

# *Writing Spaces*

## Assignments & Activities Archive

### Reflective Writing About Podcasts for Critical Language Awareness

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## Reflective Writing About Podcasts for Critical Language Awareness

Madeline Crozier

### Overview

This activity helps students develop writing and listening skills through an exploration of how identity, language, and writing are connected. By including one or more podcast episodes as supplemental course content and then inviting students to reflect on and discuss the episodes, the activity brings multiple languages, perspectives, and voices into the first-year composition (FYC) classroom. The inclusion of multimodal resources into the curriculum, especially those that address language-related topics such as standard language ideologies, endangered languages, and misconceptions in English language learning, can also move students' knowledge beyond the Western rhetorical tradition or standardized American English. An FYC classroom that prepares students to listen, speak, and write in an increasingly globalized world equips them with linguistic awareness.

The activity asks students to listen to the podcast episode "Speaking a Single Language Won't Bring About World Peace" by *Lingthusiasm*, write a guided reflection, and then participate in class discussion. In doing so, students can experience multimodal learning, expand their conceptions of communicative practice, and learn about and develop critical language awareness (CLA). CLA refers to the ability to think critically about "the intersections of language, identity, power, and privilege, with the goal of promoting self-reflection, social justice, and rhetorical agency" (Shapiro 4). As a framework, CLA can better support writers and particularly multilingual students in their engagement with rhetorical knowledge and skills by helping them make connections across multiple languages, communities, and

experiences to further their individual development as writers. CLA can extend writers' rhetorical knowledge toward an understanding of "how the politics of languaging function" (Beavers et al.), developing skills necessary for productive participation in public and professional life.

The activity works best when paired with an earlier lesson that introduces students to key concepts and definitions of terms like identity, linguistic diversity, and language ideology. Two readings that work particularly well to introduce and contextualize this activity from *Writing Spaces* are "Workin' Languages: Who We Are Matters in Our Writing" by Alvarez et al. and "Beyond Language Difference in Writing: Investigating Complex and Equitable Language Practices" by Sánchez-Martin. While this activity focuses on "Speaking a Single Language Won't Bring About World Peace," the questions can be adapted for a range of different materials (additional podcast episode recommendations listed under "Learning Accommodations"). The activity can support any instructor's commitment to issues of linguistic awareness and linguistic justice. The activity fosters cross-cultural understanding, intercultural competence, and linguistic awareness, bringing students' lived experiences and languages into the classroom.

### Time Commitment

30 minutes

### Materials

Students need a computer, tablet, or phone to listen to the podcast and write their reflection.

### Activity Process

- Students will listen to the podcast episode or read the transcript of "Speaking a Single Language Won't Bring

About World Peace” by *Lingthusiasm* (31:35 in length) and write a 250+ word reflection as homework to prepare for the class session. The reflection prompts students to share their experiences as a listener—what did they think and feel while listening to the podcast? Additional reflection questions include: What are the main arguments or claims in the podcast episode? What arguments were made about language, culture, identity, and/or another topic? How does this podcast add to what you have learned so far in this class about language and identity? What else did you learn from listening to the podcast that you think will be useful to your development as a multilingual writer?

- Next, students will come to class. In small groups, students will share their written responses from their reflections with each other.
- After that, in a full class discussion, each group will share the main themes and topics from their discussion. During this discussion, the instructor will prompt students with additional questions for the entire class to consider. Discussion questions include: How are writing and identity connected? How did the format of the argument (a podcast rather than an academic paper, for example) impact the way the argument was made? What are the affordances of the podcast as a genre and medium for argument? What makes a podcast effective to convey information about linguistic diversity?
- Finally, students will discuss how the content of the podcast episode and the experience of listening to a podcast connect to the learning outcomes of the class. Ask students to describe how the podcast might inform their next major paper or project in the class.

## Learning Outcomes

Students engaging in this activity will:

- Think critically about the intersections of language, power, writing, and identity
- Gain an understanding of concepts like standard language ideology, linguistic awareness, and endangered languages
- Develop rhetorical knowledges around the politics of languaging
- Practice self-reflection around their identities as multilingual writers

## Learning Accommodations

- Students may choose between a list of podcasts episodes around language, culture, and identity so they can select a topic that resonates with their experiences. Choices to offer students can also include "Common Misconceptions in English Language Teaching" from *We Teach Languages*, "Japan's Mystery Language" from *Subtitle*, "A Language that Survived the Boarding Schools" from *Subtitle*, "Lies Your Language Teacher Told You" from *Multilingualish*, and "The Language of Identity and Belonging" from *More Than Words*.
- Students may choose between listening to the podcast episode or reading the transcript. Most podcast transcripts can be found on the podcast's website.
- Students can listen to podcasts on Spotify, Apple Podcasts, or often through the podcast's website.

## Works Cited

Alvarez, Sara P., et al. "Workin' Languages: Who We Are Matters in our Writing." *Writing Spaces: Readings on Writing*, vol. 4,

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- Shapiro, Shawna. *Cultivating Critical Language Awareness in the Writing Classroom*. New York, Routledge, 2022.

### Further Reading

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