C.H.O.I.C.E Editing Project Meta-Analysis
Interoffice Memorandum

To   Dr. Derek G. Ross, Dr. Stewart Whittemore, and Dr. Susan Youngblood
From   Kaitlin Coyle
Date   January 17, 2025

Subject   C.H.O.I.C.E. Editing Project Meta-Analysis
Keywords Editing, Approaches

Introduction

This memo addresses the MTPC Portfolio Committee's request for a meta-analysis of my C.H.O.I.C.E. Editing Project for Dr. Sidler's ENGL 7000: Technical Editing course. The analysis discusses the audience, context, purpose, and theories that informed the editing process.

Audience, Context, Purpose

Choosing to Help Others In Our Community Excel (C.H.O.I.C.E.) is an organization offering resources to residents of Uniontown, Alabama. The C.H.O.I.C.E. one-page flyer was meant to serve as an informational document about C.H.O.I.C.E.'s resource-based programs. Although C.H.O.I.C.E. offers programs in six areas, this document focuses on their literacy/education programs. Because these programs are geared towards youth, the document's audience consisted mostly of parents and youth, but also others seeking educational resources. This document's context of use was at the C.H.O.I.C.E. building, where residents might pick up the flyer; however, they would likely also be reading the document in their home.

Theories and Processes in Editing

Buehler (2003) discusses two approaches to technical editing: the rhetorical and programmatic approach. The former involves audience analysis, evaluating a document based on audience, context, and purpose, but also "preserving" the "speaker/writer's" style (p. 461). The latter focuses on stylistic (e.g., tone, word choice) and grammatical (e.g., spelling, punctuation) matters. Recently, editing's focus has shifted towards content editing; however, Buehler (2003) suggests the programmatic approach is equally important because grammar, style, and tone are also contingent on the rhetorical situation. Both approaches are reflected in Van Buren and Buehler's (1980) *Levels of Edit*: 1) substantive, 2) language & mechanical, 3) copy clarification & format, 4) integrity & screening, and 5) coordination & policy. However, the extent to which the levels are performed depends on the rhetorical situation. I discuss how I engaged in the first two levels for the C.H.O.I.C.E. Editing project below.

Substantive Editing

Van Buren and Buehler (1980) describe substantive editing as a document's "coherence of individual parts" (p. 23). To ensure coherence, Buehler (2003) suggests the rhetorical approach, which sees editors as intermediaries between writers and readers, "empathetic[ally]" projecting

"into the position of readers" (p. 461). Engaging in empathy to communicate effectively is also inherent to Design Thinking, which teaches designers to respect the "different experiences and perspectives" of users by "immersing" themselves in their lives (Wible, 2022, p. 21).

I did this while completing substantive edits for the C.H.O.I.C.E. document. First, I researched C.H.O.I.C.E. more and quickly learned most of their audience was from low-income, rural areas of Alabama where transportation and lack of communication were huge barriers to resource access. Because of this, and the document's purpose of explaining C.H.O.I.C.E.'s literacy/education programs, I decided to combine the two documents I'd been given into one. Each document spoke on C.H.O.I.C.E.'s literacy/education programs; however, the first discussed only one program (i.e., Dolly Parton's Imagination Library) while the second discussed two (i.e., Educate Through College and the Youth Advisory Committee). In combining the documents, I achieved coherence, but also created a more usable, readable, and accessible document that helped my audience learn more about C.H.O.I.C.E.'s programs.

Language & Mechanical Style
In *The Levels of Edit*, Van Buren and Buehler (1980) discuss language as "spelling," "grammar," "punctuation," "usage," and "conciseness," elements aligning with Buehler's (2003) programmatic approach (p. 21-22). However, Buehler (2003) explains that tone is also important, informed by the rhetorical situation, discussing this in the technical communicator's context. They often associate their job with writing clearly and concisely; however, she argues this tonal choice is rhetorical and not always appropriate for the situation. Tone as a rhetorical approach is something I considered in my language and mechanical edits for the C.H.O.I.C.E. flyer. Because the document's intended audience was parents and youth, I knew a technical tone was not appropriate. Thus, I maintained the original writer's friendly but professional tone.

For my mechanical edits (i.e., grammar), I corrected usage and redundancies by following Chicago Manual of Style (CMoS) and delivering edits using Microsoft Word's track changes feature. However, I also printed several hard copies and engaged in physical markup. Dayton (2003) discusses how several technical editors engage in a combination of hard copy and e-editing because it allows them to "catch errors missed by on-screen proofing" (p. 200). The attention to detail in my editing led to a more usable document for my audience.

Conclusion
This project taught me the importance of always considering the rhetorical situation. Doing so can lead to a more usable document; however, I also learned the importance of empathizing with my audience, something I have carried with me into other TPC projects.

Bibliography

Van Buren, R., & Buehler, M.F. (1980). *The Levels of Edit.* Jet Propulsion Laboratory.
https://ntrs.nasa.gov/api/citations/19800011701/downloads/19800011701.pdf

Wible, S. (2022). Empathy. In J.C.K. Tham (Ed.), *Keywords in Design Thinking: A Lexical Primer for Technical Communicators & Designers* (pp. 21-24). The WAC Clearinghouse.

Dayton, D. (2003). Electronic Editing in Technical Communication: A Survey of Practices and Attitudes. *Technical Communication*, *50*(2), 192–205.

Buehler, M. F. (2003). Situational Editing: A Rhetorical Approach for the Technical Editor.
Technical Communication, *50*(4), 458–464. https://doi.org/10.2307/43095592