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ENG 101-016

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12/9/2016

Reflective Portfolio Letter

Throughout the semester, I feel that I have improved in many aspects. I believe that these improvements were made upon the learning outcomes for the first-year composition course, which I will show through examples from my portfolio. Although each learning outcome consists of various skills and techniques that we improved upon, the main outcome that I think I improved most in is outcome 3. Outcome 3 reads, "writing as a process. Students understand and practice writing as a process, recursively implementing strategies of research, drafting, revision, editing, and reflection." In other words, this means that I was able to learn through my own writing process and reflective writing, in which I utilized analysis techniques in order to learn to critique my own writing and works of others. From this, I was also able to clearly see that more than one draft is needed to have a complete and effective body of text. The reasons may vary, but I personally felt that my first draft was just a list of ideas, whereas each subsequent draft became more organized and well-worded. I think that I spent most of my time and concentrated on doing just that. I wanted to improve each of my drafts by rewording, organizing, and adding/removing. To be more specific, I feel as if I took a lot of my time to develop and improve in utilizing the known-new chain and idea development, which also helped with providing sufficient context.

During the semester, there are many aspects in which I have improved upon in writing. For example, I was able to grasp the simple formatting of an essay or an exhibit (font, headings, sizing, etc.). Not only that, I was also able to improve and utilize citations, especially those used in the text as reference, which are known as the in-text citations. Other than that, I have improved in other aspects such as justification. Because of this, I was able to develop a well-written thesis for my theme. Justification seems to just be the idea of "show, not tell". This seems like a statement that is both very simple and complex at the same time, but once you understand what it means to not only tell, but also show, it is an effective way to write a convincing statement. Overall, this helped with my idea development, which was easier with the use of the known-new chain. The known-new chain helped transition from one idea to the next, which was probably one of the aspects that I believe I improved most on during the semester. Transitioning and idea development is crucial since it deciphers the flow and the strength of argument.

In order to back up my assertions I made, I have included exhibits directly from my portfolio below. One of the main things that I emphasized in the portfolio is the known-new chain. The known new chain is a method of writing used very often. It is a widely-used method because it sets up a simple sequence. It is the act of writing

about an idea at the end of a sentence and continuing the idea description and detail in the next. It allows sentences to flow more smoothly and transition from one topic to the next without interruption in thought or idea. In the following artifacts, it is clearly shown that I was not able to utilize this method since I was not aware of it. However, as I progressed through the semester and was presented with this method, I was able to write in a more organized manner, from one topic to the next. Here is an example of how I failed to grasp the concept of the known-new chain. Because of this, my writing was not the best.

“Throughout history in the United States, discrimination has constantly been an issue. As a result, from 1954 to 1968, the Civil Rights Movement took place. The Civil Rights Movement focused on fighting against racial discrimination in order to close the gaps between races. As one of the first African American playwrights, Adrienne Kennedy took the risk to write out her story in a play that was later released out to the public and became the center of attention. Being African American was not the only issue that bothered many during this time period. Women in general were also considered of less importance compared to men. They were typically inferior to men as the African Americans were to whites. For Kennedy, identity played a huge role in determining who she was and how others treated her.”

This is one of the first assignments that we had during the beginning of the semester. As a reader, we can tell that every sentence is referring to the same topic and are supporting details of the main idea. However, it is evident that each sentence, one after the next, introduces a new idea, but does not focus on that idea in the next sentence. That is exactly what a known-new chain does. The reader needs to be able to clearly follow from one new idea to the next in the following sentence. Just by looking at the end of each sentence and the beginning of the next sentence, I can tell if I utilized the known-new chain. For example, in the second sentence, I ended closed the sentence by discussing what the Civil Rights Movement focused on fighting against. However, the next sentence was about Adrienne Kennedy and how she wrote a play and released it to the public. That shows that the known-new chain is not being used here.

In this next example, I will show what I have done to improve upon the known-new chain, and how that improved my writing overall. I think that this clearly shows a failure that turned into a success throughout the semester.

*“Racial and gender alienation triggered cultural difficulties for many, which caused people to feel out of place. A sense of belonging comes from similarities in identity, but differences in racial features and gender had people segregate. For example, as shown in *Funnyhouse of a Negro* by Adrienne Kennedy, Sarah, the main character, was discriminated during the Civil Rights Movement simply for being an African American and a woman. To be more specific, she was biracial, meaning that she was both white and black, which made it more difficult for her to find her identity. Thus, individuals like her were faced with hardships regarding segregation and discrimination, but also expectations that symbolizes the prejudice. For instance, Sarah was expected to maintain natural hair in order to meet the standards of how people defined African American women. Although some suffered for being black or*

female, Sarah, who represented Adrienne Kennedy, had to deal with all of the above. This exhibit will portray the hardships and adversity, such as discrimination and inequality, that African Americans, women, African American women, and biracial individuals had to overcome.”

This was an assignment that we completed in the middle of the semester after being introduced to the known-new chain. With this piece of writing, as readers, we can clearly see the improvement. Although it may not be the best version, the improvements are explicit. For example, the first sentence begins with the main idea of the exhibit (the issue): racial and gender alienation. The important part here is that it ends with the idea of feeling out of place, which is then defined in the next sentence. In addition, the following sentence provides an example along with more details about the example. In this excerpt, the reader can clearly move from one idea to the next without idea interruption.

Through these learning outcomes, techniques, and methods, I feel that I have significantly improved upon writing overall. The process of writing seems simple in some ways, but writing a piece that is simple for readers to follow is very difficult and takes time and effort. From what I have learned and improved in the course throughout the semester, I feel that I can utilize these skills in anything I write in the future. It will help me to get my message through more effectively, which will also make it easier for the reader to follow. As a student in the pre-business track, I anticipate that I will be writing many reports and letters, which I can benefit from. I will now be able to write more effective pieces of writing from what I have learned. Although it may take some drafts to write, the end result will be a more well-written piece than if I would have written it before having taken this course.