ENGL 102: Major Writing Assignment: Research Project

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Corresponding Essay

- Raymer, Rachel. "Exploring Bilingual Student Experiences in American Education." *Cardinal Compositions*, 2020-2021 issue, pp. 33-41.

English 102 Major Writing Assignment for Unit 3: Research Project

One of the goals of this course is to introduce you to a new way of thinking about academic writing (as an ongoing scholarly conversation) and then to give you the opportunity to participate in that conversation. You'll get the chance to do just this in your final project for the course, where you will develop a research question/s that is grounded in some of the texts we've read and the discussions we've been having this semester. You'll then attempt to answer that question by conducting research of your own, though on a *very small scale* (i.e., interviewing someone or developing survey questions that you send to several people).

What topic you decide to pursue for this project is fairly flexible, as long as your project involves researching some aspect of writing, as long as you can answer your research question by interviewing or surveying a very small number of people, and as long as it's clear that your project builds on the research we've already read this semester (which gives you more room to align this project with your own interests, but may also make this more challenging). This semester our readings and discussions have centered around the following keywords:

- readers/reading strategies
- language difference, bilingual/multilingual writers
- code meshing
- identity/identities
- standard language ideology, racism, and prejudice toward "non-standard" language use
- prior knowledge and knowledge transfer
- metadiscourse (and other writing techniques)
- technology and multimodal (digital) writing
- genres
- metacognition/reflection

Here are just a few examples of topics you can pursue in your project:

You might be interested in testing the extent to which students in your major are open to encountering features of Black Language in writing (which you saw in Vershawn Young's article). It's commonly assumed that Business writing discourages departing from standardized templates and so-called "standard English." Are Business students taught in their classes to avoid departing from "standard English" in their writing? If so, might this teaching have influenced the ways in which they read others' writing? You can answer this question in your project by asking two Business students to read two very short excerpts of writing, one with features of Black Language and one excerpt without these features. Then, through your interview questions, you can probe their reactions to these two excerpts.

Or you may want to learn more about the writing experiences of bilingual students (building on the findings of Victoria Hinesly's article, "The Effect of Bilingualism on Writing Ability"). You could find one or two friends who identify as bilingual students and develop some interview questions to get them to share about their writing experiences.

Or you might want to use your project to attempt to respond to one of the questions or calls-to-action in the conclusion of one of our course readings. These are just examples to get you thinking. Feel free to come up with something else!

What do I need to include in my project?

Your research project should include the following sections:

Descriptive title: If you look at the titles of the articles we've read in class, you'll notice that the authors often include keywords in their titles. Think of your title as a way to forecast the topic and purpose of your project.

Introduction: This is where you'll describe how your project is building on the work we've already read—and even the outside source you found for your project. It's also where you'll include your research questions. Signposting is a good writing strategy to use in your introduction to set up your paper for readers!

Methods: In this section, you'll describe in detail the methods you used to answer your research questions. For most of you this involves conducting interviews (sometimes with texts written by your participants, assignment prompts, or short passages that you had your participants read and discuss during your interview) or distributing surveys. The tricky part in drafting this section is figuring out what details to include. You'll want to tell readers: how many people you chose to interview; what kinds of people you chose to interview and why (this should have something to do with your research question); how many surveys you distributed, how (email, social media etc.), and how many you got back; what kinds of questions you asked in your survey/interview; that you audio-recorded your interviews and listened to them again, transcribing key passages.

Findings: In this section, you'll present what you found and describe how it helps you answer your research questions. Ask yourself questions like the following: What did I find and how does it help me answer my research questions? Are there any patterns in my data? (Your data in this case are your participants' responses to your survey or interview questions). Is there anything interesting or surprising going on here? Did I find what I expected to find? What might account for my findings? In answering this last

question, turning to our course texts, as well as the additional source you found through your library search, will help you.

Conclusion: This is where you'll practice some of the moves that are common in the conclusion sections of research articles: raising new questions that you haven't been able to answer, indicating the limitations of your project and being careful to qualify the claims you make based on your findings, and extending calls to action.

Reference Page: This is where you'll list all of the sources you cite in your project (including ones we've read in class, as well as articles you found through the library databases). It doesn't matter whether you use MLA or APA citation style, as long as you're trying to be consistent with the way you're citing your sources.

Appendix: This is where you'll include your survey or interview questions. Just include these on a page after your references and title the page "Appendix: Survey Questions" or "Appendix: Interview Questions." If you had participants read and respond to a passage/assignment prompt, include copies of these texts in your appendix as well.

How can I get a good grade on my project?

Your revised, finalized research project is worth **20%** of your course grade. To earn at least a 'B' on this project, your project should:

- The Introduction, Methods, Findings, and Conclusion sections of your project should add up to at least **1,700** words total (that's roughly 6 double-spaced pages).

- Build on the work we've already read for class. This does not mean that your project should replicate the work we've read in class. Rather, you need to use our course texts as a point of departure for the new research you want to carry out.

- Incorporate one additional academic source from outside our course reading list to help you make sense of your research findings, help you narrow down a topic of inquiry, and extend the work we've done in class this semester. (I'll include library tutorials for you in one of the weekly plans and also give you recommendations for sources.)

- Demonstrate your knowledge of the writing techniques that we've discussed this semester (signposting, transitions, close work with sources, calls-to-action, etc.)

- Demonstrate that you've revised beyond the sentence-level. That is, you should do more than simply proofread your work and you should take into account both the feedback you'll receive from me and your peers over the course of completing your project.

What does a strong research project look like?

Here are two strong research projects, both written by students in my Fall 2019 English 102 course and then published in UofL's journal for student writing: *Cardinal Compositions*. The students in this class read different readings, but hopefully these projects give you an idea of what a strong final product looks like. We'll spend some time reading these two projects as you start to draft sections of your project.

Ortega, Bulmaro Miguel Gonzalez. "Reflective Writing Process of L2 Students." *Cardinal Compositions*, vol. 4, 2020.

Saneii, Gracie. "Reflective Habits of College Freshmen in Different Majors." *Cardinal Compositions*, vol. 4, 2020.

What are the major deadlines for this project?

The rest of the semester will be devoted to scaffolding your work on this project. It will be much less stressful to complete this project if you can meet the deadlines that I'll set each week for you to stay on track. Below is a timeline with the big deadlines:

Date	What's Due
Thursday, Oct. 29, 7:00 pm EST	**Project proposal** due
*Before submitting your project draft, I'll have you draft/revise interview questions and draft individual sections of your project. You'll get feedback on all of the stages of work you submit for this project.	
Tuesday, Nov. 24, 7:00 pm EST	**Project draft** due
Tuesday, Dec. 1, time TBA	**Peer review** of peer's project due [worth 5% of course grade]
Wednesday, Dec. 9, 10:00 am EST	**Revised, proofread, finalized project** due [worth 20% of course grade].