

Research Topics: Getting Specific with Themes in the Politics of Language

Themes are ideas that have recurred across texts. When studying the politics of language, various themes often emerge. Consider **language and literacy's relationship** with the following:

identity	socioeconomic status	family/community	accents
culture	educational expectations	language attitudes	L2 learning
race	social expectations	Standard English	immigration
gender	cultural expectations	racism/colonialism	national policy
self-esteem	workforce expectations	prescriptivism	media coverage

These themes are broad. For your next essay, where you'll research a topic related to the politics of language, your goal is to find a *specific, narrowed* topic. For example, you could investigate

1. the challenges facing new immigrants when learning English in ESL classes
2. the ways in which language and race play a role in employers' hiring practices
3. how/why certain communities code-mesh and why it's prohibited in certain contexts
4. why certain cultural/racial groups' languages are viewed as inferior
5. the (social/family)/community costs of linguistic and cultural assimilation
6. the costs of the dominance and globalization of (Standard) English
7. how standard language ideology is infused in education and/or the media
8. what sorts of teaching practices might push against standard language ideology

And these ideas are still broad! You can narrow more & get even more specific by determining

- a specific **group** (Latinx, African American, working-class Caucasians, immigrants from a specific country, millennials, children, workers, educators, etc.);
- a specific **setting** (the U.S., another country, a specific city or school district, a classroom or home setting, the workplace, courts and legal settings, etc.);
- a specific **example** (a public policy, a certain idea covered in the media, a specific or public example of a conflict or person facing a conflict, an example from a text, etc.).

A clarification: Your purpose for our upcoming research project is **NOT** to inform and merely report information others have already found. Thus, topics like these will **NOT** work:

- How does one best learn a second language?
- What is the history of this word?
- What are the benefits of bilingual education?

Thus, don't forget the "**politics**" in language politics! Here are keywords that can help you zoom in on power relations and other political concerns: politics, power, power relations, hierarchies, oppression, subordination, diversity, discrimination, acculturation, prejudice, racism, classism, sexism, ableism, xenophobia, ethics, hegemony, colonization, imperialism, equality, equal opportunity, privilege, human/civil rights, dominance, superiority/inferiority.