we dislike vocal fry, uptalk, and “like”, and so on because they’re associated with young women, and anyone who doesn’t speak like a middle-aged, middle-class straight white cis man is doing it wrong” (McCulloch, 2015)

Consider this: How would men using linguistic features like uptalk, and vocal fry be perceived? Would they be perceived so negatively? Would they even be perceived at all? Chi Luu’s article reveals a shocking truth, that uptalk is used more often by people in dominant positions who assert power, such as (former) President George. W Bush: a middle aged straight white cis man. When registers of language and speech patterns are used by a more prestigious social group, these features are in fact perceived in a positive way, or not even noticed at all. This is the ideology of standard language: whatever is used by those in power, and those who

dominate, will be considered the standard and the norm. And so, everyone else who is not one of them, is compelled (*or more so "forced"*) to adopt the standard language, so they too can (attempt to) gain some sort of power and status for themselves.

So, how can we be leaders of linguistic change; how do we deviate from this ideology? Well, you, the speaker of a language, and many variants of language, must be aware that there exists a relationship between social class and language use. Basically, what you need to understand is: standard language orders homogeneity, but linguistic change is “orderly heterogeneity” (Radford). You must also understand that when you speak apart from the standard language, when you speak using a negatively perceived variant of language, you are a creator of diversity; of community; of solidarity; and of individuality. Be this kind of speaker. Continue to speak how you speak. Don't conform and homogenize *your language*. Be unique and bring something new to the table (of language). [*just, like, spice it up!*]

Our own dialects, variants, registers, and styles of language are what expand and transmogrify it. We create communities of various, complex, and enriched varieties of speech, of communication, and of lingo. This is true power. And that is why, as Chi Luu cleverly put it: “**women are linguistic powerhouses**”.

And you know what? You too have that power- the power to bring change to language, to bring forth something new, and something that challenges the patriarchal ideologies. You have the power to open doors for others to evolve in their own language, and to evolve language as a whole. Don't support language discrimination and sexism upheld by dominant standard language ideologies, but be its challengers and its perpetrators. Become language harmonizers. Be ‘language powerhouses’, just like the young women continuously changing the world of language.

So, like, to sum everything uuup? Sexism rooted in standard language ideology is, like, clearly trying to devalue the fact that young women are, like, these linguistic leaders who,

like, change an entire language over timmmeee? I mean, like, this is exactly what Beyonce said in that song, y'knowww? Who run the world? That's right, it's us! You and me, gal pal. We are who run the world: girlz.

Works Cited

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