**On the Use of Edited Standard Written English**

Suppose a group of people were living on an island, all using the same language, until one day the island broke in two, separated by impassable water. In one hundred years, with no contact, would the people on both halves still use the same language forms? No. Human language is always changing. Language on each half of the island would evolve with different forms and rules. Neither would be better in any absolute sense –just different. Similarly, in the United States, language variations have developed among people separated by culture, socioeconomic status, ethnic background, or geography.

The language dialect used by one group commonly comes to be adopted as a standard. One of the tasks of a good education is to make students aware of facts about the standard language dialect. Another task of education is to prepare students to function effectively in the world where readers generally expect writers to use Edited Standard Written Language (ESWE). Thus, in this class, we will adopt ESWE to prepare students for the broadest possible audience.

*Adapted from Walvoord & Anderson (2010) and Bean (2011). I thank Dr. Megan Threlkeld for this summary.*

By adopting a standard, such as ESWE, we avoid the problem revealed by Humpty Dumpty; any word can mean anything to anyone, anytime.

QUOTATION: “When *I* use a word,” Humpty Dumpty said, in rather a scornful tone, “it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less.” “The question is,” said Alice, “whether you *can* make words mean so many different things.” “The question is,” said Humpty Dumpty, “which is to be master—that’s all.”

ATTRIBUTION: LEWIS CARROLL (Charles L. Dodgson), *Through the Looking-Glass,* chapter 6, p. 205 (1934). First published in 1872.

<http://www.bartleby.com/73/2019.html>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Humpty_Dumpty>