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ED 498

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Atlas Analysis

The piece of work I am analyzing is a typed paper consisting of 2 paragraphs arranged in the typical 5-7 sentences per paragraph structure. It also includes a picture of a car with dead bodies in, on, and around it. There is also a post-it note stuck on the paper from someone named Michelle, who made some or possibly all of the numerous grammatical/mechanic corrections/edits to the paper in pen or sharpie. The paper has been graded. There is a 10/10 written on the top left corner of the paper.

I believe that this piece of work was produced by a 9th-11th grade boy. It might have been an assignment for his 9th-11th grade English class. The assignment might have been for the student to write about a moment or memory in his life that was surprising, shocking, scary, or crazy. The student chose to write about the time he saw one of his friends die. The assignment could also be to free write about something that happened in your hometown.

To convey his crazy, shocking, or scary memory the student decided to use a simple personal narrative constructed of a typical paragraph format. This structure means that the student has been in American schools long enough to have been taught the skills to write in the paragraph format well. Though he has the correct structure for an English paper his writing is immature or juvenile for his grade. His paper just starts off like a typical 6th grade paper, but I think that he is an older student who should be able to create a better opening for a paper.

I think that the student was trying to convey his memory in the only way he knew how to, just tell it. His personal narrative became an emotionally powerful presentation of his story. This student presents an emotional time bomb to his audience in this piece.

Though the story is a sad story about the tragic death of a friend, the student does not focus solely on the death of his friend. He writes about the tradition of their “handwalking” competitions in the streets. He also writes about the aftermath of this friend’s death. In comparison, out of the fifteen sentences in the entire paper only two sentences talk about his friend’s death. The rest give the audience background knowledge of the student and his friend and handles the aftermath of the friend’s death. I think this shows that the student did not want to dwell on only his friend’s death, but also how the accident and resulting death affected other people.

If the assignment was to write about something that happened in your hometown, the student picked a sad event. Not only did he pick an event that happened in his hometown, but one that might have deeply affected him. That moment might be a reason why he no longer lives in his hometown. That moment might have been a turning point in his young life and these all could be reasons why he chose to write about it. He wrote it as a simple narrative. That medium is perfect for the quick hard-hitting emotional story he told. It definitely is a story that makes you think about your own life.

While the student has an emotionally effective paper, there is still room for improvement. He made numerous grammatical errors in his paper. Most of his errors are subject-verbs disagreement and the wrong use of verb tense.

The teacher of this ELL student needs to complete the following steps: praise his achievements in the paper, constructively criticize the errors he made, help him correct

those errors, and help him gain an understanding of how to self-edit his papers in the future.

The teacher needs to praise the student for what they have accomplished, that way the student will be more receptive to being told there are some things that still need corrections. After praise the student needs to find a way to tell the student about his errors and how to correct them. If the grammatical errors are similar to other students in the class, the teacher could have a lesson that focuses on that grammatical skill or skills. If the teacher has multiple ELL students who speak the same home language, then he or she could put those students together in a peer editing group (Levine & McCloskey Ch 9, 2009) and then give that group a little bit of special attention. This way none of the ELL students would feel singled out.

I would like to see the student use correct grammar in his paper. The student is obviously a good writer. He is just making mistakes that all students make as they are learning to become mature writers. In order to become a better writer and make less grammatical mistakes he has to be taught what the right way is. Therefore there should be class assignments where he can practice subject-verb agreement and using the proper verb tense. Those assignments could be an individual worksheet or they could be group assignments, as long as the student and his classmates get the chance to practice with subject-verb agreement and verb tenses. To start the process the teacher has to demonstrate what is important for the students to understand the process. Then the process itself needs to be modeled for the students (SIOP Ch 4, 2010).

I would like to see this student given the chance to edit this paper over the course of several weeks or the entire semester. This could be an assignment where the student

can learn more about grammar and how to write a great paper, but also how to incorporate more detail into a paper. I would like to see this student's work go from adequate to extraordinary. The student could edit the grammatical errors along with adding in helpful details. By the end of the semester the teacher could grade the student based upon the growth of the student's paper from each of the submissions.

I would like to see the student be able to expand upon ideas presented in the paper by adding more details. He started off the paper with some good background knowledge, but things like "handwalking" could be expanded upon. Some of the paper's audience may not understand what "handwalking" is from the description that currently exists in his paper. He could expand upon the whole paper by being more descriptive. He does not even have a setting for his story. This skill should be assessed by looking at his different submissions. As he turns in each submission it should be evident that he is adding more detail in the story.

For me as a future teacher, I want to remember to make more assignments mastery assignments instead of something they turn it and get it right or wrong on the first attempt. Even in the subject of math there are chances for mastery assignments. Anything that takes more than one class period could be the chance for a mastery homework assignment or "output [...] as a learning process" (Anthony, 2008, pg 473).

As a future teacher, I am worried about making myself understandable to students, and even more so about being understandable to ELLs. American born students have clear advantage over the ELLs and as a teacher I am supposed to lessen that advantage and attempt to put everyone on the same playing field. I am scared that I will not be successful with ELL students. How could I better even out the learning

environment for all students? How could I be successful in making myself understandable to all, even those who just arrived in my classroom from another country that morning?

This Atlas assignment really made me think and evaluate myself as a teacher and a learner. I had to take myself out of the life I typically lead as a student/future teacher and think solely from the perspective of a student. It gave me a better appreciation of students in general and of ELLs in particular. I have even more respect than I already had for ELL students. ELLs have to work twice as hard as their native English speaking peers. It takes guts to write a paper in a language you are still learning when some of your classmates have been native speakers over twice as long as you. This assignment has taught me not to judge an ELL simply on production of work, but to evaluate every assignment and respond appropriately.

After analyzing a piece of student work, I am not nearly as terrified to work with ELL students. After all they are just students who are trying to learn, like everyone else, they just have an extra hurdle to jump over in the process.

Works Cited

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