

Your 5,000 word essay should contain a **SMALL** research study that explores **ONE** of the following aspects:

1) a small study of a particular learner's speaking or writing in a second language which is analysed in relation to available literature (not restricted to the unit readings but demonstrating that you understand the unit readings)

OR:

2) an examination of a claim found in the literature about the nature, influences on or course of second language acquisition using data from your own context.

As indicated in your unit outline, to comply with ethics guidelines, please ensure that your learner is **18 years or older**. Your essay must show a critical understanding of relevant readings, be presented in consistent and reliable English that shows YOUR thinking and how YOU have developed your argument by using the evidence in the readings. Your research must clearly relate to the readings that you report, and must be framed by a clear question. You must consistently and accurately reference what you have read, both in the text and in the reference list. The work must be YOUR OWN. Although your coursework is worth 100% of your final result for this unit, in order to complete the course, you will be required to engage in class participation, and demonstrate your knowledge of the class readings.

As part of your small study you are required to

- Decide on a language feature that you wish to study (e.g., a sound or a grammatical point in the second language). Create a list of topics that would encourage your participant to use this language feature. [See attached handout for potential topics for language samples for English as a Second Language]. Check the suitability of these topics with the lecturer prior to conducting the research.
- Gain a thorough knowledge of the aspect of language you are researching.
- Locate one participant for your study. Ensure that your participant has read the details in the Participant Information Sheet [attached] and that s/he has filled out the requisite Consent Form.
- Collect your language sample. The language sample may be written or spoken text. The sample should be of sufficient length to enable valid generalisations.

The length of the sample will depend on your selected language feature. No language sample should take longer than 30 minutes to collect.

- Interview your participant in order to ascertain relevant background information about the participant's language learning experiences [See attached guidelines for your interview].
- Be prepared to discuss your selected language feature in depth with your participant at the end of the interview if s/he wishes.

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GUIDELINES FOR INTERVIEW

BACKGROUND INFORMATION SHEET

AGE of PARTICIPANT _____

Engage in a conversation with your participant. In that conversation, cover the following topics:

1. When did you start to learn your second language? *[ask whether the participant thinks their age of acquisition had an effect of their learning, and if so, how]*

2. Tell me about how your second language learning experience? Was it in a classroom setting?

[If in a classroom context, ask about years of study, type of instruction [e.g. immersion], teachers' backgrounds, level of motivation to learn, etc]

[If outside of a classroom context, ask about where and when the second language was spoken, motivation to learn, level of communication required, whether there was a need for literacy, etc]

3. How often do you speak your second language in the past and now? *[ask about with whom and about what types of topics]*

4. How would you rate your speaking in your second language on a can-do scale?

I can

...argue about politics,

...engage in heated ethical debates,

....discuss work issues with my boss and/or colleagues,

....have a conversation with my children/spouse/siblings/parents etc about their daily activities,

....perform basic communicative functions with difficulty.

[Ask if there is anything that they think they couldn't possibly do in their second language for either social or linguistic reasons [e.g. swear, pray, start an argument]

4. How happy are you with your level of competence in your second language? What aspects of your second language would you like to improve and why? *[are there any grammar, vocabulary, or pronunciation issues in your second language that give you particular difficulties? If so, ask for elaboration –did they learn these concepts at school?]*

5. Do you think you are a different type of person when you speak your first and second language? *[do you think you put on a different persona, act in a different way, use the second language to express certain emotions and not others, etc]*

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POTENTIAL TOPICS FOR LANGUAGE SAMPLES WHEN ANALYSING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

Participants are encouraged to talk excessively. Inform them that the content of what they say is irrelevant for this task. If they can talk more about fictitious events, they should do so. When participants find the task enjoyable, they focus less on their speech and the data is often better quality.

EXAMPLES

For eliciting Present Progressives

Engage in a game of charades where the student "acts" and the participant "guesses"

For eliciting Past Tense

Tell me about where you have lived and what you saw and did there [e.g., I once lived in....]

Imagine you were a famous character in history. Describe what you saw and did.

For eliciting the third singular present tense

Tell me about your best friend.

Describe the kinds of housework you, your partner and your children do in a typical day.

For eliciting questions

If you could go back in time, who would you like to interview and what you would like to ask?

What are good questions for teachers who want to get their students to talk?

Provide some examples of questions parents should never ask their children.

For a range of other topics [definite articles, sounds, etc]

Tell me your children's favourite bed-time story.

What is your favourite TV programme and tell me about the last episode you watched.

What is your favourite movie? Why did you enjoy it and what was it about?

STRUCTURE OF REPORT

Write a report that contains the following headings.

- (1) **Introduction:** This section introduces your research and outlines the main points in your report.
- (2) **Case Study:** This section introduces your participant and their language learning experiences.
- (3) **Language Feature:** This section outlines the grammatical, phonological or lexical issue under study, and your methodology.
- (4) **Theoretical Framework:** This section can either: outline the theoretical framework of your study and explain why you have chosen this particular framework for your analysis or it can outline different theoretical approaches which have considered your language feature.
- (5) **Findings:** This section outlines your findings based on data contained in the interview and language sample.
- (6) **Discussion:** This section evaluates the available literature discussed in (4) in light of your findings.
- (7) **Conclusion:** This section succinctly summarises the main point/s in your report.
- (8) **List of References** (APA format)
- (9) **Appendici** (Handouts, Interview transcripts, Consent forms etc.)