Short Paper Instructions: Opinion Response

LING 140: Language in the US

Spring 2024

In this Short Paper, you will closely read and examine an opinion article, such as that presented in the Op-Ed section of a newspaper. You can submit this kind of paper for any section of this course ("Variation", "Power", or "Histories"). As always, there is no minimum or maximum length, but I expect about 500-750 words (2-3 double-spaced pages).

Choose an article, either from the list on Moodle or from another source (if it's not on Moodle, then check with Chris first). Read the article thoroughly and take notes. You should be able to summarize the main idea in a sentence or two.

After reading, develop your own take on the topic in relation to the opinion piece. You might disagree entirely, agree entirely, want to add nuance, want to extend some aspect of the opinion into a new area, or anything in between. Respond to specific arguments and/or examples from the article, and reference ideas from linguistics. You may choose to research scholarly sources, such as handbooks, to support your ideas. Formulate a one-sentence thesis statement that encapsulates your main idea.

When you write your paper, imagine that you are writing an article that will be published in the same venue as the original opinion piece, as a response to that article. Try to follow similar writing style and level of technical detail. This will likely mean expressing yourself in a way that is accessible to the general public, but not sacrificing accuracy. There is some freedom in how you structure your paper, but it should include the components listed in the Grading Rubric.

Here are some suggestions for thesis statements. These are just general ideas; use your own words. This is not an exhaustive list, just some ideas to spark your creativity:

- I agree with the author's argument. In this response, I support their perspective with additional evidence from scholarly linguistic sources.
- I agree with aspects of the opinion article, but the author is missing some important nuance. In this response I will introduce evidence clarifying these ideas.
- The author makes inaccurate claims. In this response, I will refute their inaccurate claims based on evidence from scholarly linguistic sources.

You may find [this advice about writing Op-Eds](#) helpful.

Grading Rubric

You will be graded according to the following criteria:

A successful opinion response will…
- … begin with an opening paragraph with a "hook": a bold or enticing claim, fact, or idea that draws the reader into reading
- … express a coherent thesis statement at the end of your opening paragraph
- … develop components or supporting ideas through subsequent paragraphs
- …use appropriate evidence, potentially including course materials and other sources
- …end with a conclusion that builds on the ideas presented in the piece and points toward the future, such as with a call to action or provocative question

For each of these points, the paper will be rated "2" if it succeeds in this area, "1" if it partially succeeds, and "0" if it does not succeed. Rewrites are welcome and re-graded.