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English Studies

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### Monster Wheel

[Introduction]

The visual I came up with for this essay is a little different than the first for a number of reasons. Since we have taken a broader term or, maybe I should say, a more in depth analyses of the field of the study of English and the in-depth complexities of it... I found it necessary to ‘zoom-out,’ if you will, and draw a far away picture of what I view English studies to be as a whole. The similarities it has to my first drawing pertain to it’s involvement with people and the roles they play to the entire subject. Although people are indeed still present, I chose to have the focus be more of the actual subjects instead of the people in that field this time around... seeing as we are no longer in the spectrum of theory, and more into the factual analysis of the fields and study of English, it made it more difficult to generate dialogue between perspective members. This time around, I drew a wheel with the term “English Language” at the very center, the main and essential cog in this giant English monster machine. This wheel has six bars of support for that main cog to keep it rolling in the world, which includes: Writing, Reading, Teaching, Published Works, The study itself of English (which is a zoomed out version of what I did for the previous drawing), and Institutions/ Organizations that are involved in this field. Each of these bars are what support the main *subject*, keep it turning on and on, and advancing forward as the Monster Wheel that is English Studies.

Coming up with a drawing for such a complex field of study was inevitably a challenge to say the least, which is why I added a crazy amount of colorful loop/crazy strings exploding from the main center. Because all of these topics are so interrelated and intertwined with one another, it proved to be a great challenge to narrow the subject matter down into categories and to then find a way to explain and break down these categories in a reasonably feasible and concise manner. With that said, lets move onto the topic of 'Writing.'

[Writing]

Writing is the English language baby, if you will, which is the process of documenting, recording, and even creating stories and information. This function is therefore at the very top of our English food chain, because without it there would be nothing else to talk about (in terms of English Studies). The topics we cover in this field include Creative Writing, non-Creative Writing (nonfiction etc...), Rhetoric and Composition, Historical documentation, Technical writing, and I added a few words that refer to the technicality involved in writing such as communication and craft. These are all topics that I found necessary to include in the category of writing *as a whole*, but in order to cover the subjects we covered in this unit of English Studies I will focus mainly on the ones we covered in class, which in the case of writing will be, Rhetoric and Composition, and Technical Writing.

[Rhetoric and Composition - Form of Writing]

Wayne C. Booth in his article *The Rhetorical Stance* placed a standard definition of Rhetorical writing saying: "Rhetoric is the art of finding and employing the most effective means of persuasion on any subject, considered independently of intellectual mastery of that subject." (Booth 139). Booth also emphasized the issue behind this definition being that just because one knows a subject, does not mean he/she will essentially deliver it correctly, thus

emphasizing the importance of writing itself. With that said, the concept of rhetoric is almost entirely dependent on one's linguistic abilities in that of compositional techniques. Without the ability to write successfully, the process of building an argument strong enough to persuade the reader to think differently about the topic at hand would be nothing short of impossible. Making the act of *writing* the most important and essential piece to this fragment of the field. For me personally, as a writer, this resonates completely because as a student it is my job to come up with a rhetorical stance of some kind in each and every one of my classes. This in turn requires me to compose my stance in an essay due at some point in the semester, but what I've found is that my mastery of the subject was never really as important as communicating my view point in a way that my professor found satisfactory. Thus, composition, and mastery of composition, is indeed very important, and more so than actually knowing what you're talking about... to some degree of course. To explain this differently, what I mean by this is that usually more emphasis is put on your ability to persuade your reader, which requires skill in writing, and sometimes this can be achieved without complete mastery of the topic... which brings us to technical writing, which is essentially the opposite.

[Technical Writing- Form of Writing]

The field of technical writing was the one that I found most compelling—besides creative writing of course—in the fields that we have studied so far. This is mostly due to the fact that I had felt pretty ignorant about the subject before having to read about it in this unit. The fact that it is a field that literally covers almost every organization and that it's one of the most prevalent and most in demand job titles in the workforce—for writers—was most surprising. For example, the article written by Eva Brumberger and Claire Lauer titled *The Evolution of Technical Communication: An Analysis of Industry Job Postings*, posted the overwhelming amount of job

titles that fall under the category of “technical communicator” which is the term they used to describe technical writers. Some of my favorite of these job titles included: Content strategist, Information Architect, and Documentation specialist. This, along with the attention to detail involved in creating and organizing the information that a technical writer is expected to is amazing. When thinking of the craft involved in technical writing, one might think it’s only just addressed to the general public with consideration to the writing that’s put on every day objects on store shelves, one might assume the task at hand is rather simple. Yet to see that, in fact, the technical writer responsible for putting that small piece of information on that label was involved in so much more, like doing audience research, the key to communicating what needs to come across and the importance of that, and carefully crafting an easy to understand manuscript that would be easy to translate etc... is very enlightening to say the least. Who knew that the audience was important even to obscure things like pill bottle writing?

[Reading]

This brings me to my next integral function of english in our Monster Wheel, which is the act of absorption of said writings, ‘Reading.’ I have this as a separate piece in this drawing, and as a bar for the wheel because audience has been such an important piece over the course of this field. As readers, we as individuals take on unique perspectives, and come up with ways to view texts in certain ways that have been prevalent over this course. For this part of my drawing I put in the essentials of what I found to be important aspects of reading, which are: Literature, History, Analysis, Creative Writing, Technical Writing, Intertextuality of Writing, Scholarly Texts, Learning, Non-fiction, etc... It’s also important to note the topics that I chose to stand directly across from each other, which is ‘English Studies,’ in the case of ‘Reading,’ which I

will get into more later. The main subject we will focus on for this piece however will be intertextuality.

[Intertextuality- Form of Reading]

According to James Porter in his article titled *Intertextuality and the Discourse Community*, Porter explains intertextuality by saying, “Examining texts ‘intertextually’ means looking for ‘traces,’ the bits and pieces of Text which writers or speakers borrow and sew together to create new discourse.” (Porter 34). In other words, Porter is saying that in some sense, all information is borrowed from other places and that we as readers, without intentionally doing so, use this information in what we produce. I found this to be probably the most important to think about as a reader, and is kind of what I found to be a sort of metaphor for the topic of English studies as a whole when thinking about my Monster Wheel, the entire thing is intertextual in the sense that each thing relates or takes from the other. Like a virus, information is just contagious by nature, and is one of my favorite things all together.

[Teaching]

Teaching English is the third bar in this wheel, and is one of the topics we’ve covered most closely during the entire span of this class. Encountering the challenges of English and it’s many facets and forms and the obstacles faced when trying to teach the array of functions it has has indeed proved to be an interesting feat. For this category I have included: Literature, Rhetoric and Composition, ESL, WAC, Reading, Writing etc... the list goes on and on. Once again, I will focus on the topics we covered this unit, which in the case of teaching is ESL and WAC.

[ESL/ WAC-Form of Teaching]

ESL and WAC are obviously two very different things, one is designed to teach english to foreign language speaking students so that they are able to perform in school with the same level of competency of people who have learned English as a first language, and the other is designed to improve writing skills of students across the board to help them learn to articulate and form their thoughts through continued practice. What I've often stumbled upon in this field that is English Studies, is that nothing is truly as simple as it seems, and this is what has continually baffled me as we continued to learn the complexities and functions of each of these dynamic fields.

With ESL this occurred to me after reading Robert Kaplan's article *Cultural Thought Patterns in Inter-Cultural Education*. The particular excerpt I'm thinking of says: "The fact is that diversity affects not only the languages, but also the cultures, that is to say the whole system of institutions that are tied to the language ... [and] language in its turn is the effect and the expression of a certain world view that is manifested in the culture." (Kaplan 12). Although the topic was brought up in class that Kaplan was too stereotypical of these cultures to assume or cluster an entire body of individuals to their culture without thinking of their individual learning needs, I still found this concept incredibly intriguing. Growing up in a foreign country myself, I am in partial agreement with Kaplan, because upon moving here my style and way of learning was completely different to the people I attended school with. Culturally, our schools mainly put emphasis on memorization as a learning technique, so as a learner and as a child, I never really learned how to comprehend what I was reading or studying, I only learned to memorize the answers not truly absorbing what I was actually ingraining into myself. This method of learning hindered and essentially crippled my abilities as a student upon first moving to the states, and took an incredible amount of effort on my part to break. Though Kaplan's point is refers to the

linguistic affects on learning, this idea of culture impacting learning caused me to reflect on my own transition here and the struggles faced because of this. Linguistically speaking however, I still found what Kaplan is saying to be compelling considering the way each society has it's own communication patterns etc...

[Published Works]

Moving on to my next topic which is 'Published Works,' I found this category necessary to include because to me, the act of writing, and an actual piece of text are two different cases. Published works is strategically situated directly opposite of writing, in the sense that one is the direct result of the other, and the same is true for each of the opposing categories. The same is true for 'Reading,' being opposite 'English Studies' which would essentially be a 'closer' reading—if you catch my drift. 'Teaching' being opposite of 'Institutions,' because teaching happens in institutions, and sometimes once one is taught to do any of the English related crafts, they then move on to an institution or organization that specializes in said field.

[English Studies]

The 'English Studies' portion of the wheel, like I've mentioned, is actually a zoomed out portion of my first drawing for this paper which I will also attach, which is the dialogue between all of the critical analysts and theorists that we covered in the first unit of English Studies. I found this an important category to include for obvious reasons, and I placed it directly across from the 'Reading' section of this wheel. Just as I've clarified in the first paragraph my reason for doing this lies in the fact the two are interrelated. One can read a text, and then one can analyze the text and develop methods and theories behind ways to criticize and evaluate a piece of writing. This subject is so broad yet so specific, and this is the way I sought to depict the imagery of it, that there can be a broad piece while the other end of the stick hits the core



components and specifics of what build or create this subject as a whole. Which finally brings me to the last section of our wheel.

[Institutions] (Which was brought to light by the pyramid thing in Technical Writing...)

I found institutions, and organizations necessary to include in my drawing because of the role it plays in paying positions of work. Teaching is an occupation, and where there is an occupation one needs a place to conduct that occupation, and with places like universities, some of the most important research related to English studies floods out of these institutions. This inclusion of Institutions into the wheel was initially inspired by Donna Kain and Elizabeth Wardle's organization model from their article *Activity Theory: An Introduction for the Writing Classroom*. This model was meant to depict what they referred to as an Activity System, in their own words "Scholars in many different fields, as well as workplace consultants, use the lens of activity theory to look at groups of people doing work together, which they call activity systems, and consider what their common motives are and how they try to achieve those common motives." (Kain and Wardle 273). Though Activity Theory serves to analyze the way an organization works, I still found it necessary to include as a whole seeing as the community involved in those institutions play a huge role in the contribution and or expansion of the field of English Studies and how they each conduct their business uniquely.

[Conclusion]

English Studies was a considerably challenging subject to nail down into visual form, but with a great deal of thought and meditation the Monster Wheel of English was the most adequate way to sum up the topic as a whole. I saved mentioning the thousands of little people and the subtle hint of the world map I drew on there to the end because I wanted that thought to conclude this piece. Because as the end of the day English is a global language used by millions, and it is

the basis of this language that builds the network it has today with thousands involved in building shaping and sculpting it to what it was, is, and will be.

[Works Cited]

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