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English 250

Section FK

Ms. McCourt

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Opening Reflection

This semester I took English 250. It is the first English class I take in Iowa State University. I learnt many writing techniques, discussion skills and presentation experiences from this class.

At first I want to talk about communication habits and processes. From the course, I learned that how to use transitions between two paragraphs. What’s more I know what the organization should like for analysis paper. With these writing techniques, I can make my paper more convictive and logical.

To generate initial idea for pieces, I must understand the requirement for the assignment. For example, the last assignment is mediation, which means I need to find a controversy before I get mediation. There are so many controversies in the society. However, I want to discuss the topic which I am familiar with and interested in. Since I lived in China for 18 years, and I am interested in environment conservation. So I decided to talk about environmental measures in China. My thesis is that we cannot overuse some techniques which will bring with side-effect. To support my thesis, I searched relative articles, books and newspapers, and use quote to show the evidence.

When a paper was assigned, firstly, I read the handout about the assignment. Then, do brainstorm to make sure what topic I want to discuss. For example, assignment 4 is visual analysis. To find out an ad I went to periodical room in Park Library, and went through some magazines. When I saw the ad I imagine that if I want to analyze this one, how I can approach to the purpose of the ad. At last I decided to analyze a car ad called Nissan Leaf. On the draft I separated the analysis into several parts. First a thesis and brief introduction were needed. Then I decided to analyze the ad from the use of color, pictures and text. I listed all of the ideas and made a net chart to see how the ideas support the thesis. At last, I deleted the “useless” points. I think brain storm is really useful to make a draft. After having the first draft, I will add some transitions and conclusions. To make the paper more professional, I will look up dictionary to find some fancy words to replace the spoken words. To revise the composition, the best way is to ask other people whether they can understand or not. According to their feedback, I can revise my paper efficiently. Before the due date for each assignment, I will go to English help room. They help me to find some grammar problems which I cannot find by myself, such as the use of articles. By this I mean, sometimes I cannot tell whether I should use “a” or “the” before a noun. English help room helps me a lot in grammar details. Besides English help room, peer response during lecture time is also really helpful. I still remember the peer response for assignment 4: visual analysis, my partner, changed some vocabularies. Since I am an international student, most of time, I cannot use words very accurate. For example, in my essay, I wrote “by using contrasting colors, people will be attracted by the ad subconsciously.” Actually my partner changed the word” subconsciously” from “unconsciously”. He described the difference between these two words and he thought “subconsciously” was more accurate. If English help room and peer response help me correct grammar error, my instructor helps me a lot on writing style and organization of my paper. She always pointed that I need to add more transitions or conclusions. For the last assignment: mediation, Ms. McCourt taught me how to use MLA to quote.

Before taking English 250, I was not so cared about the structure of the paper. This problem leads that my readers could not understand my thesis, and they could not find main idea. However, a good organization can show the author’s logic, and will help readers understanding the thesis. After learning the structure of analysis papers, I tried to use it in my paper. I always use attributive clause to describe one thing. Sometimes I think using attributive clause will provide more details. I know I still keep some bad composing habits, such as my papers are not succinct enough. I need to learn how to use fewer words to show more details.

At last I want to talk about my communication development.

I do not think I am good at writing. What I try to do for each assignment is that describe enough details to let my audience know what I am talking about. So I think I am good at providing details. According to the comments from my instructor, I can feel that I get development in organization and delivery.

One of the important parts for English 250 is oral. In class we discuss about the main point of the readings which are assigned. At the beginning of the class, I was too shy to speak. I was worried about saying a wrong idea. However, my partners and instructor were so nice. They encouraged me to speak out my idea. Gradually, I want to join the discussion. Presentation experience is one of the most useful experiences I got from English 250. To be honest, the first presentation I gave was in this class. Individual presentation is so different from group presentation. If it is a group presentation, we help each other add some details. If one cannot remember what should say, the others can help him. I can still remember my first individual presentation. When I stood in the front of the classroom, I felt so nervous and could not remember what I should say. I just stared at my PowerPoint on the screen and kept saying “eh”. I was so embarrassed. After several seconds, I calmed down a little bit and started presenting. After viewing all of the classmates’ feedback, I thought I need have more body language and eye contact with my audience during my presentation. Also try to avoid being nervous. There’s no doubt that I think I should practice more. The more presentations I take, the more confidence I will have. The second presentation was to introduce one of the mediation. This one, I felt, was much better than the first time. I tried to have eye contact with my classmates. What’s more the PowerPoint for the second presentation was better than the first one. I found some related pictures and used it to show the guide line of my presentation. The other part for oral is conferences and peer response. Before every conference and peer response, I would be well prepared. I tried to communicate with my classmate or instructor, and got feedback from them.

The visual part for this course was advertisement analysis. I found my ad on a printed magazine named Popular Science. To recommend the newly designed car called the LEAF and sell the energy-saving concept, Nissan Motors uses color choice, relative pictures and text on the ad. I described this ad from the contrast colors, gradient background, and the emotions from these colors to show the ad was effective. To analyze an ad, I could approach from colors, emotions, texts analysis. I tried to find some details like why the creators used a sunflower. After analyzing most of the details, I recalled the purposes of the ad. Then I found the thesis and I could use details to support it. Overall, I think I have a good organization and good details to support my thesis. The first paragraph is an introduction and followed by a brief description of the ad. Then I analyzed the ad from choice of colors, choice of pictures and texts to approach the thesis. At last I got a conclusion.

I use weebly for the first time in English 250. Weebly is a website for electronic blog. On the homepage, I use a picture which I took in New York. Then I divide my portfolio into 5 parts. The first part is blog. I put my comments and reading response in blog part. The others are writing, oral, visual and electronic part. Another electronic part is the PowerPoint for presentation. I did really bad on the first one. I just put 1 picture of the ad on the PowerPoint. But I improved for the second one. To make a good PowerPoint, I need to add related pictures and guide lines on it.

Based on the whole semester, I think group discussion is really helpful for brain storm. We can gather everyone’s idea and I can find inspiration from them. In the future, I hope to do more visual parts. For instance, our instructor can show us some video in class. After watching a documentary, we can discuss the topic in class and give a reflection.