

What are we doing?

Each group will collect and analyze linguistic data in order to try to answer an original research question proposed and developed by the group. In addition to designing and conducting the experiment, each group will prepare an analysis that describes the group's research question, reviews and contextualizes previous scholarship published on the topic, and outlines the group's hypothesis, rationale, methodology, features documented, and findings.

Why are we doing it?

Our goals for the project are to apply the skills, theory, terminology, methods, and other knowledge you are acquiring in English 4720 to original linguistic research, as well as to improve your general research, analytical, and writing skills, as appropriate for students working at the 4000 level.

How do we do it?

1. **Start with a research question:** For its first tasks, each group will decide on a general topic and collaborate on developing a specific research question. This question should outline what you are attempting to find out about some aspect of language variation and lead to your group's establishment of a hypothesis.

Topic ideas (these are only examples – feel free to generate your own original topics):

The Northern Cities Shift: A possible research question might be, "Is /æ/-raising more likely to include tensing among speakers from the east side of Michigan than it is among speakers from the west side of the state?"

Language variation in the classroom: Consider talking with pre- and/or in-service teachers about their attitudes and behavior toward students who speak non-mainstream varieties of English. You could use quantitative methods to measure these attitudes, using a questionnaire, or you could use qualitative methods, by interviewing participants and asking questions such as how they respond to students who use linguistic forms not widely considered 'grammatical' or 'correct' in classroom settings, or you could combine quantitative and qualitative methods.

Language attitudes: Where do people think the most "correct" English is spoken? For this type of question, you can try a map questionnaire, an interview or written survey, or recordings of different speakers played for research participants who are asked to evaluate each speaker for "correctness."

Whatever the topic, you will need to articulate a specific linguistic question that you hope to answer, with the goal of adding to existing knowledge about language use in American English.

2. Once you have selected a topic, **familiarize yourselves with the published research on it.** To keep from re-inventing the wheel and to establish their own credibility, researchers need to know what work has already been done on their topic. *This means consulting journal articles and books on your topic at every stage of the project.* Your work must be informed by previous research in the topic. You might test the findings of other researchers, challenge earlier work, or use previous work as a model for your data collection and analysis methods. Researchers have to be familiar with the state of the art on their topic, and so review of published scholarship is a key component of any research project, including this one.

3. **Develop your methodology:** Each group will need to develop a specific method for selecting participants and for eliciting and collecting speech data. Your group's methodology will need to be overtly articulated, meaning that anyone reading your study should be able to reproduce it based on your description of how you did it. You get to design your data collection methods, and like all researchers, you must also explain and justify your decisions.

4. **Recruit participants and collect data:** All participants in your study must give their **informed consent** using the forms approved by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board for our class. I will provide these forms, and we will discuss ethical consent protocols in class.

5. **Analyze your data:** What will you do with the data once you've collected it? Each group will have to decide how to use its data and will need to articulate the analysis methods used and their rationale. All researchers are expected to justify the decisions they make about how they use their data.

6. **Put it all together:** Create and refine the final product. See below for specific guidelines and expectations.

Deliverables, due on Wednesday, December 08. Each group will present its project to the class (20 min. per group) and will turn it in to me for evaluation in one of the following formats, chosen by the group:

1. **Scholarly analysis in paper form, 6-8 pages of journal-article quality**
2. **Professional web site that incorporates all elements of a journal article**
3. **Documentary video that incorporates all project requirements**

If your group chooses option b or c, please consult extensively with me as you work, as these formats can be more difficult to manage well than you might think. All groups should consult with Aanee and me, and students are strongly encouraged to go to the Writing Center for help. My expectations are high, and success at meeting them can be only be achieved by way of careful drafting, multiple revisions, and meticulous editing.

Regardless of the format selected, all groups must include the following:

1. An introduction to the project, including
 - a. discussion of research question or hypothesis and rationale for project
 - b. orientation to bring your audience up to speed on the topic and previous research done on it
 - c. review of published scholarly research consulted for the project
2. Description and justification of methodology, including data collection and participant selection
3. Presentation of data
4. Analysis and discussion of data
5. Conclusions
6. Works cited
7. Appendix: Includes interview questions, written or online questionnaires, type-and-token data, and any other data collection and/or analysis material. **Also, please turn in all informed consent sheets. Consent forms should all be stapled together in a single packet for each group but submitted separately from other materials; these forms must be kept on file in my office and kept separate from the data collected.**

Finally, each student must complete an individual self- and group-evaluation sheet. I will provide a worksheet for you to use to reflect on your experiences working on the project as well as to describe and evaluate each group member's contributions. Your responses will be kept confidential. Please keep this sheet separate from other project materials in order to assure your privacy and confidentiality.