

Division teaches life essentials

Loretta Palmer
Staff Reporter

Unless one is on a deserted island, everyone has to communicate with another individual at some point in life.

The University's language and literature division gives students the ability to investigate the written and spoken word.

Freshman Tricia Humphrey, a communication and English double major, said the classes within the division enhance people's ability to connect to one another.

"It's human interest," she said. "It's definitely something that can bridge the gap between all of us."

Humphrey chose her majors because she always has been more interested in English classes than science or mathematics classes, she said.

"It came easier to me," she said. "[There is] more of a leeway for interpretation, and it's easier to get what you want out of English, where math and science is very specific."

Last semester, Humphrey took a Shakespeare class with Mary Lou Woe-hlk, assistant professor of English.

"If you didn't like Shakespeare coming in, you certainly would like Shakespeare coming out of it," she said.

Humphrey said she had thought about becoming a book editor but now is leaning toward becoming a magazine editor.

"I think magazine is more my style because it's ever-changing," she said. "You have to do a lot of moving in and out, and it's more upbeat. You don't get logged into one project for a really long time."

Mary Shapiro, associate professor of linguistics, said language is important to any student, especially English majors.

"Knowing about language, both its structure and social aspects, can only deepen their appreciation for text, [and] can only enrich their own production of text," she said.

Linguistics, the scientific study of language, allows people to think about language in a new way and to study its structure, history and changes, Shapiro said.

"Language is our main medium of communication, so anybody who's interested in any field where communication is going to be a major issue can get a whole lot out of it," she said.

Shapiro said she has had students go on to a variety of jobs after graduating from Truman, such as alumna Kristin Wegner.

Before coming to Truman, Wegner said she had never heard of linguistics, but because she enjoyed English and putting words together, she decided to minor in linguistics.

"It's really just very fascinating," she said. "I recommend it for anyone. It gives you such a great understanding of lan-



Senior English major Joel Reschly reads through freshman Matt Strode's paper at the Writing Center on Tuesday afternoon.

Chris Waller/Index

guage and appreciation of it."

Wegner now works for Riverside Publishing as an editorial specialist who helps produce reading tests. She said her linguistics background was a huge help.

"I was able to walk in the door the first day and understand what was going on," Wegner said.

Her job involves finding and analyzing reading selections to make them appropriate for different age levels. She also assures the wording of questions and answers are clear to a test-taker. She said communication is necessary in every aspect of life.

"It really does make you sound more professional to pay attention to what you are writing, even in e-mail," she said.

Her interest in words led her to her job, and she said students should pay attention to their interest in certain fields.

"[Look at] the types of things that you like to explore because you can find jobs that you are interested in," she said.

Diane Johnson, assistant professor of communication, said employers look for the intellectual and psychological ability to deal with changes, and a liberal arts background provides that.

"You can think your way around a problem if you have the liberal arts background," she said. "You can look at things from different perspectives."

The communication discipline has changed significantly during recent years because of technology, Johnson said. A

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communication degree prepares students to be flexible, she said.

To stay up to speed with the changes, Truman has adjusted the communication major. Journalism, public communication and communication studies are the three concentrations within the field. The areas of communication arts and communi-

cation sciences no longer exist.

"As we see the discipline changing, we want those changes reflected in our curriculum, so we're not sending somebody out of here with a 1970 communication degree," she said. "We want them to have a 2006 communication degree."

Whatever a student's field of interest,

communication will help him or her do many things after graduation because it is broad, Johnson said.

"I buy into the contention that you cannot not communicate," she said. "Communication is a ubiquitous part of life. It's something you're going to do from the day you're born until the day you die."

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