**Introduction**



Welcome

As you know, I was born and raised in Ethiopia. As you might not know, over twenty languages are spoken in my country, and English is not one of them, even though we are required to take English classes from the first grade and, by the seventh, all of our classes are taught in English. Though we learned words like atoms, molecules, gravity, treaties and other terms that we wouldn't normally use in our everyday life, we never really learned how to apply English to the real world. For me, English was more of a barrier to understanding than it was a language that could convey meaning. That's why, starting in the 7th grade, I started to hate English. Then I moved to America during my sophomore year of high school. At first, it was very difficult to communicate with people. 10th grade was one of the toughest times of my life. Everyday was a struggle. I spent at least four hours on homework every single day just because of English. I worked hard with the goal of getting better at my English so that I could go to college. Though that seemed impossible, by the time I became a junior,  my English had already improved tremendously, because I pushed myself to the limit and for every essay I wrote, my mom made sure I applied Anne Lamott’s method of the “shitty first draft” to get all my ideas out. After getting my ideas down on paper, I would then edit my work in order to meet the requirements of the assignment, make sure my writing flowed well, and has no lower and higher- ordered mistakes. The repetition and practice of this process improved my writing and I finally made it to college.

Now I am in college enrolled into English 131 and I can say that I have come very far. English is still not my favorite subject but I don't hate it the same way I did when I was in 7th grade in Ethiopia. English 131 is different from any other English classes I have taken before, because we get to choose what we write about. The freedom to write about any subject we find amusing makes writing fun. For example, when I was writing my MP2, I was very passionate about the research I was doing on the ineffectiveness of foreign aid. I wanted to understand the issue well so I could produce a good paper. I also enjoyed learning about how to target different audiences, work in different genres, and how to make good rhetorical choices that help us achieve the purpose of our writing. Just in the past ten weeks, I have learned so much in English 131. Something that was absolutely new for me was a complex claim. In high school we were encouraged to write a claim that was one sentence long that usually ends up being more of an opinionated statement since we do not use evidence to support it. Then in English 131, we learned about complex claims and all the five components that make it complex. Claim, evidence, stakes, counter argument, and road map make up a complex claim and based on the feedback I have received form you on MP1, I feel good about my ability to produce a good complex claim. Stakes are also something we never learned in high school and I felt like you emphasized and made sure everyone included the stakes in our writing. Talking about why and how our argument will affect our audience makes writers credible and I believe it will serve me well in the future. Complex claim and stakes are the two main lesson I will take away from English 131. The class has helped me gain back my interest to writing and I hope to take more writing classes in the future.

I hope this portfolio shows how much my English has improved since coming to America and throughout this class.

**Outcome 1**

Outcome one is all about being able to demonstrate the ability to write a paper that is fit to a specific audience and genre. We learned how to communicate effectively in writing to a variety of audiences and for a variety of purposes. It requires the skills to adapt to different writing strategies and contexts.  We can achieve outcome one by learning how to apply rhetorical choices in our writings. There are many rhetorical choices a writer can make to communicate well with the audience. Some examples are: diction, hyperbole, irony, satire, statistics and many more that are decisive to what the audience and genre will the writing be targeting.

My SA1 does a great job making use of outcome one. For the short essays, I wrote a letter to boxer Floyd Mayweather and a speech to a middle school students. Two completely diffrent audiences. One is an adult professional boxer and the other audience is middle school students. In order to make my paper appropriate, I had to make rhetorical choices that are fit for each audience. For example, for the letter, I was very sincere and used a very calm tone to show my respect and appreciation for the boxer Floyd Mayweather. I started my letter with the sentence: “First of all, I would like to tell you how much I admire your dedication to your work. Many of my friends are huge fans of yours.” Words like admire makes it very appropriate for the type of genre and I go on to tell him my friends are huge fans hoping to get his attention. I made sure the rhetorical choice I made like specifically my tone in the letter attracts and forces Floyd interested in reading my letter . But in the second one, which is a speech I wrote for middle school students, had an exciting and passionate tone. I started my speech by saying “Today I am going to tell you about one of the many impacts conflict has in our day to day lives.” “today I am going to…” Starting my sentence with an informal sentence and with a conversational tone makes it perfect for a speech.

In the letter, I was using sources and making sure I have the right facts to talk about Floyd and knowing if I do not get the facts straight, he might not be very happy. Therefore, I made sure I included facts that are accurate. I was hyperbolic when describing his achievements in order to flatter him into reading my letter. I said: "You have won three Golden Gloves, an Olympics bronze medal, and you boast 38 undefeated bouts, which makes you one of the best boxer of your era." Is he the best boxer in the era? That is questionable but exaggerating his achievements  would make him get engaged more in the letter. But  in the speech it was quite the contrary. Sure I used facts and numbers to make me sound credible. But I was not worried about getting my facts straight. My speech

Two different genres, one a speech to middle school students and a letter to a professional boxer. In order to make my writing best fit the genre, I had to follow certain rules made for each type of writing. For example, when I was writing my letter, I started with dear, included sending and receiving address, and finally ended it with sincerely your fan. I followed the general rule to make my paper sound like a letter and then I made rhetorical choices like my tone (very sincere because I respect Floyd and I want him to consider reading my paper).

In the past I have written cover letters and resumes for applying for jobs…

**Outcome 2**

Outcome two is all about how well we can understand a text and being able to articulate the concepts that are relevant to our writing goals. Outcome two teaches us to dig deep and analyze the evidence we use to support our arguments. In this outcome, we demonstrate our ability to quote, summarize and rephrase a text to use it to support our argument. Intertextuality plays a big role in outcome two. Intertextuality is finding the relationship between our sources and how those relationships affect our written piece. It is very important we do not overlook intertextuality when writing a paper because we need to be certain we understand the sources well enough to use them as a resource for our paper. It is almost like putting the authors of two of our sources in a room and making them have discussions about the similarities and differences in their sources.  The concept of intextuality is very new to me and I have never really understood it very well until English 131 class. I still don't fully have a good grasp on it  and I hope to use it more in my writing in the future so the repetition and practice will improve my writing in general.  usage it while when writing academic papers until and evidence are what we need to take away from outcome two for the future.

I believe SA4 suits this outcome well. For SA4, I worked on annotated bibliography.  After each MLA citation, I included a brief descriptive and evaluative paragraphs to show the relevance, accuracy and quality of my sources. This helps me sound credible to my readers. In SA4,  I have all my sources listed alphabetically in MLA citation with the right punctuation and text style ( italics, period, commas, quotation...) right above my well descriptive paragraphs of each sources. Each descriptive paragraph gives a ground of the authors and their achievements for credibility. I also include brief summary of each sources and why and how I came to choose that source. For example, on one of my source annotated bibliography, I start by mentioning how my research affects the scope of my project.

"I was drawn into using this article mainly because of the title, which is “Why Are We Supporting Repression in Ethiopia?” I am from Ethiopia and I was primarily interested in researching the issue of corruption and aid in Ethiopia, but it is very difficult to find extensive research on Ethiopia specifically."

The quote in the bottom from my SA4 demonstrates my ability to pick sources based on factors like uniqueness and relevance for my paper. One of outcome two's values are understanding a text well enough to take out the most relevant part of a literature to support our argument. Therefore, I was able to demonstrate that through SA4. Here is an example:

"What makes this paper unique is that it uses surveys that were done in Ethiopia and it makes its argument from the standpoint of the poor Ethiopian residents."

For SA4, I sited four evidences, three scholarly articles and one article written by Dambisa Moyo, a well credible and recognizable author- on the list of Time's Magazines "100 most influential people int eh world."  For MP2, I ended up using more sources to make my argument stronger.

I have always been least interested in MLA citations and now I realize the importance of citations. We use MLA citations to make it easier for readers to understand the text when referring to the sources I have used. Therefore, I used Owl the website to learn how to properly cite.

**Outcome 3**

Outcome three focuses on producing  an excellent argumentative paper. A quality argument entails creating a complex claim (Arguable claim). A complex claim is the most important part of an argumentative academic paper. It is the single most important part of an academic paper. The complexity of the entire paper depends on the complex claim. The complex claim defines the paper’s goals using evidence, quotations, statistics, and any other supportive sources. A complex claim needs to have all five components to make it a good claim. Claim, stakes, evidence, counterargument and roadmap. The claim is the thesis statement that introduces the overall topic and argument. Stakes provide the reader with the answer to why they should read the paper. Another very important part of a claim is evidence. We have to have multiple sources and evidences backing up our claim. If not, our claim will just be an opinion. The more evidence, the more credible a writer would sound. Counter argument is also another component that would make our claim strong. Providing the other side of the argument (we cannot make up a counter argument, it has to be from credible sources)  and responding to it using evidence makes us very credible. The final component is roadmap. It is key to include roadmap because it gives our readers the scope of whole story.

For outcome three, I thought my MP1 has the best complex claim from all my wiring. I produced a really good complex claim and I revised it for a second time using the feedback I received from you and peers. Right after my introduction, I introduce the complex claim.

“Corruption is one of the major problems that contributes to why foreign aid fails to serve its purpose.The other problem is that foreign aid makes poor countries dependent on First World nations in a way that cripples their growth by reducing their incentive to build their own economies. So if foreign aid is not the answer, then what is the solution to eradicating poverty in Third World countries? I believe the solution is not to stop the flow of foreign aid, which still does some good, but to put sanctions on countries that have corrupt government and implement policies that will encourage these countries to become economically independent.” I go in depth upon this point in my next paragraph and support it using evidence. I started my paragraph with “According to the Central Intelligence Agency, there are countries where people earn less than $2 a day.” For me, I find this evidence very effective because it forces people to think about it in relative to American currency. The minimum wage here is around $9 an hour and $2 a day would be hard to imagine so the audience would be interested to find out more about it. This evidence and more that I present in my essay work as stakes. It helps answer the question why should people care to read my essay. Then my road map helps my audience decide if they want to keep on reading my essay.

“In this paper, I will talk about foreign aid and its usage in aid receiving countries. I talk about corruption, which is the major problem to why foreign has not been working effectively. I also refer to South Africa Apartheid to propose a solution to solving the problem of corruption.”

I use my roadmap to produce each paragraph. My main argument for this paper is corruption. I thought it would be effective If I talked about Apartheid to give my audience a good sense to what people living in some foreign aid counties are experiencing. Not exactly the same but my point is that foreign aid is not benefiting the poor. At the end, I mention one of the tactics that were used to bring Apartheid to end, which was sanctions. So I propose we use sanctions to end corruption. Then I present my counter argument at the end. I use Sachs’, a writer for *The Spectator,* to show the opposite side of the argument which is foreign aid in fact works. At the end I use his argument to prove that a well-used aid would make a significant difference in poor people’s lives.

This paper was very hard because I am still learning how to write a research paper. I lack specific evidence and I tend to be very general. I tried to change all that while doing my revision and I think I have made it an effective argumentative essay. I hope my MP2 demonstrates my understanding of outcome three.

**Outcome 4**

Outcome four is developing the skills to edit and revise a paper for lower and higher order concerns using feedback we receive from instructor and peers. Being able to produce a clean revised paper makes it easier for our readers to understand what we are trying to communicate. Higher order mistakes are very important to revise because it can change the whole meaning of our paper.  Lower order mistakes can equally be major obstacles to producing a good paper even though the content of the paper is extraordinary. Therefore , it is crucial a writer possesses the skills to revise for lower and higher concern to communicate well with audience.

I believe MP1 is best fit for this outcome because from the feedback I received from you and peers, I needed to make numerous changes to make it a well revised paper. You gave me a great feedback at the end with the lists of instructions to follow to make the paper work as a good argumentative essay.My main two problems are organization and generalization. The minor ones are grammar and simple mistakes I made throughout the essay. I wrote a really good complex claim based on your feedback but it was not organized very well. I believed my complex claim should start right under my introduction as opposed to two paragraphs after my introduction. I also had to work on the flow of the claim and added more evidence to make it stronger. Right after my claim, I dive straight into Apartheid South Africa and I do not provide the reason to how it connects to my argument. I also did not use a very straight forward description of Apartheid so I changed the paragraph and fixed it to make it flow better and at the end, I introduce the importance of the topic “Apartheid” as one of my supportive paragraphs. You ask me to connect it back to my topic and I do that at the end of the paragraph. I talk about the factors that led to the end of Apartheid and one of tne of the factors is economic sanctions. I believe economic sanction would work on reducing aid corruption as it has in South Africa. I also deleted a paragraph because it was not connecting well with my topic. I deleted two paragraphs because I realized I was just repeating myself and I condensed those two paragraphs into one paragraph to make it easy to understand for my audience. The paragraphs I deleted talked about Apartheid and it was the same idea being repeated multiple times without a concrete evidence.  At the end, I present my counter argument and I had errors such as rough transition, attribution and word formating. I fixed all that. For example my transition was “ Foreign aid works” and the paragraph before it was not directly related so it did not flow well when I started my counter argument. therefore, I changed my paragraph before it to make the counter argument a follow up to the paragraph before it. The other big change I have made at the end was using my counter argument to offer a solution than just criticize the counter argument. That definitely changed the dynamics of the essay and it made my paper very strong.

Organization was a big change. I started with my road map I didn’t have a good one to start with so I wrote a well detailed road map right after my complex claim and I followed that to make all my changes. It helped a lot and it made editing the essay very clear.

I believe SA3 fits this outcome very well. Especially for lower order concerns. I feel very confident with that assignment for being very neat, organized and well written paper. Based on the feedback I received from you, I made some changes to make it flow better. I also added few evidences to make it stronger.

I struggled with this outcome because I had to reach out for help at the IC and Odeggard writing center to make all the revision. I have only been writing in English for a very short time and it is very hard to make a perfect revision. But I also learned the most from this outcome so overall, I got the most out of it.

**Conclusion**

English 131 has been the only English class that pushed me out of my comfort zone. Starting with the first assignment, I wrote a letter and that type of writing was totally new for me so I had to look up how to write a simple letter. I looked up the style, diction and some other important formats that make it different form other types of writing. For my second SA1 assignment, I wrote an essay for high school students and according to your feedback, it was not an essay. It was more of a speech. Who starts an essay with " today I'm going to tell you about..." I learned all that from your well detailed feedback.

Some new concepts I learned in this classes are complex claim, road map, intertextuality, more citation(yay! :), and many more. Complex claim is something I really enjoyed learning about. It is more interesting than just having a thesis. I practiced wring it multiple times and in my MP1, your feedback about my complex claim was positive so I must have learned how to produce a good complex claim which is very important for my future writing adventures.

Sure English is not my favorite subject but writing is part of our day to day lives. I am interning for Boeing this summer and I had to respond to simply over ten emails form different people in Boeing. And thanks to my outcome one, I learned how to target each person by making different rhetorical choices. For example, when I am talking to my counselor at Boeing, I just start with Hi and use a tone that is very friendly. But when talking to the manger I will be working for, I start with dear and use a very formal tone.

So the point is that this class has taught me important writing skills I am and will use for the future. I wish it was longer than just ten weeks and thank you Professor Denise for being very helpful and understanding. You made me feel very comfortable and I usually have a hard time talking and sharing out my ideas in class but it felt very easy in your class. Thank you.