WDI Assessment Overview: ANT102

[The writing samples in this course were drawn from the first draft and final submission of. a term paper in which students assessed a documentary.]

In my assessment, Group ANT102 writes reasonably well and shows minor improvement between submissions 1 and 2. In general, students did incorporate feedback and indicate refined writing skills. Students struggled the most in both developing strong thesis statements and interpreting evidence to support their points. In general, students used evidence in each paragraph and wrote few grammatical errors. I will touch on these issues below.

**Strength and Clarity of Argument**

The clarity of the thesis statement or main goal of the paper is one of the most notable areas of difficulty in this assignment. Students in the A level exhibited a strong ability to write a clear and focused thesis statement with specific details that effectively offered a roadmap to their papers. In general, there was little improvement from the first submission to the second for this range. Most students in the level range improved marginally in their thesis statement between submissions but often did improve by rewording their thesis statement for clarity. Notably, student A2 wrote one of the strongest thesis statements that indicated a clear grasp of the concepts employed, and their relationship to the main argument:

“In this paper I will argue how the Mexican and Guatemalan governments as shown in Heart of Sky, Heart of Earth (2011) facilitate the colonization of the Mayan Indigenous by exploiting their trust via means of gift-giving, through ethnocentrism and widespread Indigenous violence, and through actively warranting the western companies’ abuse based on their own cultural biases.”

Student A4 showed the most notable difference between their two submissions in terms of specific details. Their first assignment wrote a single line, “I will explore this through the course concepts of the Other, colonization, and ethnocentrism.” Whereas, their second submission was multiple lines long with clear indications of forthcoming arguments:

“First, I will explore this through the concept of “ The Other”, a moment in the film expressing this concept, and the article “Making the Strange Familiar and the Familiar Strange: Stepping into the shoes of an ethnographer”. Then, I will discuss the concept of colonization, a moment in the film expressing this concept, and the article “How Inuit Parents Teach Kids to Control Their Anger”. Lastly, I will discuss ethnocentrism, a moment in the film expressing this concept, and the article “Body Ritual Among the Nacirema”.”

This difference in detail is witnessed across the A range submissions. This improvement indicated a careful revision and adapting of their work to the feedback on their first submission. Since many of their submissions described clear details with roadmaps, it is unsurprising that many used structures that effectively supported their thesis statements.

           Students in the B range offered a wider range in terms of the strength and clarity of their thesis statements. Clarity ranged from 0 to 3, and the details of the thesis as well as the overall structure of the paper also ranged from 0 to 3. More notable is the difference between the first and second submissions. On average, students in the B range showed at least half a point improvement between their two submissions in terms of the strength and clarity of their arguments. Students B3, B12, and B15 indicated the most notable improvement in their submissions. B3 and B12 submitted summaries for their first assignments but wrote arguments into their second. B12 for example wrote:

 “In this paper, it will go over course concepts fieldwork, participant observation, and native’s point of view to argue why endangered languages should be preserves, as well as how it could be viewed as salvage ethnography”

 offering a clearer indication of the contents of the paper and how they would achieve their argument. Similar to the B range, students in the C range also wrote thesis statements that varied in strength and clarity between 0 and 3.5. The only notable difference in terms of quality in their argument is that more students in this range did not write thesis statements or offered unclear thesis statements, lowering the average. However, those students that did write thesis statements were comparable to the B range. Student C6 for example wrote a strong thesis statement that set up an even stronger paper. They wrote:

 “Due to contemporary colonization of multinational corporations, the Mayan people are unable to proceed with their ordinary lives because of colonial violence, exploitation in their lands and poverty caused by foreign companies.”

On the other hand, students C15 and C18 showed no improvement between submissions and offered no argument or main goal for their papers. This was the most common problem across all grade ranges. Students wrote summaries of the documentaries and described events in the films with examples of dialogue but little explanation, interpretation, or argument. Students in the D range struggled the most with writing clear, focused, and detailed thesis statements. The papers often lacked the structure to clearly support their arguments. Students D8 and D10 showed great improvement between submissions, an indication of strong revision skills, and integration of feedback. In part, the difference in submission came from their developed thesis statements, and their ability to interpret their evidence. In general, the strength and clarity of argument is one area most students require further support.

**Paragraph structure**

The paragraph structures of the submissions in the A level range were generally strong, with minimal improvement across submissions 1 and 2. Paragraphs often referred to the details described in their thesis statements, focused on a main point, and were written with supporting evidence. The notable difference between students in this range and other ranges (with exceptions) was the ability to interpret their evidence to support their argument.

Students in the B range and C range showed a slight improvement in their paragraph structures between submissions. Most paragraphs included a topic sentence and developed a central argument. In general, most paragraphs in both submissions included evidence and there was little difference between the assignments. Students in this range offered little explanation for the importance of the source in supporting their argument, and while offering a detailed summary, did not highlight the specific details that would support their paper. Those in the C range showed greater improvement in including a topic sentence and in including evidence to support their arguments. For example, student C12 showed the most noticeable improvement across submissions and wrote topic sentences in their second submission such as “The concept of cultural relativism is interpreted in ways that often individual’s will combine their beliefs towards other cultures negatively” that defined the concept before dedicating the remainder of the paragraph to explaining how cultural relativism relates to their argument. Students in the B range did show a slightly greater improvement in their interpretation of evidence in the second assignment, but the difference between the B range and C range in terms of explaining the importance of their evidence was minimal in both assignments 1 and 2.

Submissions in the D range did indicate a moderate improvement in their paragraph structures. Notably, the interpretation of evidence to support the argument saw the greatest improvement in the D range assignments. Students in the D range did struggle with paragraph structures, especially including topic sentences, and developing a main argument within the paragraph. I suspect that students struggled with paragraph structures because they were already struggling with developing a clear argument, and the relationship between evidence and thesis.

**Sentence Level**

This section combines three lines on the rubric (grammar, sentence structure, and run-on sentences) because students indicated through their assignments the intertwined nature of the three. Sentence level writing is where the most consistent improvement is seen. This may be due to the nature of editing, where most students will review their work for sentence-level clarity without considering paragraph-level clarity. In general, students in the A range offered strong sentence-level writing with few grammatical errors, sentences that were easy to read, and minimal run-on sentences. Students in the B range indicated less improvement between their submissions than students in the A range. This may be due to a lack of proofreading or a lack of practice in writing clear and concise sentences, but there was a slight improvement in

 run-on sentences. Students in this range did write fewer run-on sentences in their second submission than in their first.

Submissions in the C and D range are comparable in sentence-level writing and improvements across submissions. Students in both ranges struggled to write clearly structured sentences that were easily read and concise in language. The improvements at the sentence level were minimal and indicated little proofreading or editing.

**Use of Evidence**

Students in the A range exhibited a strong understanding and application of the APA style for citations. There were minimal errors made such as not using a hanging indent or italicizing the wrong element or not at all. But the students, in general, used in-text citations effectively, chose evidence that supported their work, and presented it clearly and concisely. For the most part, students in the B and C range used in-text citations to distinguish between their work and others and showed a slight improvement in the use of in-text citations between the first and second submissions. The choice of evidence used to support the arguments, and its clear and concise presentation was generally well done. The Use of Evidence for both sections ranged mostly between 2 and 3. Students in the D range often did not include in-text citations or references to support their argument. Because many of them did not have clear thesis statements, the evidence that was used did not clearly support an argument and was often presented in complex statements.