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English 110

Professor Schulte

6 May 2021

Self-Assessment Essay

Since the 9th grade, I never enjoyed my English classes. One reason being that it was a small school, so we rotated between the only 3 English teachers we had, and the second being that we went over the same materials repeatedly. The Catcher in the Rye, To Kill a Mockingbird, The Outsiders (this one is exceptional because it made me cry), and so forth. When I registered for English 110, I merely did it because it was required for my Pathway Courses. Making it mandatory paired with the disconnection I’ve experienced this past year with remote learning made my expectations extremely low. To my surprise, I was wrong. Up until now, I only experienced a watered-down version of what English is and the elements it truly encapsulates. When given an assignment to complete, my fingers felt as if they weighed 50lbs as I dragged them across the keyboard. During this course, my interest peaked, and I believed I have discovered a joy for writing. I’ve discovered the depth and power of language, and I believe that it is truly reflected in my coursework. The outcome has far exceeded my expectations as I witnessed a growth in skills I have developed during this course, that can be applied to my everyday life.

We began the course with our Phase 1 Multimodal Language and Narrative Assignment. We were exposed to several writers who used different rhetoric. We were introduced to the idea of rhetoric and the different ways it can be used in order to convey an idea. Out of the many rhetorical devices we learned, pathos, logos, and ethos were the main ones used by the different authors we read. I feel that this understanding can be reflected in my Written Language and Literacy Narrative. My favorite piece was “Mother Tongue” written by Amy Tan, by which my WLLN was influenced. I loved how descriptive she was when she spoke about her mother’s English, and I made it a goal to do the same in my Narrative. An example of this can be seen in the 6th paragraph of her personal essay when she describes her mother’s tongue as “vivid, direct, full of observation and imagery.”[[1]](#footnote-1) I mimicked the use of imagery in my WLLN where I spoke about my time abroad. “Immediately I was cast into a sea of diversity and was delighted to engulfed with waves of culture, heritage, and language.”[[2]](#footnote-2) Like Tan, I appealed to my audience's emotions when describe the mental and emotional journey I experienced while learning Spanish. There was also a great emphasis on drafting, revising, and editing which we did in all three phases. It was a tremendous boost in the quality of my writing because giving yourself mini breaks in your writing is a refresher. Even though it is the same person writing it, you will look at it from a different angle and seek if there are any ways to improve your work.

The assignments completed in Phase 1 and topics we learned about helped us to transition smoothly into Phase 2. Using the material from Phase 1 combined with the materials from Phase 2, we explored and analyzed, in writing and reading, a variety of genres and rhetorical situations. I felt that this phase was fun but also hard. Exposure to different topics and awareness of issues were a plus, however, analyzing rhetoric was difficult for me and I feel that I did not entirely grasp the concept. My default habit was analyzing *what* they did rather than their *why* and *how*. Looking back, I realized that rhetorical analysis is like peeling the layers of an onion. With each layer you peel, you get closer to the core of the onion. The core is the *why* and *how.* Inmy Phase 2 feedback, it was made clear that I identified the rhetorical devises used by the author and vaguely identified the why and how, but I only scratched the surface because there was more to be analyzed. On the plus side, engaging in the collaborative and social aspects of writing the process helped me a great deal. Some might be too prideful to have another person critique their work, but I encourage it and I loved the fact we had the shared google docs for our work. Having a person with a different perspective from yours critique your work allows room for growth and pointing out things you didn’t even notice.

Phase 3, as I stated in my Cover Letter, was my favorite phase and assignment in general! Here are my reasons why: (1) The nature of the assignment gave me the freedom to choose which topic I wanted to explore within the language realm, which increased my interest and overall productivity in the assignment. I learned how to locate sources and analyze their credibility. I made sure that my sources were from credible companies that have an established history. I learned to look out for signs that indicate something is not credible such as: misspelling, unsecured website, lack of cited work, and a lack of “About us” page. (2) I learned so much about Jamaica and the current day issues that are occurring. I recognized the role of language attitudes and standards in empowering, oppressing, and hierarchizing languages and their users. Regarding Jamaican Creole, the negative perception perceived of the creole creates a hierarchy and a system of oppression against its users and those who don’t speak Jamaican Standard English. I was able to identify these issues in my Research Essay. (3) I was successful in composing texts that integrated my stance with appropriate sources using strategies such as summary, critical analysis, interpretation, synthesis, and argumentation. I believed all that we learned in Phase 1 and 2 was the stool that boosted my success in Phase 3. When I figured out my topic and found my sources, I was unsure of what to do. “*How do I begin my essay?” “How am I going to structure my essay?” “Which evidence will be for or against my claim and where should I place them?”* I made an outline and read my sources thoroughly. I used the rhetorical devices learned from the previous and used a style I noticed a lot of the authors I read used (placing your thesis towards the end). I was able to identify the central idea of each source and connect it to my claim, which made my paper stronger. Even more, I learned how to use citations correctly and the standards for writing an academic paper. This phase specifically gave me the chance to apply the skills I learned (and tried hard to develop) in my paper and I feel that it is my best work in this class.

Overall, this has been my favorite class since I started college. The teaching of language, how to speak to/with others, and the ability to persuade are all skills that go beyond this course. In every class I had, there has always been a paper we had to write. Intro to Jazz, Black Studies, Philosophy, etc... Knowing how to manipulate words to your advantage is a great skill to have. Furthermore, this can be applied to the corporate world and knowing how to interact with your peers. At some point, we are going to have to negotiate a promotion, our pay, or simply getting a job. Understanding *who* you're speaking to along with *how* you should talk to them, in terms of reasoning, is a valuable skill to have. I have witnessed the application of the knowledge I have learned in this class to other areas of my schoolwork, even life as well. I have experienced growth in my communication skills from what I have learned, and I know it is only the beginning.

Work Cited

1. "“Mother Tongue” by Amy Tan." *ENGL 110 Spring 2021 – Instructor: Dilan Schulte*, dsenglish110.commons.gc.cuny.edu/content/tan/. Accessed 6 May 2021.
2. Cobourne, Deborah. "Written Language and Literacy Narrative." *Dropbox*, 3 Mar. 2021, www.dropbox.com/s/5pzpiorbvqh6r11/WLLN%20Snapshot-%20Deborah%20Cobourne.pdf?dl=0. Accessed 6 May 2021.

1. "“Mother Tongue” by Amy Tan." *ENGL 110 Spring 2021 – Instructor: Dilan Schulte*, dsenglish110.commons.gc.cuny.edu/content/tan/. Accessed 6 May 2021.

   [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Cobourne, Deborah. "Written Language and Literacy Narrative." *Dropbox*, 3 Mar. 2021, www.dropbox.com/s/5pzpiorbvqh6r11/WLLN%20Snapshot-%20Deborah%20Cobourne.pdf?dl=0. Accessed 6 May 2021. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)