How do Writers Define *Editing*?

ELANG 350 Basic Editing Skills

October 28, 2021

Introduction:

There are many ways to define editing and many different levels of the craft. My mom edited my papers when I was in high school; she focused on grammar, sentence structure, and readability. Now that I'm in college, I have the writing lab help edit my papers. Akin to my mother's methods, they also make similar corrections to my work. However, the biggest difference between writing and editing is that there is so much more to the process of actually editing and publishing a a manuscript than my writer self would ever imagine. In the editing process, there are four major steps: proofreading the text, stylizing the text, cutting sentence structure, and reviewing the pictures and overall look (Eaton 113). However, this is only one way to label the editing process. How do the writers themselves define the editing process and what happens to their text from beginning to end?

Research Question:

For my research, I am going to ask at least six college students at Brigham Young University about their opinions on the editing process and what they think certain terms from the editing field (proofreading, copy editing, comprehensive, general improvement) really mean.

Methods:

I started by sending a survey to at least six writers. The survey included demographic questions of gender and age to get a feel for who took my survey and ensure that the respondents were a good sampling. I also asked the participants how many years of writing experience they have and their familiarity with the editing process. These questions helped level the playing field and allowed me to understand where my participants were individually in their knowledge so that I could better interpret their responses. In my survey, I included open-ended questions

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dealing with my four topics (proofreading, copy editing, comprehensive, general improvement) and then gave examples to choose from to further clarify their open-ended responses.

Results and Discussion:

The results for all of my survey questions can be found in the Appendix. However, it was clear that editing is viewed abstractly by those who are not directly involved in the process. The responses indicated comfort with writing. However, when it came to editing or the editing process, there was a more varied response. The lowest comfort level response the editing process received dipped as low as 19 out of 100 and the lowest comfort level response editing received was as low as 20 out of 100. Other open-ended responses asking about certain editing terms and

Q4_1	
Move the slider to indicate how comfortable you are with these questions. 0 no comfort to 100 complete comfort. - How comfortable are you as a writer?	
	83
	60
	51
	76
	50
	95

Q4_2 Move the slider to indicate how comfortable you are with these questions. 0 no comfort to 100 complete comfort. - How comfortable are you as an editor?	
	87
	80
	26
	72
	20
	40

Q4_3	
Move the slider to indicate how comfortable you are with these questions. 0 no comfort to 100 complete comfort. - Do you consider yourself comfortable with the editing process	
	81
	70
	20
	84
	19
	60

definitions showed just as much discomfort or confusion. For example, when asked to define copy editing, responses were varied. It appears that editing to an average college student consists

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Q8
Copy editing
Editing of a hardcopy
editing for content maybe
Making an additional copy that you edit while not editing the original version
editing the same thing using multiple people
when you proofread your second draft
you copy someone else's editing and follow their approach to keep everything standardized

of the most simplistic editing definition and any other official editing term confuses the process. There were similar results for the other definition-based questions.

This study shows, first of all, that the editing process is much more complicated than most college students outside of the field may understand. It also shows that there are many definitions for editing and the editing process. It would have been beneficial to the survey non-students, but would have presented greater difficulty of analysis.

Appendix:

Q1	Q2	Q4_1	
What is your gender?	What is your age?	How comfortable are you as a writer?- slider	
Prefer not to say	22	60	
Female	21	51	
Female	23	76	
Prefer not to say	24	50	
Male	28 or older	95	
		How comfortable are you as an editor?- slider	
		87	
		80	
		26	
		72	
		20	
		40	
		Q4_3	
		Do you consider yourself comfortable with the editing process?- slider	
		81	
		70	
		20	
		84	
		19	
		60	

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Q5	Q8
Proofreading- definition	Copy editing- definition
checking for grammar, punctuation and spelling mistakes	editing for content maybe
Reading over the work to look for errors.	Making an additional copy that you edit while not editing the original version
reading for errors blatant errors	editing the same thing using multiple people
when you try to read through your paper for spelling mistakes	when you proofread your second draft
you make sure the argument is logically sound. all writing should follow proper logic at all times to create a consistent proof	you copy someone else's editing and follow their approach to keep everything standardized

Q9	Q10
Comprehensive editing- definition	General improvement- definition
Editing so that the comprehension of a text is better	General improvements are made, not real editing
overall editing, including formatting	how much better the piece of writing is after editing
editing the work as a whole (grammatically, context, ect.)	Looking for and improving obvious, generalized errors
a deep edit	writing better than you did before
this is the edit you do for your final paper	this is when your writing gets better with time
you edit until you can actually comprehend what stupid people are writing	making literally any kind of edit because anything is better than the unedited draft

Q11 What type of editing does this sample contain?	Q14 What type of editing does this sample contain?
Copy editing	General improvement
General improvement	Copy editing
Comprehensive editing	General improvement
Copy editing	General improvement
Copy editing	General improvement

Q13 What type of editing does this sample contain?	Q12 What type of editing does this sample contain?
General improvement	Comprehensive editing
Comprehensive editing	Proofreading
Proofreading	Comprehensive editing
Copy editing	Proofreading
Comprehensive editing	Comprehensive editing
Proofreading	General improvement

Q17 This is the definition of comprehensive editing: editing of plot and story line as well as grammar.Does this	Q15 This is a definition of proofreading: reading and marking errors on a printer's proof or other printed material.Does this
Sort of	Yes
Sort of	Sort of
No	No
Sort of	can't you do this on a computer
No	only as applies to logic - it's all about the proof!!!

Q16 This is a definition of copyediting: edit by checking consistency and accuracy.Does this example match y	Q18 This is a definition of general improvement: additions, improvements, and changes made for the purpose of creating
No	Sort of
Sort of	Yes
No	Sort of
No	Sort of
Sort of	Sort of
yes but only when you comp[are it to someone else's editing so it's all consistent	well yeah any improvement is a good improvement

Reference List:

Eaton, Angela, Pamela Estes Brewer, Tiffany Craft Portewig, and Cynthia R. Davidson.

"Examining Editing in the Workplace from the Author's Point of View." Technical

Communication 55, no. 2 (2008): 111–139.

Commented [KD6]: In the rubric, Professor Coburn mentioned we should have 2 sources: 1 from the article, plus an additional source. He also mentioned that we should include at least one direct quote at some point! Both of these elements may be helpful to include for the purpose of the assignment and rubric ☺

Commented [KD7]: Citation looks good! If you got this from online, it may be helpful to add the URL so others can access it, as well.