Contrary to the typical family in America, neither of my parents attended college. In fact, neither my father nor my mother completed high school. My mother chose to abandon her education a month prior to her graduation date in pursuit of a dream to travel the country. My father growing up in the small town known as Quatepec, located in the state of Toluca, was forced to quit school during the second grade to work in the fields of Mexico to support his family. Lack of proper education took a heavy toll on lives of my parents. They encountered difficulty at nearly all life’s corners. They wore the pressures of society like a pair of pants that are just too tight. Life was uncomfortable and this issue made social mobility difficult. They often required lessons from informal instructors in order to pursue their aspirations in America. I became one of the said informal instructors the afternoon my father requested lessons on how to use his new computer. The difficulties faced during this conference, first appeared as language barriers but soon exposed their relevance to contemporary concerns in writing.

“¿Qué significa ‘click’?”

“What does ‘click’ mean?”

I began our session by taking the mouse and positioning it on the start button. I said to my father, “Okay so to get the applications you click on start”. He responded quickly by asking, “¿Qué significa ‘click’?” I knew at that instant, the road ahead that lay ahead of me would have more than just a few bumps. I began to explain to my father that
click, was like push, and push was like press on. We stumbled across this barrier more than just a few times during his lesson. But like all hindrances that are overcome, this accomplishment came with new knowledge and awareness. It had come to my attention that authors of both informal and formal pieces of writing could become their own thesauruses. Words could be expanded and expressed in several different ways. Writers of both essays and novels alike often overuse and clutter their works with the same terms. As a result of failing to incorporate new phrases and words, writing tends to follow a continuous cycle of obsolete fashion and technique. Elizabeth Wardle does an exceptional job in practicing this discipline in her article entitled “Writing is a subject of Study and an Activity”. In this work, Wardle references writing in many different ways. She refers to writing as a “subject of study”, “activity”, “rhetoric”, and “concept”. The reference of writing in different methods allows her to effectively get her point and perspective across to the reader. It also sets her writing apart from others that are of a similar topic. Like dictionaries, our mental thesaurus must constantly update and expand our vocabulary strengths. In doing so one’s writing will always feature new elements to keep an audience engaged while still maintaining an appealing and chic writing style.

“No lo hagas por mi, enseñame como hacerlo”.

“Don’t do it for me, teach me how to do it”.

Whether we realize it or not a large portion of our communication is nonverbal. Even less recognizable is our lack of effective written expression in our writing. Such a phenomenon was what I began to understand that afternoon I spent with my father. As I began to navigate through the different applications on his computer, he stopped me,
saying “¿Como se supone que aprenda esto, si tu no me ensenas como hacerlo? At that moment is dawned on me that I indeed was expressing myself in a nonverbal manner rather than a verbal one. He was right. How could I expect him to learn to do these things on his own, if I wasn’t showing him how to do it? Experiencing and practicing nonverbal communication so often in our daily lives takes a toll on our abilities as writers. Although some writers like Clive Thompson, see external factors like the Internet and media as sponsors of literature, the claims can be disproved as we examine the common mistakes writers make when incorporating nonverbal language into their writing. As writers, we allow ourselves to become dependent on these unspoken indicators to relay our messages that we open the door to becoming a vulnerable writer who is unable to connect with his/her audience. We often assume that our unwritten nonverbal gestures and signals are transferred to our readers when they are not. To cure this problem we must rely on our words to do all the talking. Focus on effective descriptions and colorful word choice will ultimately free our chained expressions, allowing our writing to become fuller and richer in sense and style.

“¿Mija, sabes que no hablo muy bein Ingles, porque segues usando palabras que no comprendo?”

“Sweetheart, you know I don’t speak English well, so why do you keep using words that I don’t understand?”

Facing obstacles came with frustration. Although I made attempts to use other terms to reference what I was doing and made a strong effort to explain myself clearly,
there still lacked lucid communication. I considered what my father had said. I asked myself, “Why doesn’t he understand what I am saying?” The answer came like a slap to the face. It was insulting yet eye opening. The underlying cause of frustration was my failure to comprehend who my audience was. Continuous requests on my father’s behalf like “¿Me puedes explicar una vez mas?” (Can you explain that one more time?), forced me to consider my teaching strategy. My flaw rooted from the inability to understand my audience. Similar to when one constructs a piece of writing, the audience is kept in mind but sometimes is not as deeply considered to its full potential. As writers we are often not able to be present when our work is read to explain to our readers the elements of the text that they do not fully understand. First hand I experienced how an audience takes in my spoken expression. I can assume that even more difficulty is encountered with my written word. This lesson is undoubtedly applicable to the writing process. As author Kevin Roozen points out in his piece “Writing is a Social and Rhetorical Activity (main concept)”, “Writers are always doing the rhetorical work of addressing the needs and interests of a particular audience, even if unconsciously” (Roozen 2). He also adds “Writing, then, is always an attempt to address the needs of an audience” (Roozen 2). Writers of all varieties must recognize both the needs and requests of their audience. Roozen’s article looks toward the fact that the writers always seem to keep an audience in mind but often lack understanding of the desires and wants of their intended audience. This is not to say that writers should simplify or lessen the level of complexity of a piece but rather become aware of the recipients on the other side of their message. Where are they from? How do they perceive the world? Will they understand the material the way I am intending it to be understood? In upholding such values, writers will become
encouraged to explain their thoughts and findings in a comprehendible manner no matter who their target audience may be. Writing then develops into more sophisticated and refined expression.

Like all other evenings, we concluded with pan y café. We sat at our auburn colored dining table exchanging ideas on how to spend the upcoming weekend. Sometime later I drew a piece of neglected homework from my backpack. I had been avoiding the assignment for far too long. It was an art project and although my abilities to paint were well developed my skills to draw anything more complex than a stick figure was beyond my limits. I scribbled a few marks here and a few marks there. After a few attempts I ceased to move my pencil across the page any longer. Frustrated, I returned the page back to the pit of neglect. My father watched as I forcefully put the page away. The project appeared to have won the battle and I made no attempt to fight back. Before going to bed that night my father reminded me of something he said often when we faced struggle and disappointment. He said “No hay rosas sin espinas”. This meant “there are no roses without thorns”. It is his way of reminding me that nothing in life is ever perfect. There will always be flaws in our lives and with our pursuits. This same advice can be applied to writing. Writing is never perfectly expressed, even the pieces that seem to be ideal. There is always room for improvement. Improvement begins by acknowledging the elements that are overlooked such as developing a mental thesaurus and being considerate of your intended audience.
Works Cited

Roozen, Kevin. “Writing is Social and Rhetorical Activity (Main Concept).” N.d. Print.


Wardle, Elizabeth and Linda-Adler Kassner. “Writing is a Subject of Study and an Activity.” N.d. Print.