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The Importance of Improvement

Improvement is necessary to human life. If we had the same capabilities as when we were born, our species would definitely not be at the top of the food chain. Improvement is also paired with experience. With practice over time, skills develop naturally and become easier to utilize. I have experienced this progression in my writings this year. I improved my quote integration and narrative techniques, enhanced my ability to revise, and developed the way I performed primary research. My integration and/or improvement of these skills has made me a better writer, and I plan on utilizing these skills in my future classes.

Narratives have always been tricky for me to undertake. I end up rambling about the material, or spiraling away from my topic of interest. My poor memory certainly doesn't help. The process of writing the first paper that I was assigned was a challenging one; it was a narrative about an important memory in my life. Nevertheless, I overcame my obstacles and produced a concise and accurate paper. If I had still been in high school I would have described the scenery for five pages. However, this time I described feelings, emotions, and thoughts. I tried to make the readers feel as if they were inside my head. "My fingertips tingled with the anticipated feeling of them gliding across my skin, the velvet so soft and yet so fuzzy at the same time, the scarlet color both intimidating and comforting" (**Validating**). I kept some descriptive

words, but also included enough story content to keep the readers engaged. My paper was longer than it needed to be perhaps, but there is always room for additional improvement. I plan on taking at least one creative writing class in my future, and intend to keep working on my narrative skills.

Another skill I intend to keep excelling is my integration of quotes. It can be clearly seen in a draft of the first assignment that providing background information for direct quotes is not my strong suite. ‘Just like glasses, I don’t wear them all the time, but when I do everything seems a lot clearer and more focused. “Artists- musicians, painters, writers, poets...” (Validating). I did not mention where this quote came from or what purpose it was supposed to serve, I just threw it into my paragraph because I thought it sounded good. As I considered the feedback I got from others, I realized my quote’s inclusion into the paragraph was brought up quite a bit. By the third paper that we wrote, I had corrected how I did things and was integrating quotes in a much more organized and effective manner. ‘Some studies have been done on dentistry in regards to discoveries in medicine and new tool manufacturing, such as “MRI In Dentistry- A Future Towards...” (The Test of the Teeth). Citing work from other authors is very standard in writing essays for my major; this improvement will assist me in many of my future courses. However, I could not have improved upon this technique before I first improved in another.

My ability to revise my own work has been improved upon as well. The beginning of the semester I would read through my paper maybe once to fix grammatical mistakes and not check for bigger, more thematic problems. However, for my most recent work I took out entire paragraphs and started over. I added notes in for later consideration. I even started writing

smaller passages above where I was typing that told me what to include in the indicated paragraph. This helped keep me focused and spurred additional thoughts that I then added to my paper. My work became more organized, and writing became a simpler task because I knew exactly what I wanted to write. I started doing this throughout the process of writing the second essay, and then continued to do so for the third. As my ability to revise on my own grew, so too did my ability to integrate feedback from others. Over the course of the semester, I had peers review my work nine times. Each paper was looked at three times, and I was told of the ways it could be better. I then would read this feedback and change my work accordingly. In a world that thrives on group work, this part of my writing process is essential and extremely beneficial to the quality of my papers. Being able to work with others is a necessity, especially when conducting research.

Seeing as how I had never participated in primary research before, I would not say my abilities have advanced, so much as surfaced. For the third assignment students were required to analyze a community with special characteristics, and interview/survey several members. I did this by piecing together a set of questions for the interview. One of the questions was “How long did it take for you to feel like a member of the workplace community?” (Test of the Teeth). I interviewed one person, recorded it, and then transcribed it into the appendix of my essay. The interview went well, and after I finished asking all the questions I felt more confident in my interviewing capabilities. I will surely be able to utilize these skills in my upper level courses that require research studies to be conducted by the students. I would probably not have had a chance to develop these abilities and techniques if the paper’s topic had been different.

I will never be done improving; the progress I have made this semester encourages me to keep bettering my writing and my literacy skills. My narrative improvements will serve me well as I take creative writing courses, my enhanced quote integration and revision skills will benefit the papers for any class that requires one, and my newfound research abilities will aid me in many lab courses that I will take as a Biology major.