

Requirements for Term Papers Based on Empirical Linguistic Data

Version 1.2 (April 27, 2017)

Term papers which are based on empirical linguistic data (e.g. in classes on sociolinguistics) must satisfy the following criteria:

- (a) **Research question** – Your term paper must be based on a **three-membered research question** in the following format.
- (i) **Topic:** “I am studying...”
 - (ii) **Indirect question:** “Because I want to find out what, why, how...”
 - (iii) **Significance:** “... in order to help the readers understand how, why, or whether...”

Example I am studying the pronunciation of [r] in New York because I want to find out whether different social groups differ with respect to their pronunciation, in order to help my readers understand how social factors influence our linguistic behaviour.

Cf. BOOTH, COLOMB, and WILLIAMS (2008: 45–8)

The research question must be motivated and elaborated on in the introduction.

- (b) **Data** – The term paper must be based on the analysis of an actual, authentic, linguistic dataset, such as...
- a linguistic corpus.
 - your own interview data.
 - experimental data.

Your dataset must be valid, objective and representative of a speech community. If you submit a term paper which does not include your own analysis of a valid dataset, you will not pass.

Your complete dataset including your data and your annotation must be handed in in digital format (i.e. on a CD or a USB drive).

- (c) **Quantitative approach** – In the results section, you must provide quantitative data...
- (i) both in the form of a contingency table...

	Women	Men
<i>-in</i>	243	285
<i>-ing</i>	57	15

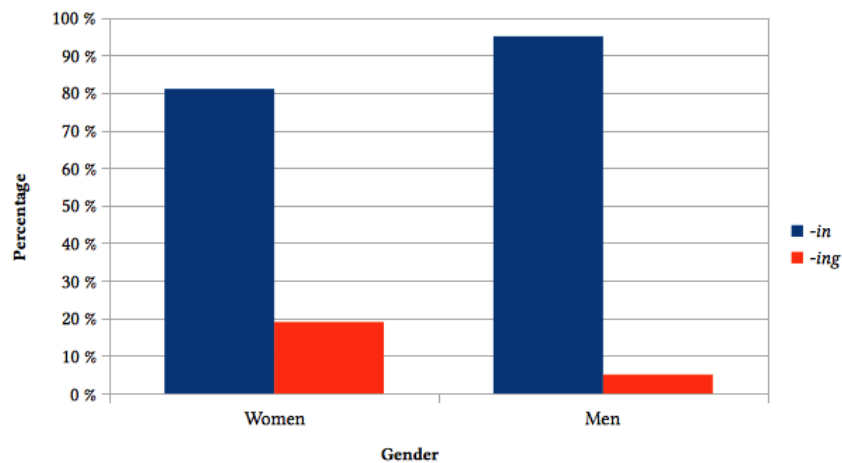
Table 1: *-in* vs. *-ing* by gender

In many cases, it will also make sense to provide percentages:

	% Women	% Men
<i>-in</i>	81	95
<i>-ing</i>	19	5

Table 2: *-in* vs. *-ing* by gender (Percentages)

(ii) and in the form of a corresponding graph.

Figure 1: *-in* vs. *-ing* by gender (Percentages)

(d) **Structure** – Unless a different structure is developed in class, your study should have the following components:

- (i) **Introduction:** Develops and states the research question (cf. (a)).
- (ii) **Background:** Introduces each linguistic variable which will be addressed in the analysis (e.g. the use of one or another vowel by two groups of speakers, or the omission of /r/ depending on social class etc.)! Describe the variable and cite former studies which have analysed it. In addition to that, make sure that you have surveyed all relevant previous research related to your topic and that you properly cite these sources.
- (iii) **Methods and data:** Provides details about your sampling process, data handling, your corpus, informants or experiments.
- (iv) The **Results** section is the main part of your study. It provides...
 - a detailed breakdown and discussion of your results.

- tables and graphs (cf. (c)).
- examples from your corpus.

(v) The **Conclusion** relates the results to your research question and the bigger picture of linguistics.

(e) **Consultation** – It is essential to talk to the instructor about your research question, your corpus and your methodology before you start working. You are unlikely to pass if you fail to do.