Real Reading and Right Writing

Karla Montenegro
Instructor: Sandra Jackson

Real Reading and Right Writing

One Step at a Time

Learning how to annotate while reading was quite confusing at the beginning. I didn’t even know what “annotate” meant. First of all, to annotate means to take side notes as you read. As my professor said once: “Annotating is a way of talking back to the writer.” Even though learning how to annotate was difficult, I practiced and became better at it. I’ve noticed that I’ve become stronger in analyzing essays. I’ve paid close attention to the structure, vocabulary, content, emotion, credibility, purpose, and argument of an essay and to the intended audience. These reading skills have guided me to write stronger essays myself.

My first essay for this class, “Unravel: My Choice, My Future” is where I talk about the obstacles I faced when I came to this country. When I started writing this essay, I knew exactly what to say, but I didn’t know how to begin writing. I had to use details, examples, and citations, make sure I had good grammar and punctuation, and the most difficult of all: have great sentence structure and essay organization. Therefore, this was the most difficult essay for me. Things couldn’t get any more difficult at that point. I heard my professor say, “Please, make sure you use MLA format in your essay,” and my mind went completely out of this world. What the heck is MLA format? I kept asking myself. Then I looked through the pages of our handbook and I noticed that this was the proper way of writing a college essay. I didn’t know there were these rules you had to follow when writing an essay. However, I’ve learned how to properly use MLA format now.

I wrote my last essay, “New Advertising Strategies, Same Bad News,” on the negative aspects of fast-food advertisements. I put a lot of time and effort into this essay; I did research, which I am really good at, made sure my argument was strong enough to have the audience on my side, and most important, gave my essay a lively voice. Even though I enjoyed writing this essay, the
Section 1: Writing about Writing

struggle I faced again was with sentence structure and vocabulary. My essay organization improved when I revised my papers carefully. To use quotes, the professor introduced us to what she called the “Quote Sandwich.” First, you introduce the quote, which would be the top slice of bread. Second, you insert the quote, which would be the sandwich’s ingredients. Lastly, you discuss the quote, which would be the bottom slice of bread. She taught us that quotes are supposed to support our points in the essay.

One of the New Voices essays that I enjoyed reading was Ying Lin’s, “Language and Me.” I felt that I could relate to her because she also had a hard time learning a new language. On the other hand, the essay that I disagreed with was “Creative Writing” by Lillian Tran. In her essay, she says adults would have a better imagination in writing if they thought as if they were kids again. Realistically speaking, at some point we all have to grow up and make tough decisions in life. We can’t be stuck as kids forever.

Long Way to Go

English is one of the most difficult subjects for me. I know that I still have time to improve my sentence structure and vocabulary. I have to learn how to properly explain what I want to say, so that the audience understands, and this is something I need to work on. To improve my sentence structure, I ask my siblings to read my essays to see if they understand what I am trying to say, and I seek for ways to make the sentences better. When it comes to vocabulary, I try not to use those fancy, confusing words. When it comes to reading, one of the things I have to improve on is how to make an outline of the reading. It’s been difficult for me to grasp the main idea of the text and examine the supporting details. I need to look carefully at the text and make sure I understand it.

To improve my reading and writing skills, I have to put in more time and effort. For me, learning is not only a matter of understanding and getting better, but it’s also a matter of growing as an individual. That’s why learning will never stop.