Professor Karen Grayson

English 102

April 2, 2018

Practice What You Preach ✓

As we have read more and more articles throughout the semester, I have noticed how many authors often utilize writing strategies they describe in their own pieces (I will refer to this strategy as "the strategy" from this point onward). It is understandable, as the best way to show the strength of a writing strategy is to use it effectively. I noticed the strategy is used most noticeably in "Two Languages in Mind, but Just One in the Heart" by Louise Erdrich, "Intertextuality and the Discourse Community" by James Porter, and "Should Writer's Use They Own English?" by Vershawn Ashanti Young. While these authors all use the strategy in different ways, its main purpose is to show the effectiveness of their topics in action.

In "Two Languages in Mind, but Just One in the Heart," Erdrich uses the strategy very subtly, yet it influences the tone of her article very strongly. The point of her essay is to show how she has been influenced by and enamored with the Ojibwemowin language. She says that while she still loves English, Ojibwe has taught her to think in wholly new ways that she never would have thought of with English. This is because "Ojibwemowin is also a language of emotions; shades of feeling can be mixed like paints [. . .] Ojibwe is especially good at describing intellectual states and the fine points of moral responsibility," (Erdrich). The reason why I believe the use of the strategy here is subtle is because she very rarely uses Ojibwe, and when she does, it is not used to get a point across. Instead, she uses the concepts of Ojibwe she described in English to make her writing more compelling. Her essay is riddled with things such as personification, as "Nouns are mainly designated as alive or dead, animate or inanimate. The word for stone, asin, is animate," (Erdrich) and emotional adjectives and verbs. As an example, all of these can be shown within just one small excerpt from the beginning of the article: "The language bit deep into my heart, but it was an unfulfilled longing," (Erdrich). After reading the article a few times, I myself felt a sadness that such a beautiful language was nearing extinction, despite the fact that I had never even heard of it less than thirty minutes prior. This goes to show how successful Erdrich was by writing so emotionally by using the strategy.

The next example I found that uses the strategy is "Intertextuality and the Discourse Community." This one is also rather subtle, in the sense that one would need to know of the discourse community surrounding the academic community. In said community, everyone is expected to write in perfect Standard English, and mostly anything written in any other form is looked down upon. From an outside perspective, it simply seems like Porter is just writing normally. However, perhaps unintentionally, Porter's writing is being influenced by prior works in his field (academics), and which is exactly the topic of his essay. The entirety of his essay is filled to the brim with advanced vocabulary and an incredibly professional tone, exactly what one would expect from an academic paper. Despite that using the strategy was most likely unintentional (and is therefore hard to deem whether or not it was effective if the writer did not notice it), I consider it to be incredibly successful in validating Porter's argument, and as a result, the effectiveness of his topic. Porter's argument is that all texts are influenced by previous texts, and will influence future texts. A discourse community is simply a group of individuals who share an interest in a topic and wish to discuss them. However, discourse communities

themselves shape the form of future texts they will discuss, as anyone interested in sharing their minds with them would need to conform to their rules in order for their work to be discussed. If Porter wished to show the correlation between discourse communities and intertext, what better way would there be than to let his essay be influenced by the discourse community the essay is meant for.

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The last example I am going to talk about is "Should Writer's Use They Own English?" Young's use of the strategy is entirely different than Erdrich's or Porter's; it is the first thing one would notice about it. However, just because it is not written like Porter's does not mean it is not an academic essay. Young's argument is that there should not be a specific format in which one must write or speak in order to have their opinion respected. And to prove this, the vast majority of his essay is in African-American Vernacular English (AAVE). However, he still agrees that some mediums (languages or vernaculars in this case) are better for conveying different types of information than others. In order to deal with this, he both discusses and uses code-meshing (the meshing of two styles of language). Many example of this can be found throughout his essay, one easily noticeable one being, "This mean we should, for instance, teach how language functions within and from various cultural perspectives [. . .] We should teach how to let dialects comingle, sho nuff blend together, like blending the dialect Fish speak and the black vernacular that, say, a lot—certainly not all—black people speak." Despite being able to pick examples out easily after reading it, I did not notice many of the times he used code-meshing while reading it, showing how well the essay flows. Based off of this, Young was successfully able to display the validity of his topic by using the strategy.

In many cases, use of the strategy is difficult to see, or may require prior knowledge in order to be seen. However, this does not decrease the successfulness of it, as shown in Porter's case. The strategy is not an easy thing to use, nor is there always a way to utilize it, but using it effectively will lead to a much more compelling essay. Before writing this, I never noticed how common the strategy was, yet I am clearly able to think of many examples of it being done in books that I have read. Having learned of this, I will need to keep my eye out for examples of it as I read, as I am sure it will change my perception of the topic.

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English 102

4/02/18

Purpose in Language

After looking back over the ten main texts that we have covered this semester I noticed many things, however, for the purpose of this assignment I will talk about the one main thing that I noticed. While all the writings that we covered were written by different people, made different claims, conveyed a different purpose, and used different language, there was a very similar theme amongst them. Each of the different writings, despite the individual authors having their own purpose, serves sort of the same over all purpose. All of the writings take an understood part of writing and explain why it is not necessarily set in stone. To use an example to make the point clearer: In her writing *Research Starts with a Thesis Statement,* Emily Wierszewski makes a statement when discussing the "thesis first approach": "This kind of thesis-first approach to research becomes harmful, however, when we assume that it is *the only or the most valuable* way to conduct research." (Wierszewski 231). She goes on to explain that the thesis-first model limits a person's ability to conduct research in a meaningful way with the want to learn and experience new things. This is significant because students now a days are told that the first step of their writing should be to create a thesis and then use that as the basis for their writing. This statement can be seen in in the other pieces of writing that we covered as well. What makes this most interesting however, is that the writings are making claims for different parts of writing. Not only that, but the writers use different methods of research and language in order to emphasize the uniqueness of the writings purpose. For example, the idea that all pieces of writing come from the creative minds of writers gets challenged by James Porter.

In his writing *Intertextuality and the Discourse Community,* James Porter states "All texts are interdependent: We understand a text only insofar as we understand its precursors." (Porter 34) In the world of academia, the importance of creativity and original ideas is incredibly importance. However, according to Porter, its seems that in many, if not all occasions, some ideas or thoughts in a bit of writing must have at least been inspired by other pieces of writing or expression. This is a very thought provoking idea, but it is different from what is commonly thought. Porter expresses the issue his claim brings up: "According to this view, authorial intention is less significant than social context; the writer is simply a part of a discourse tradition, a member of a team, and a participant in a community of discourse that creates its own collective meaning." (35) Now this could turn out to be an unpopular idea, however, Porter effectively argues it which leads to his purpose being conveyed and heard. Porter's main authority in his argument is that he has good research to back up his claims. The best example of this is the couple pages Porter uses to explain intertextuality with examples. While the Pepsi commercial is a good example of both iterability and presupposition, The Declaration of Independence is a much more concrete example. While many credit the writing of the Declaration of Independence to Thomas Jefferson, Porter puts forth and argument that cites his citations in intertextuality. "The Declaration contains many traces that can be found in other, earlier documents. There are

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great point – Discuss need to. What writers need to consider + attend to while pursuing their purpose/hopes + w...

Same about more this – juxtaposition + how the author deals w/ / responds to it

say more about this – provide context

explain why

traces from a First Continental Congress resolution, a Massachusetts Council declaration, George Mason's 'Declaration of Rights for Virginia', a political pamphlet of James Otis, and a variety of other sources, including a colonial play." (36). Through Porter's clear examples we see a well-argued purpose of conveying that a standard in most writing discourse communities, such as creative originality, may not be as prevalent as originally thought. However, Porter is not the only example. Jennifer Mott-Smith has a different argument with a different purpose and presents it with a different method.

"Plagiarism we know, is an immoral act, a simple case of right and wrong, and as such deserves to be punished." (Mott-Smith 247). In her piece of writing on plagiarism, Jennifer Mott-smith satirically looks at the widely accepted idea that plagiarism is the worst offense in the academic world. By reiterating what most already know, Mott-Smith is able to introduce her radical Idea that maybe we should take another look at plagiarism as a whole. Mott-Smith's argument is effective here because she does not argue that plagiarism is a good thing, but she argues that is its confusing and convoluted enough to the point where maybe the severe punishment should get a re-look. In order to make such a claim, Mott-Smith needs to make a convincing argument, which she does when she introduces her argument. "First, ideas are often a mixture of one's own ideas, those we read, and those we discuss with our friends, making it hard, or even impossible, to sort out who owns what. Second, writers who are learning a new field often try out ideas and phrases from other writers in order to master the field. This process allows them to learn and is a far cry from stealing. Third expectations for citing sources vary among contexts and readers, making it not only confusing to learn the rules, but impossible to satisfy them all." (248). This introduction to Mott-Smith's argument is a fantastic example of her authority on the topic. In a clear and concise manner Mott-Smith is not able to present her argument, but convey her purpose and cause readers to, most likely, re-think something about writing that has been engrained in their brain from a young age. Up to this point the ideas about writing that have been changed have been things like how to acquire information and how to use it. However, many of the pieces of writing that we read addressed language itself.

One of the most understood concepts when it comes to writing is the language or dialect. This is something that is not necessarily taught since it is believed to be automatic. However, a few of the readings we've read so far have challenged that idea. While all three of the writings are trying to convey the same message, the method in which all are done differs. Due to the method being different, it seems that a different motivation, or purpose, can be discerned from each of the writings. The first one is *The Standard Language Myth* by Rosina Lippi-Green. In her article, Rosina uses surveys and research to come to her conclusions. Her main argument is that the standard written language seems to be absolute when spoken English varies throughout the country. This experimentation that Rosina partakes in leads her to a specific conclusion. "The myth of Standard language persists because it is carefully propagated, with huge, almost universal success, so that the language, the most fundamental of human socialization tools, becomes a commodity." (Lippi-Green 61). While many people have their own way of speaking, it seems that language in writing is put in a specific light that is universally accepted. Despite this, there are other aside from Rosina who feel the same way she does. In his own piece of writing called *Should Writer's Use they own English?* Vershawn Young uses a very unique

method of argument to get his point across. By using his own form of speaking as his diction when writing, Young comes up with the idea of Code Meshing which is essentially using one's own way of speaking when they write. "Let me drop some code meshing knowledge on y'all. Code meshing what we all do whenever we communicate—writin, speakin, wahteva. Code meshing blends dialects, international languages, local idioms, chat-room lingo, and the rhetorical styles of various ethnic groups in both formal *and* informal speech acts." (Young 114) It would seem that Young takes the issue brought forth by Rosina and comes up with a bit of a solution. The last example of this comes from Amy Tan in her reflection called *Mother Tongue*.

of what?

Tan's piece is a slightly more reflective writing than the other ones. Not only does she talk about her personal experiences instead of survey results, or hypothetical ideas, but her purpose is to convey how she personally feels about her own language. Tan's mother speaks in as she describes it "broken" English. Despite that, Tan says that she finds her mother's English to be very unique and endearing. "Her language, as I hear it, is vivid, direct, full of observation, and imagery. That was the language that helped shape the way I saw things, expressed things, made sense of the world." (Tan 25). Tan uses a more emotional method of getting the reader to realize that language can be very different for some people.

Overall, I guess I would have to say that reflecting on these ten readings has only increased my appreciation of them. Reflection as a process really helps shine light on things and makes one appreciate the themes that are present. While I initially did not see any sort of similarity between these writings, it was through reflection that I realized my views on current writing ideals were being challenged. These ten readings were not only unique in the ways in which they challenged the current norms in writings, but unified in the fact that they did. It seems that regardless of the method of argument, each writer had a certain level of passion that lead them to research their arguments and create compelling points. While the current discourse communities in writing seem exclusive and revolve around set in stone ideals, perhaps the new ones created by these writers will be more open and adaptable.

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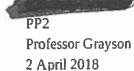Wierszewski, Emily, "Research Starts with a Thesis"

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PP2
Professor Grayson
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The Elements of Successful Writing

To become better writers throughout class we have been analyzing and discussing texts to better understand key concepts of successful writing; genre, inquiry, purpose, reflection, revision, discourse community, audience, rhetorical situation, and context. We have been keeping track of examples of their use in our Journal of Key Concepts. Looking back on my journal of key concepts, several passages from three of the texts we have read have ended up in multiple categories. Passages from *Should Writers Use They Own English?*, *Mother Tongue*, and *Young Women Shouldn't Have To Talk Like Men To Be Taken Seriously*, show up in three particular sections of my journal of key concepts, and I understand these three texts best out of all the texts we've read. It has become clear to me that a good writer recognizes the relationship between context, audience, and purpose and makes use of these elements in their work, for they play the crucial role of making the author's points effective.

Firstly, let's talk about context. There are genres of context—meaning it varies in form. For example, context can be a fact from history, a reference to a movie or song, reference to an event in the past, or even discussion of scientific study. From the journal of key concepts it is understandable that context is the author's information they wish to share to the reader through outside experience or story. In *Women Shouldn't Have To Talk Like Men To Be Taken Seriously*, Marybeth Seitz-Brown makes use of context in multiple ways. The last sentence of her opening paragraph states,"One woman even made a movie just to tell young women all the things they should change about their voices.". To emphasize to the reader how discouraged uptalk by young women in society, the author provides the reader with the shocking fact that a movie was produced to shame uptalking. She gives more context when she states, "Last week, I gave an interview on NPR, and while most of the reactions were overwhelmingly positive, I also received several messages suggesting I change my voice so that people will take me seriously. Why? Well, I uptalk.". This is the form of context I like to call *personal context*, for it comes from the author's personal experience. Directly after the a line of personal context Seitz-Brown delivers a definition, "Uptalk, in case you've missed several years of media frenzy, is using a rising intonation at the end of a phrase or sentence.". This is essential context, for when I first read this, I thought this was solely slang for another form of speaking I had no idea that a rising intonation actually had a name. Amy Tan uses personal and impersonal context throughout *Mother Tongue*.

To properly illustrate her mother's struggles through life with what is considered 'broken english', contextual evidence of her mother being educated are presented, "You should know that my mother's expressive command of English belies how much she actually understands. She reads *Forbes* report, listens to *Wall Street Week*, converses daily with her stockbroker, reads all of Shirley MacLaine's books with ease--all kinds of things I can't begin to understand.". This background information on her mother's day-to-experiences proves that her mother is capable of holding a conversation, and is well educated even though many people throughout her life have treated her as if otherwise.

Vershawn Young inserts textual information throughout *Should Writers Use They Own English?* by referring to scholars past theories on what a good writer does,

> "Cultural critic Stanley Fish come talkin bout—in his three-piece New York Times "What Should Colleges Teach?" suit   there only one way to speak and write to get ahead in the world, that writin teachers should 'clear [they] mind of the orthodoxies that have taken hold in the composition world' ".

Vershawn Young uses the technique of presenting contextual evidence relating to his topic and then analyzing these quotations. The casual diction he uses makes the article more intriguing and ultimately relatable to the audience.

It is important to have a connection with the audience when writing for it makes the author's purpose easy to understand. Context and audience go hand-in-hand together in works to make connections to the reader. Amy Tan describes the relationship between audience and writing with, "I later decided I should envision a reader for the stories I would write. And the reader I decided upon was my mother, because these were stories about mothers. So with this reader in mind--and in fact she did read my early drafts--I began to write stories using all Englishes I grew up with: the English I spoke to my mother". This quotation in itself is context, information the author inserted about the writing process in her, but in my journal of key concepts it is categorized as context, audience, and purpose. The purpose of her work was to have the reader understand her mother's struggle. Choosing to write with a specific audience in mind would in turn help her achieve her purpose, showing the purpose of the work is always connected to audience. The contextual evidence she provides throughout the story are to further relate her to the audience and bring her mother to life in the story. For if the audience didn't have context when reading about her mother's oppression, they wouldn't empathize with her and not understand the purpose of her work as a whole.

Same goes for the other two texts I mentioned previously. The personal context that Marybeth Seitz-Brown provided throughout her essay made it possible for an individual of any gender to empathize with her purpose for writing *Young Women Shouldn't Have To Talk Like Men To Be Taken Seriously*, "I actually believe that the people --mainly women, actually--who were messaging me about my uptalk sincerely wanted to help me reach a wider (read: male) audience". The context once again leading to explanation of purpose. This connection between purpose, audience, and context can be seen in Young's work when he states,

> "Lord, lord, lord! Where do I begin, cuz this man sho tryin to take the nation back to a time when we were less tolerant of linguistic and racial differences. Yeah, I said racial difference, tho my man Stan be talkin explicitly bout language differences. The two be intertwined. Used to be a time when a black person could get hanged from the nearest tree just cuz they be black. And they fingers and heads (double entendre intended) get chopped off sometimes.".

Comparing the way Stanley Fish talks about language to the way white Americans used to kill African Americans is a strong and heavy imagery. His purpose of the article is to convey that the idea that there must be a standard language is oppressive in itself and destroying cultures. The reference to early-american-racism helps make that point obvious to the audience, and evokes several emotions into the readers.

These three works are perfect examples of the writer's acknowledgement of the relationship between audience, context, and purpose, for each article uses these terms in a different way, proving that there is no right/wrong way to write, but also showing the effect the relationship

[handwritten margin note:] with Tan's specific choice of audience for the by luck club in mind, explore how other authors (including yourself) identify, choose, envision an audience - now why

between these terms has on the work as a whole. If the writers were to take one out of the equation their writing wouldn't be as powerful. If Amy Tan were to tell the story of her mother struggling to communicate with her doctor without telling us about how brilliant her mother's mind is, the reader would empathize with the doctor. Assuming that the doctor was the one struggling to communicate, when in fact he wasn't even trying to speak to her. The work of Marybeth Seitz-Brown would not appeal to males if she didn't provide the contextual example of male-uptalkers who aren't shamed in society, "I also hear many men, including former President George W. Bush, using uptalk, and have yet to hear any of them be chastised for not sounding authoritative enough. In fact, there's no conclusive evidence that women even use uptalk more than men.". And if she did not reflect on her personal experiences with uptalking-shamers she would not even appeal to her female audience. Vershawn Young's essay would have no value if he didn't choose to focus on his audience through casual diction. His purpose would not have been justified if he chose to write his essay the way Stanly Fish instructed.

The majority of the quotes I used throughout this essay were placed in the three sections that I have written about. These three elements come together with all the other key concepts, but why haven't I noticed the other connections as strongly as I have noticed these? Now that I have discovered this connection between audience, context, and purpose I can't help but wonder if this relationship can be or is applied to life outside of writing. I am fascinated by the connections I making between writing and coding. Being a computer science major, I saw a connection between ideas surrounding plagiarism in society through the lens of a coder. When looking at context, audience, and purpose through a coder's lense, I see the context being the code itself, borrowed and changed. The purpose is the reason the program is being typed, the desired result that the coder wants out of the program. The audience is who the coder is creating the program for. What other ways is this relationship used?

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