

The journal assignment is designed to be a fun and informal way to track your thinking about language outside of the classroom. Language is everywhere, and you will appreciate what you learn in this class much more if you start to pay attention to how language is used outside of class. Therefore, you are to keep a journal describing things you have noticed about language (spoken or written) that have struck you as interesting. Your journal entries will be collected five times throughout the semester.

There are no real rules for how to do a journal entry, but there are some guidelines to follow. In the beginning especially, your entries may be a little bit less formal, because you will not know as much technical vocabulary about linguistics and will not be used to paying attention to language in such detail. As we move further along through the course, however, I hope your entries will begin to show more evidence of your having understood concepts covered in class and your awareness of them outside of the classroom. Your entries do not necessarily have to be tied to the readings or to the schedule of topics on the syllabus, but if you like you can write some of your journal entries as responses to what we've read or discussed in class. Do not think your topics for entries need to be especially academic in nature; don't shy away from things like slang and popular culture if they interest you.

As a general guideline, aim for at least two type-written pages each time you turn a journal in. There is no length requirement for the individual entries; you could be fascinated by one topic and talk about it for two pages, or you could have several shorter entries that add up to two pages. The entries themselves will be graded based on the quality of effort and understanding you have put into thinking about the topic. Here's a sample of how a journal entry might be graded for quality:

*Poor:* I watched the movie "Shaun of the Dead" and I had a hard time understanding some of what they said. Their accents were funny and they used different words for some things.

*Fair:* I watched the movie "Shaun of the Dead," which is a British film, and I had a hard time understanding some of what they said. For example, there is a scene where they are trying to kill zombies by throwing record albums at them, and they're sorting through their record collection and naming off the albums to decide whether they're willing to throw them or not. I didn't understand some of the band names they mentioned. I had to put the subtitles on to get it, but that helped a lot.

*Better:* I watched the movie "Shaun of the Dead," which is a British film, and I had a hard time understanding some of what they said. Their accents are different from what I am used to hearing, of course, so that probably has a lot to do with it, but I noticed that not all the actors really sounded exactly like each other, especially one character who was played by an Irish actor, and surprisingly I was able to understand him better. However, I don't know to what extent the accents

used in the film are the actors' normal ways of talking, or whether some of their speech was also specific to their portrayal of the characters. The two lead characters were the hardest for me to understand at times, but their characters are also supposed to be sort of slackers who aren't very high up in society, so maybe that is part of the reason, because I also noticed that I understand the lead actor a lot better in another movie, "Hot Fuzz," where he is playing a more straight-laced character. I wonder to what extent actors really think about their accents when they play a certain role. You can kind of see the same stereotypes at work in American films, like whenever the character is a tough guy, he'll have a New York accent, or if he's stupid, he'll talk like a southerner. I don't know how many of those choices are conscious or unconscious, but it was interesting to think about those things in terms of a society I'm not as familiar with as American society.

*Best:* I watched the movie "Shaun of the Dead," which is a British film, and I made some interesting observations while listening to the commentary. First of all, I had noticed during the movie that I had a hard time understanding some of what the characters were saying, which didn't really surprise me since they're foreign, but I was just struck that they use certain pronunciations that I had never really heard in English before. For example, on the commentary, there is a part where the writers are talking about how they filmed a "tube station" in a certain part of the city where there isn't actually a tube station, just because they thought it would be fun to put one there. Naturally, some Americans are not familiar with the term "tube station," which is another way of saying what we would call a subway station, so the lexical difference is likely to be somewhat confusing. However, what threw me off even more was that when both of these individuals pronounced "tube station," I thought they were saying "cheap station," and I really had no clue what this was. I finally figured out that they are pronouncing the [t] sound as an affricate instead of a stop. What was even more interesting, though, was that they seemed to be aware that their language choices affect the way different audiences perceive the movie. For example, they commented on a scene in which the main characters see a zombie for the first time in their yard, but they don't yet know that she is a zombie. In the scene, they say "she's so drunk," and the writers said that they used the word "drunk" instead of "pissed" so that the American audiences wouldn't have any problems understanding what was meant. So I think perhaps people are more conscious of the lexical differences between different regions, and they know how to accommodate to others by changing their vocabulary, but they are less conscious of their phonological patterns, or if they are conscious of them they may find it harder to change them.

If you would like some inspiration for further ideas that you may write about, look at some of the links on the course website, visit the blog <http://wishydig.blogspot.com> (a concept similar to this journal, but carried out by a graduate student in English at Purdue), look at some of the chapters in your textbooks that we will not be reading in class, or look at the discussion questions in your textbooks that are not assigned for homework.