

Olena Halytska

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Final Reflection

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The work I did this semester provided a new perspective on the way I approach reading, writing and researching. First and foremost, my overall writing strategy will never be the same. When faced with a long-form writing assignment, my usual strategy was to put pen to paper as soon as possible. I would brainstorm and write down everything that came to mind, only to end up deleting most of it when it came time to edit. Outlining and writing introductions were my most dreaded tasks, and the only way around them was creating a *very* rough draft that would eventually become the main body of the paper. I thought I was saving time, but I was really wasting it.

This faulty strategy (barely) got me through Unit 1, but when we were given the task of creating an annotated bibliography, I knew it would not work for Unit 2. Instead, I created an outline and expanded it by adding useful information from my research. Once that part was finished, the introduction and conclusion paragraphs seemed to come together all on their own. From there it was only a matter of editing and proofreading, which is much easier when you are not exhausted from drafting, editing and rewriting a giant wall of brainstorming text.

As a reader, I was fascinated by the Amy Tan article and her “different Englishes.” That piece made me reflect on the evolution of language. Is there even such a thing as a “correct” definition? The meaning of every word/phrase changes with time or in the right context. If enough people use a word “wrong,” their intent becomes its new definition. This changed me as a reader because I was definitely guilty of gravitating toward writers who use complex sentence structure and obscure vocabulary. Or rather, I automatically assumed they are more qualified in their subject area than someone who writes like their audience is in middle school. The truth is, adapting a voice is challenging regardless of what the voice is.

That said, my biggest takeaway from this class is the power of research. In today’s social media driven world of 24-hour news cycles and “alternative news”, it is imperative to have the ability to find the truth. For example, if you Google “Why I should take the COVID vaccine,” you will see a wide range of expert testimony, research studies, etc. discussing the many, many reasons why people need to get vaccinated. However, if you Google “Why I should not take the COVID vaccine,” you will find hundreds of blogs, claims and testimony demonstrating that the vaccine is a killer nanobot sent from the bottom of the flat Earth we live on.

Thanks to the research skills I gained in this class, I am able to distinguish between a claim and a verifiable fact. When faced with a claim, I make sure to dig into it until I find a primary source of information. As a result, I know Bill Gates is not trying to turn us into cave-dwelling crab people

to further his communist agenda, as hundreds of so-called news sites suggest. In addition to distinguishing between reliable and unreliable sources, I learned that not all scientific studies are objective. Corporations have always conducted fraudulent “studies,” such as those that concluded nicotine is safe because they were funded by Big Tobacco. To verify the legitimacy of a study, I consider how many times it has been replicated and read the Methodology section.