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Teaching Technical Editing for Social Justice

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Abstract: Responding to calls for an inclusive editing paradigm in the teaching of editing (Clem & Cheek, 2022), the author revised their professional editing course to better align with social justice values. The author describes the revisions that took place in terms of definitions, curriculum, learning objectives, and assignments. Having taught the course in spring 2022, the author performed a content analysis of one of the course assignments where students define technical editing early in the semester and revise their definition at the end of the semester. Results indicate that students' conceptualizations of editing shifted over the semester from copyediting-based definitions to definitions based in editor/author relationships, rhetorical awareness, and substantive editing.

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Introduction

Editing is one of the core courses in undergraduate technical and professional communication (TPC) curricula (Melançon & Henschel, 2013). Around 85% of all institutions offer an editing course, making editing "the most common course across all curricula in the United States" outside of service courses (Melançon, 2019, p. 185-186). Despite the prevalence of editing courses, scholars have recently recognized issues in the pedagogy and content of these courses, such as a lack of feminist theoretical approaches to editing (Popham, 2019), inadequate teaching of comprehensive editing (Albers, 2019), omitting the topics of ethics, visuals and design, and intercultural concerns in editing (Melançon, 2019), and not preparing students to edit texts for the usability of international audiences (St.Amant, 2019). In this disciplinary moment of re-evaluating the objectives, content, and pedagogies associated with technical editing (TE), I suggest that we also consider social justice as a core aim of TE courses and build our TE pedagogy accordingly.

While the field of TPC has taken a turn toward social justice (Haas & Eble, 2018; Walton, Moore, & Jones, 2019), the subfield of technical editing (TE) is still just beginning to confront issues of social justice and inclusion (Clem & Cheek, 2022). The ideologies currently circulating in TE are the presumed objectivity of editing and instrumentalist expediency based in the linguistic singularity of American Standard English (ASE) (Clem & Cheek, 2022). And yet there is well-established research in TPC refuting that technical communication is ever neutral or objective (Jones, 2016; Jones & Williams, 2018; Shelton, 2020) and valuing the need for diversity and inclusion (Gonzales & Baca, 2017; Jones, Moore, & Walton, 2016; Savage & Matveeva, 2011; Walton et al., 2019). With this expanding disciplinary focus on social justice, TPC is well-positioned to apply social justice aims to additional spaces of scholarship and practice, like technical editing.

In this paper, I describe how I revised a course in technical editing to integrate social justice aims. Through these revisions, I shift the curriculum of the editing course from TE's current core of prescriptive usage rules (Smith, 2020) toward an inclusive editing paradigm (Clem & Cheek, 2022), one that explicitly values social justice and linguistic diversity. I began the revision process by re-defining the term *technical editing* to align with social justice. Using this definition as a guide, I developed the topics and assignments and chose readings for the course. I was interested in determining if and how these definitional and curricular changes would affect students' understanding of editing. After describing the course, I present the results of a content analysis from one of the course assignments in which students defined and then (potentially) redefined technical editing. After engaging in the social justice-based course, students' conceptualizations of TE took on a much more nuanced, rhetorical understanding of editing. These results can inform editing instructors as they consider the potential goals and outcomes of their courses.

Revising a Definition of Technical Editing

Many in TPC have recognized how critical and widespread TE is within the field (Flanagan, 2019; Murphy, 2010; Melançon, 2019), while also acknowledging that it is under-researched (Albers & Flanagan, 2019b) and overlooked (Howard, 2019), to the point of being "the most underdeveloped subfield of technical communication" (Boettger, 2019, p. 47). Attributing to this

underdevelopment is the fact that the term *technical editing* doesn't have a well-established definition (Flanagan, 2019). As Rude (2009) argues for the case of TPC, defining a field is important for establishing values, purposes, and disciplinary identity. Thus, by clearly defining *technical editing*, we participate in establishing the values, purposes, and identity of that subfield.

Flanagan (2019), in her extensive literature review of technical editing research, determines that there are five types of definitions for the term *technical editing*: (1) technology-based, (2) rhetoric-based, (3) actor- and activity-based, (4) discipline-based, and (5) levels-based. While Flanagan provides the categories and examples, she does not offer a new definition or suggest a preference between existing definitions or category of definitions. Instead, she leaves establishing a preferred definition as an open question for future empirical inquiry (p.39).

Directly connecting the importance of defining TE with the teaching of TE, Melançon (2019) argues that a clearer definition of TE is crucial for our programmatic and pedagogic aims. Echoing Flanagan, she writes, "It is clear that there is not one "editing,"" but she continues that, "for TPC, we need to advance discussions around what editing does mean and, more importantly, what definitions guide the creation of "editing" courses" (p. 187). Drawing from these sources (i.e., Rude, Flanagan, and Melançon), I understood that an important first act in revising my technical editing course would be establishing a clear definition of technical editing, a definition that would guide not only my curricular choices but also the values, purposes, and identity of the course.

As Flanagan's analysis of TE definitions indicates, there are enough existing definitions of the term to warrant categorization, meaning I had many options on where to start mining definitions. I decided to start with the most recent TE textbooks. The primary audience of TE textbooks is students in technical communication (Cunningham, Malone, and Rothchild, 2020, p. x). This is important because rather than a definition being put up for post-publication discussion, as a definition published in an academic journal might be, the purpose of textbook definitions is to inform the practice and development of future generations of technical communicators and editors.

Cunningham et al. (2020) is one of the most recent textbooks published on TE. It was published after a noticeable decade since the release of the last edition of the best-selling textbook in technical editing, Rude & Eaton (2010). For these reasons—the recent publication date and the intended audience of the text, I decided that Cunningham et al.'s definition would be a solid place to begin. These authors provide a definition on the topic in the preface of their textbook: Technical editing—the topic of this book—is actually a form of quality assurance that helps ensure that documents in any medium are appropriate for their context and are produced at the highest quality for the lowest cost. (p. ix).

There are a number of parts to this definition. From it, we understand that TE (a) is quality assurance, (b) assures document appropriateness, and (c) is based in principles of market-based production. While there were aspects of this definition that I found useful, namely idea (b) that allows for a great range of tasks that an editor might do given different rhetorical situations, there

were other aspects, namely (a) and (c) that I thought could and should be revised to better align with social justice values.

I began revisions with part (a) of Cunningham et al.'s definition. I was concerned that framing editing as quality assurance might downplay the symbolic-analytic work (Johnson-Eilola, 1996) that editors do in making meaning. To revise this part of the definition, I drew heavily on the work of Slack, Miller, and Doak (1993), who claim that technical communicators are authors, meaning makers, who always, already "facilitate, sustain, generate, and disrupt relations of power" (p. 15). Power is one of Walton, Moore, and Jones's (2019) 3P's of social justice work in technical communication; therefore, I thought considerations of power should necessarily comprise part of my revised definition.

Slack et al. (1993) argue that technical communicators are authors, meaning makers, an understanding that I believe can be aptly applied to the context of technical editors as well. In their article, the authors describe two other views of technical communication prior to authorship: transmission and translation. The goal of communication in the transmission view "is to assure that messages are accurately encoded and that they are transmitted with minimal noise over clear channels" (p. 18); meaning is transported from the sender to the receiver, and the editor's job, then, is to ensure the quality reception of that message. This is the view of communication that I interpret from Cunningham et al.'s definition based in quality assurance and much other scholarship in TE. For example, Rude & Eaton (2011) have a whole section on undesirable document noise, like misspelled words, grammar errors, and inconsistencies, which are "annoying and distracting" for the reader (p. 24-25).

To revise, I replaced Cunningham et al.'s (2020) phrasing that "Technical editing… is actually a form of quality assurance" with "Technical editing is a form of meaning making…" In my revised definition, editors, as authors, move beyond both the transmission view of communication into actors who wield communicative power. This move doesn't come without repercussions. Slack et al. (1993) warn that recognizing technical communicators as meaning makers—power holders—necessitates an "attention to ethics grounded in an understanding of how power works" (p. 94). In becoming authors, editors become ethically responsible for the texts they produce and the editing processes in which they participate. My course, then, would need to include training students in how to ethically handle texts and their authors.

The second part of Cunningham et al.'s (2020) definition that I wanted to revise was part (c) "[documents] are produced at the highest quality for the lowest cost" (p. ix). In my opinion, this part of the definition sets editing up as a neoliberal endeavor—a production-based task that aims to get the best product for the least amount of money. Framing labor in this way seems like a set up for the exploitation that Walton et al. (2019) warn can and does operate within TPC (p. 27) and is also a prime example of the instrumentalist values of efficiency that are prevalent in TE, as identified by Clem & Cheek (2022). Katz (1992) and Frost (2016) have made very compelling arguments for how market-based understandings of efficiency can be at odds with ethical actions. Frost (2016) specifically indicates how cultural diversity is too often stifled by productivity-based understandings of efficiency (p. 16). For this reason, in revising, I deleted reference to cost-based production for something that I thought might foster more inclusivity;

highly influenced by Jones (2016), I added reference to how technical editing should be based in advocacy.

Jones (2016) extends Slack et al's (1993) claims to argue that technical communicators are not only authors but advocates, obligated to make positive change in the world (p. 345) by eliminating marginalizing silences and legitimizing non-dominant perspectives (p. 346). To apply Jones's argument to technical editing, I added that editing "advocates for underrepresented audiences and authors."

Reflecting further upon Jones (2016) and the ways in which editing might facilitate marginalization, I decided to make one final revision to my definition of TE. While I appreciated Cunningham et al.'s (2020) indication that editing should help ensure that documents are "appropriate for their context" (p. ix), I couldn't help but question how appropriateness might be another term, much like efficiency, that can be used to silence and exclude. I immediately started searching TPC scholarship for descriptions of appropriateness. I started with feminist and critical race scholarship in TPC, most likely because my lived experience has taught me that *appropriate* is a gendered and racialized term, but I didn't find any critical discussions of the word. I found many TPC scholars using the term to describe methods, assessments, contexts, responses, work, etc., but no one defining or examining it the way that other terms like "efficiency" (Katz, 1992; Frost, 2016), "professional" (Cox, 2019; Peterson, 2014), and "technology" (Durack, 1997; Haas, 2007) have been interrogated.

Outside of TPC, there have been more direct inquiries into the connection between appropriateness and identity. Chapell (2006) describes a gendered "logic of appropriateness," in which assumptions about appropriateness are labeled neutral although they are in fact masculine. In relation to race, Sanchez & Chavez (2010) describe how Spanish-speaking Latinos are perceived (both within their community and out of it) as more "appropriate" candidates for affirmative action than non-Spanish-speaking Latinos, as the former are perceived as having a greater minority status than the latter. While appropriateness is not analyzed directly by these authors, their study clearly implicates appropriateness as a racialized concept. Jones (2016) does not mention the word appropriate in her article, but I believe including in the definition of TE that technical editing must critically examine and expand the meaning of appropriateness in ways that advocate for underrepresented audiences and authors sets the subfield up for the kinds of critical interrogations into power and social justice that Jones calls for.

In revising my editing course, I started by developing a definition of technical editing that aligned with social justice aims. I sought to challenge existing definitions and ideologies in TE, drawing explicitly on existing social justice scholarship in the field. In doing so, I edited Cunningham et al.'s (2020) definition to establish the definition of TE that I used throughout my revised course and curricula:

> Technical editing is a form of meaning making that helps ensure that documents in any medium are appropriate for their context while critically examining and expanding the meaning of appropriateness in a way that advocates for underrepresented audiences and authors.

This definition establishes that editors are authors, meaning makers, who can and should use the power provided to them through their position as editors to advocate and make space for underrepresented authors and audiences. I designed the revised TE course around the values, purposes, and identity of my definition of TE. For example, ethics takes a center role in the course to prepare students for meaning making and advocacy.

Revising the Content of a Technical Editing Course

To align the teaching of technical editing with social justice, I propose that we necessarily need to shift our understanding of what constitutes the fundamentals of editing. In existing literature, we can find a myriad of references to the foundations, fundamentals, and basics of editing. For example, Rude (2010) writes, "[Students] really have no claim to the title of "editor" if they are not experts on these basics [expertise in grammar and punctuation]. That means not just punctuating and using grammar correctly but knowing why" (p. 58). Here, Rude negates the possibility of students becoming editors if they don't have a thorough knowledge of grammar and punctuation and the rules underlying their use. Lang & Palmer (2017) reiterate Rude's claim that the fundamental skills for editors are "not only writing correct, standard, edited English but the ability to articulate and fix errors in said work" (p. 307). Melançon (2019) writes that one of current strengths of TE pedagogy is teaching editing fundaments, "[s]pelling, grammar, punctuation, style" (p. 177), although she does hedge that we've got too narrow a focus on teaching them (p. 181).

From these examples, we come to understand that the fundamentals of editing are a strong understanding of the grammar and conventions of ASE. Even though some TPC and TE researchers have already suggested that we break from prescriptive ASE usage (Connatser, 2004) and nonessential and fake grammar rules (Weber, 2010), those suggestions are based on an understanding that editors first know the rules of ASE and, thus, know how to break or deviate from those rules intentionally. In this sense, the fundamentals of editing don't change, in fact they are further solidified. From my perspective, requiring all communities to adopt a singular language for technical communication, a language that is not equally accessible to all communities, exemplifies multiple forms of oppression in TPC as described by Walton et al. (2019). It exemplifies marginalization by devaluing (and even deeming unemployable) the knowledge expertise of those who do not learn and use ASE, in part by critiquing deviations from ASE as "unprofessional" (Walton et al., 2019, p. 30). Being delegitimized as 'unprofessional' is also an example given by Walton et al. (2019) of powerlessness. Finally, establishing ASE, the dominant culture in TE, as the norm by which all correctness is judged is a form of cultural imperialism. As we can recognize from Rude's (2010) comments about not considering her students 'editors', the linguistic singularity imposed in TE through the exclusive use and knowledge of ASE significantly reduces the pool of people who could be considered editors; it is exclusionary. And yet, there is also scholarship in the field that recognized how reframing our methodologies away from exclusion, technical communicators can acknowledge and value that "all individuals have their own diverse technical expertise" (Frost, 2016, p. 15). In reframing the foundations of TE away from the reproduction of ASE and toward the advocacy for underrepresented populations, we might better recognize the technical editing expertise that non-experts of ASE can and do have.

In the remainder of the article, I will present the new foundations that I propose as content for my revised technical editing course. Broadly, the course responds to Clem & Cheek's (2022) claims that an inclusive editing paradigm is necessary for a social justice approach to teaching editing. I also follow the guidelines of Gonzales and Baca (2017), who call for increased linguistic and cultural diversity in TPC courses. This approach rejects teaching practices and vocabulary that are culturally specific to heritage English speakers in the US and emphasizes how "[r]ather than teaching students to always adapt their linguistic practice to SWE [standard written English], TPC instructors can benefit from helping students to rhetorically enact their diverse languages and communicative practices for various audiences" (p. 277). In this way, the editing course I've designed emphasizes that ASE is only *one* option that technical editors might use, but it is not the *only* option.

ENGL4400: Professional Editing

I taught "ENGL4400: Professional Editing" with a social justice framework as a 15-week course in spring 2022. My institution is a primarily White institution in the western United States. As per department policy, the course is capped at 20 students; 19 students completed the course that semester. ENGL4400 is senior-level, undergraduate course. It is a required course for Technical Communication and Rhetoric (TCR) majors, but also fills university breadth requirements for a communication intense course. Of the students in spring 2022, around a quarter were TCR majors, another half were non-TCR English majors, and the last quarter were non-English majors.

The course is made up of four units: 1) Situating ourselves in TE; 2) Theory and ethics is TE; 3) Comprehensive editing, and; 4) Style. In this section, I provide an overview of each unit and the kinds of topics addressed in that unit. The complete syllabus for the course, complete with assignment descriptions and suggested readings, is available in the Appendix.

Unit 1: Situating ourselves in technical editing (Weeks 1 and 2)

I use this unit to establish students' prior knowledge and conceptualizations about technical editing and to teach them the technology they will be asked to use to edit texts throughout the semester, namely Microsoft Word and Adobe Acrobat. Albers (2019) argues that one of the difficulties with teaching comprehensive or higher-level editing is that students can get overwhelmed by the high cognitive load of these tasks and revert back to prior knowledge (p. 124). To be able to formatively assess my students and ensure that they aren't cognitively overloaded, I wanted to start with a sense of what their prior knowledge is to identify if and when they revert back to it. To do this, they begin by writing a definition of the term *technical editing*, and then editing a document with tracked changes on (Changes Reflection 1). With these two assignments, I establish a base line of how students conceptualize and practice editing.

Unit 2: Theory and ethics in TE (Weeks 3-6)

Amid Melançon's (2019) critiques of TE pedagogical practices, she expresses concern at the "noticeable omission" of ethics (p. 184). The definition I developed for TE invokes questions of ethics and how prepare students to ethically engage with texts, authors, and audiences, meaning that ethics needed to form a solid base of my course. Popham (2019) also calls for more explicit integration of theory, specifically critical theory like feminist theory, into the teaching of TE. In

this unit, we start by interrogating who and what has been involved in ASE's rise to dominance (week 3), the kind of sociohistorical approach to teaching the systemic elements of communication described by Spinuzzi (1996, p. 303) and Savage (2013, p. 12). We then incorporate readings and discussions of critical approaches to theory and how those theory might or could be applied to editing. Since there is little written about critical approaches to editing, this unit is primarily discussion- and imagination-based as we co-create an understanding of what ethical and socially just editing might entail. By week 6, after engaging with and practice the application of these theories, we then analyze what is currently written in TE textbooks about ethics (in this case Rude & Eaton's chapter on ethics) to determine what content the class would add/subtract/edit about that chapter.

Unit 3: Comprehensive Editing (Weeks 7-11)

Albers (2019) argues that comprehensive editing is the most important level of editing because it helps ensure human-information interaction, i.e., it helps readers comprehend texts better. That said, the graduate TE students in his study were only competent in making sentence and paragraph level edits, not comprehensive edits, leading him to the conclusion that TE pedagogy in comprehensive editing is "inadequate" (p. 125). Albers & Marsella (2011) indicate that with instruction, students can effectively change their editing strategy to focus on more comprehensive edits than copyedits, but to do that, they need to learn about and practice effective ways of communicating with the author, particularly through comments. We begin this unit with developing an editing plan, which Rude (2010) identifies as a key step in improving overall edits. From there, we discuss and craft editorial comments and communication strategies between author/editor before moving into content for comprehensive editing suggestions—organization, cohesion, and visual design (a topic that Melançon [2019] indicates as having too little coverage in current TE pedagogy).

Unit 4: Style (Weeks 12-15)

Melançon (2019) argues that TE pedagogy has too narrow a focus on copyediting, with an average of 8 weeks spent teaching copyediting and only 3 on comprehensive editing (p.181). In the design of this course, I respond to Melançon's call to de-emphasize copyediting. Particularly in the wake of my critique of ASE-centric, neo-liberal definitions and approaches to editing, I had a very hard time deciding if and how much ASE to teach. While Clem & Cheek (2022) have denounced the neoliberal ideologies that insist TE course content should be driven by the needs of the market, I can also recognize that my students have a need for economic stability and employability. I was finally swayed by Brimm's (2020) argument that workforce preparation can be productive even within a counter-hegemonic pedagogy. Brimm insists that because instructors are employees and "are our institutions" (p. 95), we can model for students the tension of participating within an oppressive institution while simultaneously critiquing that institution and advocating for alternatives. In this way, we can prepare students to get jobs but also provide them with the critical tool set to recognize, reveal, reject, and replace injustices and oppression within their professions.

This unit allows some opportunity for students to learn and practice ASE grammar and mechanics, while also providing them with the choice on whether or not and to what extent to do

so. Shapiro, Cox, Shuck, & Simnitt (2016) developed a 'teaching for agency' framework that emphasizes the need for students to not only have choices in the classroom but also have an active awareness of the choices available to them. In this way, the authors argue, instructors and programs can shift from passively appreciating the linguistic diversity to actively empowering students with the agency to control "how they position themselves in a text and in the wider community" (p. 48). That is my intention with this unit. The readings are fairly prescriptive, but at that point in the semester the students have the vocabulary from previous units within which to analyze and ultimately determine what to do with the information presented in the sources.

Assignments

All of the assignments in this course are reflective in nature. There is strong evidence in the scholarship of teaching and learning about the effectiveness of reflective assignments for facilitating and deepening student learning (Ambrose, Bridges, DiPietro, Lovett, & Norman, 2010; Yancey, 2016). Specific to the context of TE pedagogy, Melançon (2019) affirms the importance of metacognitive work for facilitating students' knowledge transfer to different contexts, a skill she argues is vital for all technical communicators (p. 179). Jones & Walton (2018) add that the reflexivity in the TPC classroom (particularly the reflection inherent in personal narrative) is necessary for students to be able to engage meaningfully in issues of social justice. Melançon (2019) indicates that metacognitive work is already a frequently used *supplemental part* of TE coursework (p. 179). In my course, I move away from the grammar, spelling, and punctuation quizzes found in *all* 86 TE courses included in Melançon's (2019) study, and base the grade of the course exclusively on reflective assignments. This move aligns with my teaching philosophy and the values of social justice pedagogies in TPC (Medina & Walker, 2018), which work to destabilize existing power and privilege relations in the classroom. I complete list of assignment descriptions can be found in the Appendix.

Impact of Course on Students' Definitions of Editing

To identify if my social justice-based curriculum had an impact on how students define and conceptualize editing, I intentionally created two assignments: "Definitions of TE" and "Revised Definitions of TE." In week 2, I asked students to "In no more than 3 sentences, write a definition for technical editing." I gave them resources on how to write an effective definition, but I asked them specifically to not refer other sources before writing their definitions—their definitions should be a reflection of their own current understanding of the term. Then, at the end of the course, in week 15, I asked students to revisit their original definitions. In the "Revised Definitions of TE" assignment, students were given the opportunity to revise their original definitions of TE, providing a 1-paragraph reflection about what they chose to revise, what they didn't, and why. Students were not required to revise their definitions to receive full credit, but they were asked to indicate why they didn't change anything in their reflection.

Through the Defining TE assignments, students tracked changes (or lack of changes) to the definitions of technical editing that they wrote during the first weeks of class, prior to engaging in course content. In compliance with my university's institutional review board protocol, once the course was completed and grades submitted, I had data from the students' "Revised

Definitions of TE" assignment pulled and de-identified. I then coded the original definitions and revised definitions thematically.

Codes for TE definitions, original and revised

Of the 17 students who completed the "Revised Definitions of TE" assignment, 16 decided to revise their original definition. The one person who decided not to revise indicated in their reflection that though their understanding of the topic had evolved over the semester, their original definition was broad enough to encompass those shifts.

In their original definitions, 13 students made explicit mention of copyediting or grammar correction being a main role of technical editing. Seven of those students kept their original reference to copyediting in their revised definitions. Two students added a hedge to their reference to copyediting, indicating that copyediting is only "sometimes" or "potentially" a part of technical editing. Importantly, this is the only category of codes that decreased in instances between the originals and the revisions: two students completely removed their previous mention of copyediting; two students removed references to "identifying errors" and "correcting problems", which they elaborated in their reflections related to copyediting; and one student removed their previous indication that copyediting was the *only* task of technical editing, emphasizing instead that it is only one of many tasks. After the revisions, nine students had a direct reference to copyediting in their definitions of TE, four fewer than the 13 original references.

Compared to copyediting, fewer students (8) started with a reference to substantive editing in their original definitions of TE. After revisions, though, the instances of substantive edit outnumbered those of copyediting 11 to 9. Reference to substantive editing was tied with advocacy of author and audience awareness for most instances in the revised definitions, all with 11 students including those codes as some part of their revised definition.

The biggest change between original and revised definitions were the "advocacy for the author" code, which went from 0 to 11 instances, "audience awareness", which went from 1 to 11 instances, and "communication/relationship with the author", which went from 0 to 7 instances. These large gaps between original and revised definitions can indicate where the majority of the class shifted most greatly in their understanding of TE. Close behind these three codes were "expanded considerations of text (not just written documents)" and "rhetorical situation", which both increased instances by six between the original and revised definitions (2 to 8 and 1 to 7 instances, respectively).

The rest of the codes had few instances, but included "suggesting changes rather than making changes" (1 original instance; 5 revised instances), "developing ideas" (0 original instances; 3 revised instances), "design/visual aspects" (2 original instances; 4 revised instances), "advocacy of audience" (0 original instances; 2 revised instances; "accessibility" (0 original instances; 2 revised instances); "ethics" (2 original instances; 4 revised instances), and "considerations of underrepresented identities; i.e., race, gender, sexuality" (0 original instances; 1 revised instances). While these codes didn't have many instances, they do represent parts of the learning objective or values used to develop the course and, as such, were useful to track.

Students' revised understanding of TE

The assignment prompted students to provide a paragraph-long reflection indicating what they changed, what they didn't change, and—most importantly—why they did/not make those changes. I triangulated the results of the definitions codes with themes present in the reflections. From this analysis, I have categorized three strong themes of how students defined and conceptualized editing at the end of the course.

1. Effective editors share expertise and authority with authors.
2. Effective editing is based on a strong rhetorical awareness.
3. Effective editing focuses on the text as a whole, rather than focusing solely on grammar.

In the following sections, I describe each theme in more detail and reference data from codes and reflections to illustrate each point.

Effective editors share expertise and authority with authors. For the majority of the students, the relationship between the editor and the author was the biggest shift in understanding editing that they made. "Advocating for the author" was tied for the highest number of instances in revisions and represented the biggest increase from original to revised definitions. The third most increased code was "communication/relationship with author." These large increases indicate that students hadn't previously considered communication and relationships with authors as a key part of editing but came to such an understanding by engaging in the course content.

One of the other codes that aligns with this theme is that editors should suggest changes to a text rather than make direct changes. In this way, the role of editor shifts from one of fixing and correcting, where language authority and expertise lies with the editor, to one of collaboration and providing guidance. Referring to why they changed their definition to include editors suggesting rather than making edits, one student wrote:

> [U]ltimately the author decided if they accept or reject those changes... I think that the changes in my definition highlight the idea that an editor is only offering some guidance to the author about changed that would help them reach the audience they want to.

In this reflection, the student indicates that power ultimately lies with the author, whereas the editor becomes a guide or rhetorical mentor in the writing process. Another student acknowledges directly how editors cease to be the ultimate language authority in their revised definition of TE: "It's important to clarify that the changes that technical editors suggest are not absolute because technical editors are not objectively more knowledgeable on an author's paper than the author." This student set expertise squarely in the realm of the author rather than the editor. With these shifts in knowledge and authority, editors take on the role of collaborators and guides rather than policers of language. In fact, as one student points out, focusing too heavily on fixing and correcting can alienate the author/editor relationship, which is so central to their revised definitions of TE: "An editor should not make a writer feel as if their work needs to be constantly fixed. Instead, an editor should help an author express themselves in the most effective way possible."

Effective editing is based on a strong rhetorical awareness. As previewed from the students' reflections in the previous section, the objective of working so closely with and for the author was often so that the resulting text could be more effective in the given rhetorical situation. Behind "advocating for the author," the "audience awareness" code had second highest increase in instances. With that increase, this code was tied for the highest number of instances, or one of the most common features of the students' definitions. There were an additional three definitions that included reference to rhetorical situations; we can understand audience awareness to be an integral part of a rhetorical situation. Combining these two codes would mean that rhetorical awareness was the most common feature of the student definitions, with 14 of 17 students making specific reference to rhetorical awareness in their revised definitions.

In their reflections, students referred to rhetorical awareness as "critical to being able to properly edit" and "one of the most important parts of editing." One student describes how deeply entrenched an editor is in the rhetorical situation of a text, whereby an effective editor serves as a *bridge* between author and audience:

> I added a sentence to clarify the role of the editor as a bridge between writer and audience. The sentence contains emphasis of the responsibility of the editor to not alter the message of the author but also to communicate clearly. By leaving the author's message in a confusing form, the editor fails the audience; by completely altering the author's message for the sake of the audience, the editor fails the author.

This reflection recognizes the role of editors to represent not only for the author—as mentioned in the first theme—but also to represent the audience. Only through a solid understanding of the author's message and the audience's needs can an editor achieve the role of effective bridge and, thus, effective editing.

This newfound rhetorical understanding of editing became, along with author relationships and substantive editing, a foundation of the students' definitions of TE. Importantly, and as I will describe in greater detail in the next theme, rhetorical awareness became more important for students than copyediting, and even influenced how students conceptualized copyediting. Of the four students who removed reference to copyediting in their revised definitions, all of them added reference to audience awareness and three of them added reference to rhetorical situations. One student summarized their shift in editing emphasis: "Instead of making a document grammatically correct, the editor's focus should be on making the document easily understandable for its audience." This student redirects their original focus on copyediting toward audience awareness and more substantive editing, the topic of the last theme.

Effective editing focuses on the text as a whole rather than focusing solely on grammar. There is much overlap between this theme and the previous two themes, but there were so many reflections that related specifically to a shift away from ASE and toward substantive editing that it warranted a separate theme. From the codes, substantive editing was one of the three most common references in the students' definitions. While copyediting maintained one of the highest instances among codes, it was dethroned as the prominent point of reference, giving way to substantive editing, author relationships, and rhetorical understanding. That said, it's important to recognize that students didn't completely write off the importance of grammar and

copyediting. Rather, their understanding of copyediting shifted from a perspective of correctness toward a rhetorical understanding of how grammar and mechanics can and do play a role in crafting texts that are appropriate for the particular author, audience, and purpose in which that text exists. For example, in recognizing how grammar can be manipulated rather than being simply correct or incorrect, on student commented, "[the class readings] showed me that grammar and punctuation have a similar purpose to editors themselves, to manipulate language to provide a variety of meanings." In this reflection, we understand that rather than policing language, editors manipulate it to better serve the purpose of the text.

Some of the reflections indicated how the students moved away from ASE and grammatical correctness and toward a more nuanced understanding of how ASE has become culturally situated to equate with correctness. Commenting on the subjectivity of language, one student wrote, "Especially regarding those who do not use SAE, it's important to recognize when a grammatical change is subjective, and it's easy to get caught up in a mindset of prescriptive SAE editing when tackling a work without first looking at the larger picture." In this case, the student shifts their understanding from objective ASE toward a more wholistic understanding of a text and its language usage. Another student makes specific reference to how grammar and correctness are culturally situated:

My original definition of TE was more a definition of copyediting. I took out "the correcting of improper speech" because what is improper speech when speaking in general terms? I feel that, like our discussions of unjust revisions/feminist theory/etc., saying "improper speech" conveys a strict message that should be avoided in culturally aware, respectful editing.

From these reflections, we can recognize how students have complicated their understanding of grammar and copyediting. By the end of the semester, students have not disregarded copyediting and grammar as useless or unimportant. Rather, they have situated grammar as only one part of the larger rhetorical situation of a text.

Conclusions

As instructors of technical editing consider pedagogical reforms to strengthen their curriculum and pedagogical aims, I propose that incorporating social justice as part of these reforms can have meaningful impacts on the future of the field. To align with my personal and pedagogical values, I redesigned a senior-level professional editing course around an inclusive editing paradigm (Clem & Cheek, 2022). Comparing student-written definitions of the term *technical editing* from week 1 and week 15 of the course, I determined that there were significant shifts in how students defined and conceptualized technical editing after engaging in the course. Their original definitions focused almost exclusively on copyediting and grammar, though about half of the students also mentioned substantive editing. In their revised definitions of TE, written at the end of the course, copyediting became a lesser consideration, topped by relationships with authors, rhetorical awareness, and substantive editing. These results align with Albers & Marsella's (2011) findings that students can be effectively taught comprehensive editing skills when shifting the focus of TE curriculum and Moeggenberg et al.'s (2022) conclusion that comprehensive editing skills can help students enact more inclusivity.

To begin redesigning my course, I first developed a definition of TE that I used to guide the values and curricular decisions of the course. My definition included specific reference to

advocating for underrepresented populations. While I do believe that the three themes in student definitions--effective editors share expertise and authority with authors, effective editing is based on a strong rhetorical awareness, and effective editing focuses on the text as a whole, rather than focusing solely on grammar—indicate an important shift toward a more inclusive paradigm of technical editing, they also did not include much reference to advocating for underrepresented populations. Advocacy and conversations of underrepresented populations were the main focus of the first half of class, but I can recognize that they may need to center more explicitly and more frequently in the latter two units if students are to consider these aspects more thoroughly in their definitions of the term. That said, it's important to recognize that my course was designed from a new and innovative understanding of what technical editing is and what it can be. My focus on ethics, theory, and comprehensive editing stood in sharp contrast with what students original understood editing to entail. Within that context, I feel satisfied with the students' end-of-semester understandings. As I continue the work of revising my course, I hope that other instructors and practitioners of technical editing can add to this conversation of how to better incorporate social justice into our learning and understanding of this important subfield.

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Appendix: Course Syllabus

English 4400: Professional Editing

Course Overview

In this course, we will work together to revise our understanding of editing. To start, we will consider the context in which editing currently exists and how it came to exist there: What existing assumptions do we have about what editing is and what editors do? How have we come to form those assumptions? What role do language, knowledge, and power play in those assumptions? From there, we move from what is toward what could be by engaging in critical frameworks and theories that can inform our conceptualizations of editing. With these theoretical frameworks in mind, we then begin to analyze texts to determine how changes to the structure and language of the text might affect the intended audience(s), the author(s), and the editor(s) themselves. While analyzing the texts, we consider the best methods for creating dialogue between the audience(s), author(s), and editors(s) through the editorial comments we make and the texts we help create.

Course Objectives

Upon completion of the course, students should be able to

- Assess the ethical and social justice implications of editing and adapt editing techniques in light of those implications.
- Analyze the rhetorical situation surrounding a given text and create editing priorities and objectives based on that situation.
- Determine the most appropriate methods for communicating with authors and suggesting revisions.

Required Text & Materials

All texts and materials for this course are open educational resources (OER), meaning that they are available for free either through the Canvas course or through the [institution's] e-library. We will be using Microsoft Word and Adobe Acrobat to make edits on texts and documents. This software is available for you to download to a personal computer for free as a student at [institution]. This link takes you to the Adobe request form. All computers in [this institution's] computer labs, including the English department computer lab, come equipped with Word and Acrobat.

Schedule with Readings and Assignments

Unit 1: Situating ourselves in technical editing

Week 1: Defining TE

- Readings: Kreth & Bowen, 2017.
- Assignments: Week in review 1

Week 2: Tools and technology in TE

- Readings: Track changes in Word 2) Getting started with Acrobat
- Assignments: TE definition; Changes reflection 1 (diagnostic)

Unit 2: Theory and ethics in TE

Week 3: ASE and the standardization of language

- Readings: "Normative linguistics and text quality", Van de Poel, Carstens, & Linnegar, 2012; "Language", hooks, 1994.
- Assignments: Week in review 3

Week 4: Rhetorical theory

- Readings: "Understanding the rhetorical situation", Cunningham et al., 2020; Lyons, 2000.
- Assignments: Week in review 4; Learning circle summary 1

Week 5: Feminist theory

- Readings: Popham, 2019
- Assignments: Week in review 5

Week 6: Social justice theory

- Readings: Clem & Cheek, 2022; "Ethics," Rude & Eaton, 2010.
- Assignments: Changes reflection 2

Unit 3: Comprehensive Editing

Week 7: Evaluating the document

- Readings: "Comprehensive editing: Definition and process," Rude & Eaton, 2010,
- Assignments: Week in review 7; Learning circle summary 2

Week 8: Communicating with authors

- Readings: Mackiewicz & Riley, 2003; Sommers, 1982.
- Assignments: Week in review 8

Week 9: Editing for organization

- Readings: "Editing for Organization", Cunningham et al., 2020.
- Assignments: Week in review 9; Learning circle summary 3

Week 10: Editing for visual design

- Readings: "Chapter 1: How to think about editing" and "Chapter 2 "Editing for Readers", White & White, 2020.
- Assignments: Week in review 10

Week 11: Cohesion

- Readings: "Cohesion", Kolln, 1999.
- Assignments: Changes Reflection 3

Unit 4: Style

Week 12: Clarity

- Readings: Pick your own two chapters from the "Clarity" section in Hacker & Sommers, 2020.
- Assignments: Week in review 12; Learning circle summary 2

Week 13: Style

- Readings: Pick any two readings (Clarity, Grammar, Punctuation, Mechanics, or Research) from Hacker & Sommers, 2020, that you haven't read yet.
- Assignments: Week in review 13; Learning circle presentations

Week 14: Style

- Readings: Pick any two readings from Hacker & Sommers, 2020, that you haven't read yet.
- Assignments: Week in review 14

Week 15: Reflection

- Readings: None
- Assignments: Revised definition of TE; Changes reflection 4

Assignment Descriptions

Defining TE (2 assignments; 5% of final grade) The first week of class, before engaging in others' definitions of TE, you will write a definition of "technical editing". Your definition should include the purpose, tasks, and skills of technical editing. At the end of the course, you will revisit your preliminary definition of technical editing and revise it. You will submit your revised definition along with a 1-2 paragraph reflection that describes what changes you did or did not make and *why* you did or did not make those changes.

Changes Reflections (4 assignments; 30% of final grade): At the end of each unit, you will find your own or be given a text and asked to edit it. Using the skills, tools, and understanding that you've developed during the unit, you will edit the document, tracking each of the changes you make to the document. Each change should be accompanied by a short comment that indicates why you made the change you did. You will also make a 2-paragraph or 2–3-minute audio or video reflection describing what changes you made to the document and why. The reflection must begin with a description of the rhetorical situation surrounding the editing act—who is the author, what is the author's purpose and message, who is the intended audience, and what is your role as editor. You will turn in both the document with tracked changes and the reflection.

Week in Review (10 assignments; 45% of final grade): Each week, you'll complete a "week in review" assignment. These assignments are designed to help me track your learning in the course as well as to check in with you. We will decide as a class the day/time for these weekly submissions. Week in review assignments will typically ask you to reflect on that week's readings/assignments or delve deeper into a topic from class discussion. There will be a week in review assignment every week except the weeks that you have a changes reflection assignment (weeks 2, 6, 10, and 15).

Learning Circles (5 assignments; 20% of final grade): Early in the semester, you will submit your preferences for a book related to technical editing. Students will be put in groups of 3-4, and each group will read a different book. Your group will meet four times to discuss the content

of your book. As a group, you will decide how to divide the content on the book into four meetings, assigning yourselves a certain amount of reading in a given period and assigning roles for each person for each meeting. The roles are:

1. Discussion Leader: Your job is to develop a list of questions that your group might want to discuss about this part of the book.
2. Summarizer/Reporter: Your job is to prepare a summary of the session, highlighting the group's discussion and conveying the key points, main highlights, and the "essence" of that session's reading. Your notes will be uploaded to Canvas as evidence of progress in your group. No specific format is required for your submission.
3. Connector: Your job is to connect content from the book to other content, readings, and discussions from our class. How does this source support/challenge other claims that we've encountered in class?

Roles must change every meeting. The reporter for each session will upload their notes to Canvas. In week 13, the group will make a 5–7-minute presentation of the 3 most important takeaways of the book and how those takeaways relate to the rest of the course.

The book options for this course will be determined by the interests of the students and the availability of OER material from the library.