Professor O’Brien

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Assignment One

**Preview**

A person speaking English as a second language might be confused by *The Pitt News* article, “Corbett plans to sue NCAA over Penn State Sanctions.” The writer used abbreviations not common outside of America, wrote complicated sentences and referenced culturally different situations. For an international audience these create miscommunications and misunderstandings.

**Abbreviations**

Using abbreviations like “Gov.” “Pa.” and “NCAA” adds difficulty for new learners of English. Reading “Gov.” instead of governor, a non-native English speaker may miss the meaning. Also, “Gov.” alternatively stands for government. Even if the reader knew the abbreviation, he or she would wonder which meaning it held. Writing acronyms like “NCAA” also creates difficulty. The National Collegiate Athletic Association is not internationally known and holds no meaning to foreigners.

**Sentence Structure**

The sentence structures in this article deviate from what a new English speaker has learned. Creating long and complicated sentences containing various ideas adds difficulty for English learners. The first sentence of the article has three ideas, Corbett is filing a lawsuit against the NCAA, it involves the Jerry Sandusky scandal, and the scandal occurred in 2011 at Penn State. All of this information in one sentence overwhelms a new English speaker. The usage of punctuation can also overwhelm the reader. The sentence “During his press conference…” has many ideas guided by punctuation, but a new English learner may interpret the punctuation differently and miss the flow of ideas.

**Cultural Differences**

This article brings up many issues unknown or offensive to people from different cultures. The journalist quoted opinions of those who did not agree with Governor Tom Corbett. A critique of an elected official may offend a culturally different group where high positioned politicians are greatly idealized and never criticized. Also, referencing U.S. specific policies without summarizing what they mean discourages foreigners. “Antitrust lawsuit,” “civil courts” and “tenure” do not exist in other countries. The alternative definition for civil, polite or courteous can confuse the reader into thinking the writer means polite courts because of their unfamiliarity with our court system.

**Conclusion**

While this article may be easy to read for native speakers, English as a second language speakers will find a lot of difficulties that could be easily fixed. All abbreviations and acronyms should be replaced with the full word to end confusion about what they stand for. Shortening sentences and relying less on punctuation to define the meaning can also alleviate confusion and give a more natural read. Lastly, being more culturally sensitive by quoting less angered criticism and providing brief explanations of American specific terms can lessen the likelihood of misunderstandings.