

## Keys to Successful Collaboration

Qualities associated with responsible group membership are outlined below, along with suggestions for how to apply them to achieve a successful collaborative experience.

There are other factors that contribute to successful collaboration in addition to those listed below, and groups are encouraged to identify and incorporate these into their group's written agreement, but *at minimum*, the requirements articulated below must be addressed in each group's contract.

### I. Communication

Communication is key to group success. Each group will need to set up a system for keeping all members in touch. At minimum, a directory containing the contact information (phone numbers and email addresses) of all group members must be created and distributed.

Each group will also need to reach consensus on its expectations for responding to emails or other messages, state its preferred modes of communication and what it considers a timely response, and outline what will be expected of members who miss a meeting or a lab day in class. This information should be stated explicitly on the group's written agreement.

Aanee's suggestion: A great way to keep in touch is to create a Facebook group for your collaborative project group members. This can be a private group where members can touch base to post availability for out-of-class meeting times, attach drafts of work in progress for all members to review, link to useful articles and other sources, and share ideas and information. A Facebook group may be more advantageous than email because it opens communication easily to all group members at once, limiting confusion and keeping all written communications, attachments, and ideas in the same place rather than in a hodgepodge of emails. However, keeping in touch online is not a substitute for meeting in person, and we still strongly recommend sharing phone numbers for getting in touch on the fly when necessary and outlining specific protocols for communication.

### II. Participation in Discussion and Contribution of Ideas

The exchange of thoughts and ideas in group discussion should lead to a project that each member finds interesting and feels comfortable with. Therefore, it is important for each group member to engage actively in group discussion, contributing their own ideas as well as offering constructive feedback on others' ideas. Every person has a unique perspective, and all group members are expected to participate fully and contribute substantially to the success of the project as well as to be open to the contributions of other members of the group.

Each group will need to work out for itself what its expectations are for its members in terms of the exchange of ideas and to codify these expectations clearly in the group's written agreement.

### **III. Setting and Meeting Deadlines**

Linguistic research projects have multiple stages, with several official due dates (see syllabus) as well as deadlines that will need to be established within the group for when particular tasks should be completed. Members are responsible for completing their assigned tasks by the agreed-upon dates.

Each group should consider developing a work plan that includes a calendar of due dates for particular stages of research (e.g. for completion of data collection, submission of annotated bibliographic information about scholarly sources consulted, tabulation and analysis of data, rough draft and revision due dates, etc.) and include in the group's written agreement procedures for emergency situations when a deadline might have to be missed as well as specific consequences for missing deadlines in non-emergency situations. If a group member is absent on a "deadline day," he or she must contact other group members and find a way to supply their portion of the work without burdening or holding up other members of the group. The group should consider including a specific procedure to follow in cases when a group member must be absent on a day that he or she has something due and/or that the group is due to turn something in to the instructor.

### **IV. Division of Labor**

Many groups find it efficient to divide the work on the project so that each member takes on a fair share of the labor and contributes according to his or her strengths. Examples of division of labor might include assigning a group member to be in charge of organizing data and creating tables/charts, one to oversee the writing of the paper, one to organize and lead the presentation, and one to head up the creation of a powerpoint, for example. Division of labor does *not* mean that members will not contribute in multiple ways and work on multiple tasks in the process of completing the project, however. Production of the final paper, video, or web page itself may be divided so that each member contributes a portion, such as the introduction, review and appropriate incorporation of scholarly research consulted, presentation of data, discussion and analysis, conclusion, and works cited list. However, regardless of how this work is divided, appropriate revision and editing is required to ensure that the paper or other final product is cohesive and fluid, a requirement for which all group members should consider themselves equally responsible.

All group members are expected to contribute to data collection, analysis, scholarly research, producing the final product, and preparing and participating in the final presentation. Groups should come to consensus and include in their agreement specific information about their expectations as to how work will be distributed and who will be in charge of which aspects of the project.

### **VI. Active Role in Reviewing Others' Work and Providing Feedback**

Each member is responsible for keeping up with the work of others in the group to ensure that everyone remains on the same page and is up to date on the status and progress of each stage of the work, including with respect to any unexpected issues or problems that may arise. This means that regardless of each person's individual agreed-upon role, each member of the group is also equally responsible for reviewing the work of the other members and for providing appropriate feedback. For example, everyone will need to make sure the project is appropriately grounded and contextualized in scholarly research, that the final product (whether scholarly paper, web resource, or video presentation) is cohesive and error-free to the extent possible, and that all group members are well prepared to participate fully in the group's final presentation. Groups should reach an understanding about how best to accomplish this review and feedback process and codify it in their written agreement.