

Project #1: A Right to My Own Language

Rough Draft Due: 8/31

Final Draft Due: 9/10

The Situation: Inspired by a policy statement written by the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), the statement “Student’s Right to their Own Language” condemns teaching practices which do not value student’s native tongue, which forced them to assimilate and use Standard English or face teasing and lowered grades.

The Assignment: In a personal narrative, focus on identifying what your unique language consists of. Even though you may not be bilingual, maybe you use sign language with a deaf relative, or IM your friends, or spoke pig latin in the third grade to confuse your crabby teacher. Everyone uses language differently—even though all of us in class speak English, each one of us uses it in a slightly different way in various situations. For ideas, look to the articles and poems we’re reading for this unit: all of them are personal narratives about language experiences.

The Context/Audience: Our academic writing class.

The Purpose: To not only communicate your unique language experience with your peers, but also for you to gain perspective on the ways in which you use language daily.

The Format: Traditional essay format, use MLA citation. See your handbook for specifics of MLA.

In writing your narrative, you may choose to refer to any of these articles or poems we’re reading for this unit:

Raymond, “On Being 17, Bright, and Unable to Read” Rose, “Entering the Conversation” Smith, “Talking Wrong” Mellix, “From Outside, In” Tan, “Mother Tongue” Agosin, “Always Living in Spanish” and “English” Lorde, “Public School No. 18: Paterson, NJ”
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Thesis: While this won’t be a traditional argumentative essay, your narrative should of course have a focused main idea. Be sure to clearly identify that main idea early on in the narrative.

A Reminder: Be sure to focus your narrative. Choose one specific event or experience you have had concerning your language, or one language habit you have. Don't try to write a comprehensive autobiography of your language history in 2-3 pages. This is meant to be a personal narrative, as creative as possible, in the spirit of the articles/poems we're reading. Refer to the list of readings on the previous page to see how they were able to focus their narratives.

Grading: 20 points.

Other details:

- ◇ Use MLA format (see your handbook, or ask me, for details).
- ◇ 2-3 pages, double-spaced, no title page.
- ◇ Turn in your draft electronically, but turn in your final in hard copy format.
- ◇ Keep your final draft saved electronically somewhere, since you may choose to include it in your final portfolio at the end of the semester.
- ◇ Revision Policy: Because this is a quick unit, there is no time available to revise. You will be able to revise most other projects.
- ◇ I'm available for conferences if you have questions (phone 2-9551, email efleitz@bgsu.edu). Also the Writing Center is an excellent resource to get good feedback.

Happy Writing!