

**Summary of Assignment:** You are being asked to write your own autobiography from a language perspective – looking at issues of languages learned or used by you or your ancestors, your language (learning/use) goals, and your current beliefs about issues of language policy (e.g., should English be the official language of the U.S.?), etc.

**Length Guidelines:** 500-600 words

**Grading:** You will be given a holistic score out of **5% points of your final grade** based on whether or not you addressed the following two required parts:

- 1) Provide your language background and experience. As this is your autobiography, the way you structure your short essay is up to you. You may tell your story as a report or as a narrative; you could discuss language issues “chronologically” (languages acquired as children, learned in school, current and future language goals) or in some other order based on themes that you observe in your life.
- 2) Explicitly address the following question in the essay: **What are your beliefs about language policy issues, and where do you think those beliefs come from? (i.e., from personal experience, political philosophies, formal learning, etc.)**

**Rationale/Goal of Assignment:** Our language experiences and values, along with the beliefs we have about language itself (e.g., What value does language have?), are important for all topics of this course, especially language policy (which we are about to address in class). This assignment is intended to get everybody into the mode of thinking about this particular theme from the perspective of each individual’s own personal experience, and it is also a way for the instructor to get to know more about everybody’s backgrounds and interests.

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### Some writing prompts

The kinds of topics you discuss will vary according to your background. If you speak more than one language, you might write about the order in which you learned the different languages, how you learned them, how well you speak each one, on what occasions you use each one, etc. If you speak only English, you could write about what variety of English you speak. For example, have you noticed that you use different words or have different pronunciations of words compared to English speakers with backgrounds different from your own? You could talk about where you are from and what variety of English you grew up speaking. You could also write about your family's linguistic heritage: Where are your ancestors from? What languages did they speak, and did they have any interesting language-related experiences?

Relating to any of these possible topics, you might also express your feelings about the languages and varieties of languages you discuss. **How do you feel about your heritage language(s) and your ability or lack thereof to speak it/them?** Are there issues in your family about who speaks

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what language to whom? Are you proud or embarrassed about your native dialect of English or about another language you speak? Do you ever change your pronunciation or choice of words when talking to certain people? Finally, remember that your life is ongoing and your autobiography is evolving! What sorts of language (learning/use) goals do you have for the future? For your current/hypothetical children?

Concerning the required question about beliefs on language policy, here are some ideas that you might address: Should English be the official language of the U.S.? Do you think that supporting indigenous (Native American) language revitalization efforts should be a priority of the U.S. government? Do you have any ideas about bilingual education? What do you think about political correctness? ... the use of slang? ... etc.