

THIS ASSIGNMENT HAS YOU READING THIS AND DOING THE 4 QUESTIONS BELOW.
PLEASE READ OVER THE QUESTIONS AND MAKE SURE IT IS SOMETHING YOU CAN DO
BEFORE BIDDING. THANK YOU

INFORMATIVE USE OF LANGUAGE V. EMOTIVE AND EXPRESSIVE USE OF LANGUAGE AS APPLIED TO NEWS MEDIA AND EDITORIALIZING

As your reading on logic and language points out, language can serve a number of different functions. For instance, it can be used to convey information. It can also be used to express attitudes and to manipulate readers to take a certain attitude. While these functions are not mutually exclusive, some uses of language tend to be largely intended to be informative while others are also largely intended to influence the attitudes or feelings of the reader. A good example of this distinction can be found in the manner in which stories are presented by news organizations such as newspapers like the New York Times and TV network news organizations such as CNN and Fox News. In so-called “hard news” reporting, journalists report the facts in an effort to keep their own attitudes, emotions, and opinions out of the report. In contrast, editorializing typically involves taking a stand on an issue and attempting to sway the reader to a particular point of view. Thus, editorials often use emotively expressive language.

For example, here is a lead sentence in an article that appeared on the front page of the New York Times on December 2, 2013:

The Metro-North train that derailed in the Bronx on Sunday, killing four people, was traveling more than double the allowable speed through a curving stretch of track...

Notice how the writer simply reports the facts without using emotive or expressive language. While the facts as conveyed may lead the reader to form his or her own feelings and attitudes on the subject of the report, the writer does not attempt to influence the reader by using expressive or emotive language. In contrast, consider the following (fictitious) “editorial” about the same event:

The Metro-North train that derailed in the Bronx on Sunday, killing four people, was traveling like a bat out of hell at an insane speed of more than double the allowable speed. What kind of stupid idiot would drive like that through such a treacherous curving stretch of track....whoever did this should be horse whipped!

This second description uses emotive language and is obviously aimed at getting the reader to take a condemnatory attitude toward the operator of the Metro-North train that derailed. In contrast, most journalism codes of ethics admonish news organizations not to confuse reporting news with editorializing. Thus, in reporting the news, a journalist is supposed to use language informatively; while in editorializing the expressive and emotive use of language can be acceptable. Of course, discrete editorials do well to argue from evidence based on facts rather than from “smokescreens” of emotive language that conceal one’s lack of information. In such “discrete” editorializing personal attacks such as “what sort of stupid idiot would drive like that” are avoided. Yet some emotively active language such as “driving twice the allowed speed was irresponsible” may be quite suitable in an editorial.

ASSIGNMENT FOR:
INFORMATIVE USE OF LANGUAGE V. EMOTIVE AND EXPRESSIVE USE OF LANGUAGE AS
APPLIED TO NEWS MEDIA AND EDITORIALIZING

1. Write a description of an event (1 PARAGRAPH or so in length) that has taken place using informative language and avoiding expressive or emotive language. The event can be something in the news or even something you recently experienced. Make believe that you are reporter who is reporting on the event, trying your best to keep your own feelings and attitudes out of your description by choosing language that is factual and emotionally neutral.
2. Now, revise your report, turning it into an editorial by discretely adding some emotive or expressive language.
3. Go online and look for a news source such as an online newspaper or a major news network such as CNN, Fox, NBC, ABC, or CBS, and find a news report that is supposed to simply report the news but is really a disguised editorial. Write a brief paragraph describing the news story, the news organization you found it on, and what expressive and/or emotive language you found in it that makes it more like an editorial than a news story.
4. What news source/s do you get most of your news from? In your estimation, does this source/s do a reasonable job at keeping editorials on the editorial page and out of news reporting?