Alex Yeoh

ENG 2140-B90

28th June 28, 2022

**Summary**

James R. Koelsch, in their article “Is Writing an Essential Skill for Engineers?”, argues that writing is an important skill for any engineer. He begins this argument by bringing up a counterpoint claiming that writing was not critical and that learning core engineering skills would be a better use of time; however, he quickly minimizes the counterpoint with a statement about how that would only be true for a portion of engineers. He then continues arguing the importance of writing skills by using anecdotes to show how writing skills have helped some people further their careers. He then suggests ways to improve writing skills before reinforcing the idea that writing is an important skill by showing the fact that some colleges and universities are placing writing skills at a higher priority.

**Analysis**

The author argues the importance of writing skills for an engineer primarily using anecdotes and with the help of some facts at the end of his article. Due to the article being published in *Automation World*, the target audiences are likely engineering students and engineers. Although, this article likely focuses more on engineering students rather than working engineers due to the use of facts about college courses at the end of the article. The article’s uses of anecdotes and facts are very effective on the primary audience of engineering students; however, with its focus on students, it is far less effective on working engineers.

The use of anecdotes is very effective for engineering students because they allow the students to connect with the story immediately. The initial anecdotal evidence doubles as a counterpoint where the author recounts a story about a classmate of his that questioned the necessity of good writing skills as an engineer, which is a doubt that many engineering students would likely also be wondering. The author, however, quickly dispels the doubts about the importance of writing skills by showing a statement made by a Ph.D. chemical engineer, who is also the president of a consulting firm, about how not having good writing skills would greatly limit what a working engineer could do. This anecdote is very effective for students due to it allowing them to connect with the doubts presented.

Another effective use of anecdotes that the author employs is an anecdote about how good writing skills can impact employment. The author shows an anecdote by a senior vice president of human resources who explains how their company looked for candidates who were both good at writing and engineering. He reinforces this point by showing an anecdote by a chemical engineer who explains how good writing skills was essential to their ability to move onto a leadership position. The use of anecdotes in this fashion are very effective for students who are likely thinking of their future employment but is also effective for working engineers who want to move into leadership positions.

The author also uses facts to persuade his readers that writing is an important skill for engineers. He uses the fact that Cleveland State’s engineering college and Purdue University has raised their writing requirements. This use of facts is effective for engineering students because these are insights to the direction colleges and universities are turning towards and changes that their colleges and universities might soon implement. This use of facts, however, is ineffective for working engineers as they have already completed their education.

Overall, the author has effectively used anecdotes and facts to target his main audience of engineering students. The author, however, could have made better use of facts to persuade both engineering students and working engineers by having facts that show statistics such as the difference in employment rate or pay rate between engineers who have improved their writing skills and those who have not. The author could have also better persuaded working engineers by using anecdotes that they could better connect with; however, this change may lessen the article’s overall persuasiveness to engineering students.

**Conclusion**

Koelsch has made effective use of anecdotes to persuade by quickly minimizing the impact of a counterpoint and showing the importance of writing skills in employment. However, he could have made better use of facts to persuade by simply using more relevant facts, simply using facts about colleges and universities would only be effective on a portion of his audience. Overall, he has made a very effective argument for writing skills being an important skill for engineers that is focused on his primary target audience, engineering students. He could have relatively easily made the argument more effective by utilizing more facts, which would have made his argument more effective overall, to both engineering students and working engineers.