



UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

**Department of Writing and Rhetoric**

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Observation of Emily Hensley by Lissa Pompos Mansfield  
Monday, October 2, 2017, 11:30 am – 12:20 pm  
Nicholson School of Communication, Room 102  
ENC 1102: Composition II

*What Happened During Class*

Prior to this classroom observation, Emily Hensley sent me her teaching materials, which included a reading chart (that students would complete for homework prior to attending class) and a set of presentation slides. The focus of these materials was on comprehending the main arguments of Perri Klass' article, "Learning the Language," as well as helping students to begin brainstorming how they might apply some of the lessons of the article in their own upcoming assignments.

At 11:31 am, Emily greeted her students and projected the first slide of her presentation, which asked students to consider Klass' main claim and the type of data used in her article. After this brief recap, Emily asked students to respond to the following question prompts in the form of a quick write: "Does the doctor's language use make them seem less empathetic? If so, how could they change their language to appear more empathetic?," "If doctors use their specialized language to explain medical issues to patients, how does that affect how patients view their doctors?," "What are the negative impacts of using this specialized language with patients?," "Why did Klass not directly state a research question in this piece?," and "Are there benefits other than those Klass mentioned to becoming fluent in a particular community's specialized language?" Students completed their quick write from 11:34-11:38 am. After this individual writing, Emily led her students through a whole-class discussion based on the question prompts. This discussion occurred from 11:38-11:43 am.

At 11:43, Emily transitioned to a slide titled "Jargon, Lexis, Specialized Language." This slide contained the following overarching discussion prompts: "When is it appropriate to use specialized language?," "When is it inappropriate?," "Why might someone use specialized language?," and "What are some examples of specialized language?" After students provided a few examples of specialized language (e.g., doctors' jargon, foreign languages, American Sign Language), Emily showed a slide with links to four YouTube video clips. The purpose of this activity was to have students analyze the consequences—positive and negative—of using specialized language. The slide asked students to identify "What are some of the specialized terms used? Can you determine their meaning from the context?" The videos included examples of specialized language for computer programmers (i.e., those who want to learn how to create a "smart pointer"), professional photographers (i.e., those who would benefit from a DSLR tutorial about shooting a low-light video), employees at the Pawnee Parks and Recreation Department (i.e., coworkers of Tom Haverford on the show Parks and Recreation), and investors in a new (but fake) technology. This video analysis activity occurred from 11:47 am – 12:00 pm. After each video, Emily

asked students who they thought the video was for, what some of the specialized terms were and their meanings (e.g., aperture), and what the consequences—both positive and negative—of using specialized language were for an outside audience (e.g., turning off potential viewers because the content is confusing) and the intended audience of the video (e.g., teaching programmers how to make a “smart pointer” using precise language).

Following this whole-class discussion and analysis activity, Emily asked her students to provide their own examples of specialized terms used in their literate activity/ discourse community. Students were tasked with identifying the term, defining the term, explaining how the term is used in their literate activity/ discourse community and the consequences of that term’s use, describing the role of specialized language in the literate activity/ discourse community, and reflecting on how understanding these roles might help them to develop their Task 2 and 3 assignments. Students began working on this task at 12:01 pm. After approximately six minutes, Emily instructed her students to get into groups of three-five and share their answers with each other. Following this small-group discussion, one member of each group shared their example with the rest of the class (e.g., “spit” in the rapping community, “coda” in the deaf community, “eye with lip” in nail salons).

Last, Emily ended class by sharing some announcements (i.e., students should complete their CITI training modules by Wednesday night and read Sean Branick’s article before the next class). She then released her students at 12:19 pm.

### *Overall Impressions and Thoughts*

This was a well-organized and interactive class session. As mentioned above, Emily combined many different types of active learning activities throughout the period, including individual quick writes, small group discussions, and whole-class debriefs. Based on the level of engagement I observed, it seems that the video clip analysis activity and the subsequent small-group discussion were the most useful. This was evident by the sheer number of students who participated in these discussions. For the whole-class analysis, approximately 11 of the 20 students present contributed in some form (which is a commendable percentage!), and for the small-group discussion, each student appeared to share an example that was directly related to their earlier Task 1 assignment. I especially appreciated the examples that Emily chose for the video analysis activity; she included two disciplinary-type videos and two more entertaining pop culture examples. I believe this variety of examples ensured that students paid attention and could see multiple versions of the concept of “specialized language” in action. Thus, Emily provided multiple opportunities for her students to engage with the material and apply the main skills described in Klass’ article: identifying instances of specialized language within particular contexts and investigating the uses and consequences of that language use.

In sum, I commend Emily for her design of this particular lesson so that it provided multiple means for students to engage with the course concepts. In addition, I believe that Emily’s explicit emphasis on the potential value of Klass’ article for their Task 2 and 3 assignments will help her students to begin inventing for these tasks in productive ways. I look forward to hearing from Emily about her students’ success as the semester progresses.

Sincerely,

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Observation of Emily Hensley by Rachel Street  
Monday, October 29<sup>th</sup> 2018  
Visual Arts Building, Room 113  
ENC 1101: Composition I

### *What Happened During the Class*

Before class began, Emily played music for everyone and had the title slide to her presentation up, “Essay 2 Reflection and Essay 3 Introduction.” She let students know that they would be doing a lot more writing during the class than usual and asked if everyone could see the board. She instructed them that they would be focusing on writing their reflection for their paper. This was their prompt:

- What was your process like for writing Essay 2?
- Did you discover anything new about how you write?
- What was particularly easy? What was difficult? What was confusing?
- What were some of your successes? What do you think you could improve?
- What will you do differently next time?

They started writing individually at 10:32 am after Emily instructed them to focus on the prompt. During their writing time, Emily remained up at the podium and also moved around the room and monitored the students. Most students who had laptops began writing their responses on those and the students who did not have them either used their phones or wrote their responses on paper. Once they got started, Emily played the music again. At 10:38 am, she asked about their progress and if they needed more time and most students said that they did. At 10:40 am, she asked them to talk with a partner about their answer and then warned them that they’d be talking about it as a class. While they were working in partners, many of the students actively discussed their current status of their projects and helped each other through some of the difficulties that they were experiencing. At 10:45 am, she reconvened the class. She asked what was easiest overall about their projects. One student said that they were actually in the image that was circulated so they found so they had the better understanding around the truth of the image. Another said that they found difficulty incorporating sources and another said they found determining what the big takeaway of their project was difficult. She asked them about the things they thought they were doing really well. One student said they wrote an essay like they always do and another student said they wrote pretty fast. She asked the class, “What would you do differently for Essay 3?” A couple of students said that they’d plan and research a lot more.

They moved onto the next portion of their reflection, which was focused on how they achieved the course outcomes. The main question for the prompt was “Did you achieve or partially achieve the outcome? How? What can you do differently when working on Essay 3 to make sure you’re working toward achieving these outcomes?” She warned them that they’d have five minutes to write. At 10:55 am, she asked students to raise their hands when she said an outcome that they thought they’d achieved.

She then moved into introducing their Essay 3 prompt. She asked them to think about the following questions:

- What is the main goal of essay 3?
- Who do you think the audience might be for essay 3 (other than your classmates or me)?
- Are there any unfamiliar words or phrases in the prompt?
- Why do you think this is your final major essay assignment for the class?
- What questions do you have?

At 11:00 am, she asked them if they needed more time and they responded that they did. She asked them about their main goal was for the essay. A student responded that it was meant to showcase them as writers. She asked about the audience and they said the main one was those within the class like the instructor and students. Emily clarified that there could be more individuals who encounter their projects, like those interested in the field of Writing Studies. All students expressed that there were not any unfamiliar words involved in the assignment sheet, but one wanted clarification about what counted as a text. She asked them why they thought that this was their final project and one student responded that it was because it gave them the opportunity to reflect on how they've changed as a writer in comparison to the beginning of the semester. Emily then went further into the expectations for their assignment. They then shifted into a quick write about Unit 3 with the prompt:

- What do you already know that will help you complete essay 3?
- What do you still need to know to write essay 3?
- What questions you have about essay 3?
- What are you expecting to learn about in unit 3?
- What might be confusing to write about essay 3?

She asked that they write on a separate sheet of paper so that she could collect it and use them to plan the unit. They began answering the prompt at around 11:10 am. At 11:13 am, she asked them to talk about what they were expecting. One student said they expected to look back at all their different kinds of writing. Another said that the writing would help them understand more about writing in different contexts. At 11:15 am, she gave announcements about the campus closure that was coming up and their reading for the next class and reminded them to make sure to bring their readings to the class. She also mentioned she would bring Halloween treats for the next class because it fell on the holiday. After the announcements, she dismissed the class.

### *Overall Thoughts and Impressions*

The class that I observed with Emily was abundant in opportunities for the students to reflect on themselves as writers and on their writing process as a whole. Through her thoughtful lesson planning, she encouraged a deep level of introspection that students could then reinforce through a discussion with their peers. Students were able to talk about their research successes and difficulties with one another and offer advice based on their own experiences that semester. In this way, the learning that happened within the space was a collective effort.

The class was writing heavy with three different activities that required students to write out their thoughts. But, it seemed that Emily planned this with purpose because many students were able to reference their papers when talking with peers, which led to more fruitful discussion. The questions also seemed much attuned with the assignments themselves. So, I imagine the students will have no problem utilizing them later in their writing process. The questions were also geared toward students thinking critically about the transition from their Essay 2 to Essay 3. So, they were able to establish a greater connection between different steps

in the writing process. In this way, students might develop a clearer picture of what the research process might look like within the academic community.

Overall, Emily seemed very cognizant of her students' needs. She played calming music frequently to add to the welcoming feeling of the classroom. Emily often checked in on progress and if students needed more time she gave it. So, the different activities never felt rushed. She monitored the students and kept them on task as they wrote on their laptops or phones. She welcomed any form of writing tool, whether it was pen and paper, laptop, or cell phone. This alone would be extremely helpful for students who didn't have access to one. The class I observed was a very productive one when it came to students thinking deeply about their process and writing identities. I am confident that many more productive class periods will follow under Emily's instruction.

Sincerely,

Rachel Street  
Graduate Research Assistant