

## FINAL REFLECTION

On my first day in this class, I was nervous in a way I had never felt before. This was my first time taking a writing course in English, and my first semester learning inside the academic system of the United States. Even simple things such as understanding classmates' accents, adjusting to professors' expectations, or figuring out Canvas and Blackboard felt overwhelming. But the hardest part was not the technology or the assignments. The hardest part was finding my voice in a language that still felt new on my tongue. Writing in English immediately, while still learning to live in English, felt like trying to swim before fully learning how to float. I was worried that my English would make me appear as though I didn't belong here. That fear followed me into every classroom during the first weeks, including Freshman Composition.



I still remember writing my first paragraph for the Language and Literacy Narrative. It took me more than thirty minutes to produce a few sentences. I deleted them, rewrote them, and still felt unsure. I kept thinking about the long list of assignments ahead, including rhetorical summaries, research worksheets, analysis work, synthesis writing, discussions, and multimodal tasks. This class would be harder than Calculus I or Chemistry I, which I was also taking at the time. But something changed the moment I received my first feedback from my professor. She said my work was good and showed me how to fix my mistakes without making me feel embarrassed. That comment alone softened my fear. It didn't make writing easy, but it gave me the confidence to believe I could grow.

Another turning point occurred during peer review as I read and heard my classmates' Language and Literacy Narratives. Almost everyone mentioned struggling with language in some way, whether through accents, dialects, family expectations, or fear of being misunderstood. Realizing I was not alone lit a fire inside me. Slowly, I began to understand that my voice deserved space too. My classmates and professor provided feedback that highlighted my strengths but also pointed out areas where I needed to improve, such as clarifying my ideas more clearly, considering my audience, and taking the time to revise. Even when peer review felt quiet or awkward, it was still an important space where I saw that writing is not a competition but a community.

One of the most significant tools that helped me grow was learning about rhetoric and rhetorical situations. I had heard the word "audience" before, but I never truly understood how deeply audience shapes writing. In one exercise, we had to explain our class to two different people: a friend and a grandmother. That simple activity showed me how much tone, language, and structure must change depending on who we are addressing. The annotation helped me read more actively. Before this class, I would read large sections of a book, such as *Seraph on the Suwanee*, for my Black Studies course without truly understanding what I had read. But after learning to annotate for what the text says and does, I was able to read with purpose and confidence. I finally understood how authors build their arguments and how I could build my own.

Another skill that changed me was learning to use sources and citations correctly. I used to skip the Works Cited pages because I did not think they mattered. Now I can write my own MLA citations, and I understand the importance of giving credit to authors like Amy Tan, Jamila Lyiscott, and Langston Hughes when I use their ideas. At first, MLA felt confusing, and I mixed it up with APA. But through repeated practice in my synthesis essay and research worksheets, I learned how citations support credibility and show respect for other writers' voices.

This course also taught me to appreciate the concept of multimodality. Previously, I believed good writing meant using advanced vocabulary or long academic sentences. However, through assignments like the Synthesis Essay and the LLN, I learned that strong communication is not about sounding “professional,” it is about making people understand. I saw how Lyiscott’s performance communicated power through her voice and gestures. I learned that images, videos, posters, and even memes can deliver meaning more clearly than text alone. This changed how I write and how I understand arguments. For instance, in my second paragraph of this final reflection, I used an image that explains the argument more effectively than using words only.

As I reflect on everything, I realize this course was never meant to silence anyone’s culture, language, or identity. Instead, it taught us how to use our voices purposefully. My synthesis essay became proof of that. I wrote about the importance of celebrating language diversity while still recognizing that communication must be clear. I wanted to encourage other international students and non-native speakers the way I wish someone had encouraged me during my first week here. Through writing my LLN, my synthesis proposal, my research worksheets, and many drafts of my final essay, I discovered that writing can be a space of empowerment, not fear.

I would also like to express my appreciation to my professor. I asked her the same questions multiple times because I was afraid of misunderstanding something. She never became impatient. She explained things again, sometimes even sending me personal emails to make sure I understood. That kindness made me feel safe enough to try, even when I felt lost.

After all this work, I see myself in a different light. I am still learning English. I am still finding my voice. But now I know that writing is not about being perfect. It is about expressing something meaningful and connecting with others. This class helped me understand my own strengths and

weaknesses and provided me with tools I will carry into every course I take next. Most importantly, it taught me to be brave enough to speak and write because my voice matters.