

Katrina Parker  
 23 October 2012

OED Assignment: Statement of Goals and Choices

1. Going into this project, I had the clear goal of re-contextualizing the OED entry for “identify” as a children's television series pilot. At first, I focused on what was familiar and made the most sense to me: the main definitions. However, I realized I would need more data to fulfill the assignments' requirements. Reviewing the rest of the data, I quickly found myself to be uncomfortable with handling other parts of the OED – some of it didn't even make sense to me, so how could I possibly make it work in a completely new context? With this in mind, I created the goal of showing some of the content of the OED to be unintelligible, overcomplicated, and useless to the average user of the dictionary. In other words, there is only a certain amount of the OED that the common person can identify with.

2.

Choice	Reasoning/Explanation
<b>GENERAL/ MATERIAL</b>	
Kids' Show Format	I decided to follow the format of the pilot for a kids' television show to portray how the OED makes even adults feel like kids because of the complexity of the OED data, including symbols that are impossible to decipher and example sentences that make little sense. In this case, the normal viewing audience is inverted by sending the program to adults in seeking funding for the project. These adults may be confused and immediately reject the show as inappropriate for children and far too complex and nonsensical, even for themselves. Also, the format itself allows for segments of seemingly unrelated material in various formats to be joined together, similar to Sesame Street. Thus, I could experiment with the inclusion of live action video with animation and still images without straying from the medium's standard form.
Inclusion of Screenplay in Format	I quickly realized that the only logical way to keep track of the words used in the video was to create a script for it. Originally, I was going to keep this as a reference for myself, but I discovered that it would be interesting - and helpful to the word count - to include the OED data as character names, in the actions lines, and on the title page.
Inclusion of Letter to Dr. Shipka	The letter allows for me to give context to the video. By framing the video as a copy of a pilot that is sent out to possible investors, this immediately allows for Dr. Shipka to be included in the viewership of the video, since it would normally be intended for a young audience. This also allowed me to include more of the OED data in unique ways, such as the address including dates and page numbers along with one of the names of the authors of a quotation for the street name. Also, while looking through the data, I came across phrases that could be placed perfectly into a letter seeking funds, such as phrases appealing to the public interest and how it is “an engaging series.”
Definition Order	I ordered the definitions from simplest and most obvious to increasingly complex, specific, and obscure. The first definition that I give seems, to me, to be the most intuitive: identifying as in to locate or recognize. The next definition is also fairly straight-forward as well: “To be made, become, or prove

	<p>to be identical (with).” However, for the third definition, I purposefully kept the more wordy language that makes a simple definition more confusing than it needs to be.</p>
<p>Increasingly Inappropriate Content for Children</p>	<p>The intro is very geared toward kids with its brightly colored text and simple definitions. However, as the definitions become less child-friendly, so do the examples and associated images. The first animation, with the amoebas, is still child-friendly in its colorful use of shapes. However, a child is very unlikely to know what an “acanthamoeba” is, or to care about it. The next section, the western, is probably appropriate for some kids, but the violence is likely not to sit well with the parents of younger viewers. Similarly, parents are likely to be uncomfortable with the idea of their kids learning about reproduction through a kids show, as demonstrated in the lamb animation. Thus, the discomfort of the viewer increases as the video progresses.</p> <p>The next section of the park is less uncomfortable, but more nonsensical. In this sense, the content is inappropriate in the way of not being suited to a younger audience because of its complexity. This serves the goal of showing parts of the content of the OED to be unintelligible and useless to an average person.</p> <p>By the next segment, the potential investor should be completely convinced that this is not a show to finance. The animation with God is clearly inappropriate for kids because, objectively, religious content should not be in any children's programming (except, perhaps, in the view of members of that religion). Similarly, an advertisement for loans has no place in a children's show. Thus, the data is become inapplicable to the audience it is intended for, just as much of the data becomes irrelevant to readers of the OED.</p> <p>The line-up scene becomes a disturbing segment because it discusses a victim of a crime, which may be an uncomfortable topic for kids. Also, the discomfort is heightened by a reminder of the child being the intended viewer – the same highlighting around the “robber” and <i>click</i> sound that accompanied by the kids' guessing of “verb” and the “Dune Crow-berry” image. The last segment, the public service announcement, serves to sum up the ridiculousness of some parts of the OED.</p>
<p>Glitches/increasing static</p>	<p>The static that I created in photoshop is derived from the pronunciations of “identify.” Brit. /aɪˈdɛntɪfaɪ/, U.S. /aɪˈdɛn(t)əˌfaɪ/, /əˈdɛn(t)əˌfaɪ/. When first viewing this in the entry, I had no idea what these symbols meant. It took me a moment to realize that they are indicators of pronunciation. Thus, I decided it would make perfect static – nonsense in video form. This also visually portrays my argument that certain elements of the OED data are useless and unintelligible to a typical person.</p> <p>I decided to begin the static before and after the “interruptions” in the show – the advertisement and the PSA. This occurs just when the segments reach a level of inappropriateness that cannot be recovered from – the animation with God. The static covers each transition between segments from then on, increasing in intensity each time. This serves to represent the increasingly</p>

	<p>useless information presented in the OED. The video culminates in sporadic static ending in bars and tone – a function of video used to allow for calibration of monitors to different color tones. However, I have never seen it used for this function. Instead, I have seen it as effect in video representing a video signal being cut off. This represents the functionless (to the average person) data presented in the OED.</p> <p>The pronunciations are represented in the script form as printing glitches. This is to allow the same meaning to come across, but through a different medium. I considered leaving the script undamaged, but I believed this would take away from the meaning of the piece. I wanted it to be clear that, no matter the medium, elements of the OED data will be unintelligible and useless to the average reader.</p>
<b>SPECIFICS/ RHETORICAL</b>	
Title Page	<p>The title, “Identifying with Olivia Ellen Daniels,” was chosen because it is simple and clear, as children's programming titles tend to be. The name of the host is obviously chosen for the initials “OED.” The “Based on” section, which is usually used for books or other material that the screenplay is derived from, I used for the origins of the word. Since the word “identify” that we know today is based on other words, it parallels a film being based on previous iterations of the same story. The phone number in the lower-right corner contains numbers derived from page numbers and dates from the quotation examples.</p>
Introduction	<p>The program begins with a friendly Mister Rogers style opening, welcoming the viewers. I chose a close shot of myself so it feels like an inviting and welcoming space, versus a wide shot, which may make the viewer feel more distant from me. I wanted to start in this pleasant, comforting environment to contrast the uncomfortable or confusing segments to follow. The OED also presents this comfort in its familiar dictionary layout, but soon becomes uncomfortable with all of the miscellaneous data and overwhelming, complex quotations. I ask the viewers' (kids') parents to “help to identify the places and people under discussion,” not only because it was from the OED entry, but also because it sets up the idea that not all of the images and topics to follow will make sense to kids without explanation from adults.</p> <p>The show begins with easy definitions and kid-friendly graphics. Easily recognizable words, “noun, adverb, adjective, verb, article,” are shown on the screen in bright, happy colors. This shows the OED data to be, at first, deceptively welcoming and familiar. Just as this show begins in a familiar and audience-friendly way, so does the OED data. However, this is quickly to be turned upside-down by both. The next part of the introduction is an identification of the “Dune Crow-berry” or “Rhus crenata.” Clearly, no kid is going to know these terms. However, a photograph of the plant is also provided, making identification of it simple. This begins to subtly show the breakdown of the viewer's relationship with the video, and thus the reader's relationship with the OED data.</p>
Cafeteria Scene	<p>This scene serves as an additional, comforting segment for the viewer. Its use of</p>

	<p>cheesy comedy feels right at home in a children's television show. Once again, this lulls the viewer into a false sense of security in their understanding of the show, and the OED data. This section also serves to set up the format for the rest of the show: a general definition followed by an example from that definition's section to illustrate a use of the word in context.</p>
Amoeba Animation	<p>I created this animation as part of a Special FX assignment and, upon reading the example quote from the OED, "The amoeba was identified as a species of Acanthamoeba," I immediately thought of this segment. Here, the images and music distract from the actual information that is given, the OED data. While the viewer is focused on the easy-to-understand elements of the colorful, floating shapes, the data is lost. This serves to illustrate that the more difficult to understand elements of the OED, including the layered definitions and quotes, are easily ignored by the reader focused only on the general ideas, as I initially was.</p>
Western	<p>This segment serves a similar purpose as the amoeba animation, the cowboy antics and music in the background overshadowing the information being delivered in the words, while adding the previously mentioned level of discomfort with the material. Guns and any kind of violence are typically avoided in children's programming, thus it feels out of place here. However, it is at the lesser end of inappropriate because westerns may be seen as clearly fictionalized, exaggerated violence.</p> <p>This segment contains a text overlay in the lower-left corner of the screen. Typically, this placement indicates that the footage was taken from another source and serves as a credit to the source. In this instance, the source is a fictional film <i>White Fang</i>, with the actor J. London in the lead role, created in 1906. This set of data is the author name, title, and date for the source of the quotation "Inoffensive ranchers in remote valleys were held up by armed men and compelled to identify themselves," that is mentioned in this segment. Thus, the "credit" for the "source," is referring to the quotation instead of the film. While it is still crediting an element used in this section, it prioritizes the relationship of the OED data over the video. However, the viewer is more likely to pay attention to the video over the data. This creates a conflict in the way the video is perceived and how it is meant to be taken. Similarly, the OED is meant to be filled with lots of useful information, but instead the data seems filled with useless, overcomplicated information.</p>
Lamb Animation	<p>The lamb animation serves the purpose, as previously mentioned, of increasing the level of discomfort in the viewer of the kind of information being transmitted to kids. I chose to use lambs based on a moment of inspiration upon seeing a name of an author in the data: "C. Lamb." In using the image of the lamb rather than the name, it shows a breakdown of what the OED data represents and how it is being interpreted. The more complex OED data can similarly be misunderstood, creating a parallel breakdown between the reader and the data.</p>
Park Scene	<p>This scene reveals a discomfort with the material being spoken because of the sheer complexity of the data. The narrator is asking the viewer to identify with the emotions of the people on the screen, but they can only identify so far. They</p>

	can identify with the tone of voice and emotions in the faces and gestures of the people in the photos, but these factors overshadow the real meaning of the words themselves. Just as I could only find useful and identify with the simple, general definitions, the viewer can understand the simple images and tone of voice, but the real meaning of the words is likely lost.
God Animation	This section serves uses the first quote, “We can identify the Father with God himself,” in a literal manner – a father and son look up into the clouds and see God, thus the literal father is identified with God. This slightly alters the original intention of the words. However, the second sentence, “But a body can not be eyther like, or identified to nothing,” is completely changed from having no religious context to relating to the eucharist or “body of Christ.” The data becomes useless in presenting its intended meaning, revealing its meaninglessness in any other context than in the dictionary. Thus, the data is shown to be meaningless and useless to the dictionary user, as it is to the viewer of the kids' show.
Loan Commercial	Seeing the quote for this section, “Up to your ears in debt?” I immediately thought of a loan salesman, particularly alongside the title “How to Prosper during Coming Bad Years.” The text overlay includes this title and the author's name as the loan salesman, along with a phone number comprised of page numbers and dates from quotations in this definition section. The data here is utterly removed from its informational context of the television program. Thus, the data is useless to its intended audience, kids, just as elements of the OED data are useless to the reader.
Jailhouse Scene	This scene uses the data in the definitions as well as the signs the prisoners are holding. These signs serve to identify the prisoners in the line-up, containing their name (authors names), prisoner number (page numbers), location of residency (place names found in the data of this section), and date of birth (publication dates). All of this data comes from this definition's section, which is oddly specific to “Of a witness or victim of a crime.” I created a story of a line-up scene by combining quotations from this section. This combination of data becomes disturbing to the viewer because it is inappropriate for a children's show, as previously mentioned. Similarly, the specificity of this section of data seems ill-fitted to a dictionary. The data here feels useless and repetitive, as is a line of prisoners in a line-up.
PSA	This public service announcement is derived from the most ridiculous quote that I could find in this entry. This serves to show the utter uselessness of some sections of the OED. Even in the context of the OED, I could not decipher the purpose of this sentence. Thus, this information is just as useless as a PSA about an attacking squirrel.

3. The two main ideas I had were the children's program and an I-Spy book. Though I liked the idea of the I-Spy book because it goes so well with the word “identify,” I determined that it would be much more difficult to incorporate the OED data because I-Spy books emphasize the images much more than the words. While I had the idea of including a foreword or author's note, a table of contents, directions on each photo page, and praise of the book on the back cover, I was still worried that this would not be enough to contain all the OED data.

A third idea that I had that I dismissed was an art film for the word “identity.” This would

contain various editing techniques. The main point of the video would have been to show that while people are individual, there are also similarities between them, connecting to the very different definitions of “identity.” I quickly realized that this idea was too general, making it difficult to determine where exactly the individual pieces of OED data could go.

Overall, I determined that the children's show pilot would allow me to play to my strengths as a film major while containing all of the OED data required for the assignment. It also allowed me to explore my true feelings toward the OED with all the tools at hand that I am familiar with at my disposal to create an argument based on these feelings.

4. I received much help from my fellow film majors who acted in the show, including Tyler Spittel, Mike Woodard Jr., Brianna Paige, Kelly McAdams, Sander Lebau, and Martin Onuegbu. I was also aided by the knowledge from my various film and art classes, which taught me script format, lighting, camera handling, special effects techniques such as motion of 3D layers and the multi-self portrait of Digital Darkroom class (both used in the “Park” scene). Along with this is, of course, the software that allows for these kinds of effects, including Photoshop, After Effects, and Final Cut Pro.

I relied on outside sources for certain images and sounds. Google Images was essential to finding images for the plant images, the lamb scene, and the father and son looking at the clouds with God and the eucharist. With more time, I would have searched for copyright-free or creative commons licensed images, but for now I rely on the argument of fair use for education purposes. The western is an episode of “The Lone Ranger” found on archive.org. The soundtrack I put together uses Soundtrack Pro loops and music beds.

Art classes in general have helped with this project overall, and in particular in writing this Statement of Goals and Choices because creating art is all about making a piece of work and being able to justify the choices made in it. Particularly with the creation of experimental film, which I've mostly focused my student film career on, people will not necessarily understand what your purpose is just from watching the film. Thus, you have to be able to explain the purpose of each piece of footage, each editing choice, each effect, and its contribution to the overall argument of the work, as I have done here.

#### WORD COUNTS:

Goals and Choices – 3290

Script – 1067

OED data – 803

Other – 264