

**Essay 4: Language and Identity, Language and Power**  
**ENWR 100: Introduction to College Writing**  
**Instructor: Emily Isaacs**

**Introduction to the Assignment:**

For this essay you will be combining the skills you have developed in the previous assignments to write an academic essay in which you make a claim about language that is well supported through your own reasoning, and the ideas of others we have read. The challenge of this assignment is that you, the writer, have to figure out what exactly you want to write about and what central claim you want to make. The topic is what we have been discussing for the last few weeks: language, identity and power.

**Assignment:**

Write a three to four page essay in which you explore and develop a central claim (a point of view) about language.

**Assignment Requirements:**

1. For this paper you must write about and discuss the ideas of any two of the writers from this unit. These writers are all writing about either the relationship between language and identity, or the relationship between language and power. You will choose two writers who help you address your central question.
2. During the course of your essay you need to include at least one summary of a part of one of the assigned articles, and also at least one quote from one of the assigned essays.
3. You must write about an issue, an idea, and not **primarily** about your personal experiences. This is not an assignment to (only) tell your family's story. That is, you are not to simply tell the story of your experiences with language acquisition, or your family's experiences with language. So you may draw on personal knowledge to exemplify a point—indeed, that can be wonderful and effective--, but your personal story should not take up the bulk of your essay.

**Getting Started:**

1. Review all of the homework assignments you have completed on these readings.
2. Review the readings themselves, noting points where you were especially interested, or where you sense there is an "argument," or a debatable point.
3. Freewrite for several minutes, noting the conflicts or disagreements that you observed. These ideas are good ones to consider for your essay.
4. Try something else: Freewrite about what you want your teacher and classmates to understand about any in the following list. Try a few; see what sticks. These ideas are also good to consider for your essay.
  - a. How language is very important, central even, to who we are as individuals.
  - b. How language isn't very important to who a person is
  - c. How knowing a language is like knowing a culture
  - d. How not knowing a language keeps people from knowing a culture
  - e. What happens to families when they do not share the same language
  - f. The relationship between language and culture
  - g. The social pressure to learn English
  - h. The connection between learning English and assimilating into American culture
  - i. The value of resisting American culture and total assimilation
  - j. The possibilities of living in two worlds – the dominant American/English/middle-class world and a home world which may be very different.
  - k. Your own ideas.