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English 110

Final Reflection

During my journey in English Composition, I have learned and developed many things throughout the semester. My writing, reading, and thinking skills have changed drastically in unexpected ways. When I first entered this class, I had no notion of how everything in the class worked. I do not know how writing and reading work, how language is tied to one's identity, and how rhetorical strategies shape meanings of texts. But now, after months of learning how to draft, revise, analyze, collaborate, and reflect, I can assure you that I have become a more self-aware and flexible writer. This reflection includes four main claims about the most significant learning I had achieved throughout the course of this semester, and there is evidence from my Exploratory Essay, Language & Literacy Narrative, and other classwork that supports my improvements.

One of the most significant lessons from this course that will be glued to my chest is the reading and writing about linguistic standards. Before this course, I did not understand how certain forms of English are considered "standard," while other forms are viewed as incorrect or less intelligent, all because of the accent and different word choices. Through course readings, such as "Mother's Tongue" by Amy Tan and "Nobody Mean More to Me than You" by June Jordan, I was able to understand the societal perception of the people who are not able to speak proper English. These two readings showed me the linguistic discrimination and language hierarchy that made me realize how language is deeply connected to identity, culture, and power.

This helped me reflect on my own experiences I had faced in my adaptation to this new country. For example, in my Language and Literacy Narrative essay “Breaking Through the Brick Wall of Language,” I mentioned my experience in school for the first time in the US, and I was very surprised to see how people judged me. The students in class just stared at me as if I’m some “supernatural being.” This broke my inner self because I felt I wasn’t welcomed, but why? Well, most here in the US judge us because we either don’t speak or speak in ways that are not considered “standard.” I realized how people treat us badly or judge us just because we can’t communicate our thoughts as efficiently.

Before this course, rhetorical terms like “audience,” “purpose,” and “genre” felt optional when working on a writing piece. Throughout the semester, however, these ideas became the center of how I read and write. In assignments where we examined different texts, from personal narratives to academic essays or even course readings, I learned to pay attention to tone, structure, evidence, and rhetorical strategies. When writing my Exploratory Essay, I consciously thought about who my audience was and what I wanted them to understand. These decisions affected the level of formality I used, the structure of my paragraphs, and how much personal experience I included. For instance, in my Exploratory Essay I mentioned, “This so-called ‘economic progress’ hides a very disturbing conflict that is impacting millions of low-income residents across the country, especially in New York City, due to the rise in housing costs and displacement.” In this section, I purposely placed quotation marks around the phrase “economic progress” to show the other perspective people have regarding gentrification and its positive effects. This rhetorical choice depicts the doubts of gentrification and encourages the reader to question who actually benefits and who doesn’t from this so-called “progress.” Analyzing rhetorical situations helped me understand that writing requires more details instead of just

writing something on a topic. I realized while writing my essays that the use of rhetorical choices changes depending on the context, the genre, and the goals as a writer, and I was able to do all this throughout the semester.

My strategies for reading, drafting, collaborating, revising, and editing significantly improved, and it's the CLO where I saw the greatest improvement. Before I took this course, I usually tried to write my essays in one sitting, expecting my first draft would be my final perfect essay. Nonetheless, this course showed me the path to writing a perfect essay or any genre of writing. The CLOs completely shifted the way I perceived the writing process. Through multiple drafting, conscious revision exercises, and peer reviews, I learned that strong writing happens through multiple layers of revision, not through rushing to the final product. Even the greatest writers and authors had to go through this same process in order to produce the perfect writing piece.

My Language and Literacy Narrative is the clearest example of this. My first draft was scattered and lacked a clear direction, but after outlining, reorganizing, and reviewing peer feedback, the structure became much stronger. I was able to present my idea and my story more clearly so my audience could have a better understanding. After doing reviews with my peers, I was able to identify issues like repetitive sentences and unclear transitions. In my first draft of the essay, I wrote, "The feeling is very overwhelming and uncomfortable. It makes me feel I don't belong," but this sentence was unclear, and I was able to find this mistake through the peer review process. In my final draft I corrected this mistake and made it more clear: "The language barrier made it difficult for me to engage in conversation and form friendships, reinforcing my feeling of not belonging." This revision combined the two ideas together and made it less repetitive while still conveying the same message.

Overall, this course has helped me and shaped me into a more confident, reflective, and rhetorically aware writer. I realized that strong work comes from revising and collaborating and that rhetorical tools can transform an essay and its message. These lessons I learned go beyond English class. They helped me in my history courses and final papers. I think these skills I have learned will come in handy in future writings or courses. The class taught me a lot about writing and reading. My takeaway from this course would be this: writing is not something I must perfect instantly, but instead, it is like a process that grows over time. This reflection, along with my digital portfolio, represents the progress I made and the learning I will carry forward.