

APLNG 595 Retrospective Account of Your Teaching

There are three parts to this assignment:

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1) One Page Initial Free Response

Okay! Wow. This is the second time for me teaching this class. But it did not go as well as I expected. First let me talk about what I did. I asked my mentor who teaches two sections of ESL 15 if I could teach the other section as well because I found it ridiculous that she would have to create another lesson for the other section—and because I felt guilty last time because I sent her my lesson on plagiarism and in some of the slides I had weird animation he he he which she does not usually do. So I felt that I caused her to get out of her element. Anyway, I taught the first section (the section that I do not usually observe) and the lesson went very well!!!! Actually it was fantastic. The student did not know anything about me—yet they responded to the lesson verrrry well, which is funny because my mentor told me ahead of time that this section is less active than the other section—thus, I was telling myself, that I should not expect the students to jump around in excitement when I talk about counterargument. At the beginning, I was nervous, but, then I felt relaxed when the students responded. Interestingly, I found this class more linguistically diverse than the class that I typically observe. In that class there were fluent speakers of Spanish and Vietnamese. Come to think of it, my class is diverse too and represents other nationalities and tongues that the other section does not represent. Anyway, in the “other” section the lesson went smoothly and I was able to do most of the activities and this does not make any sense!!! Why? Because I am not familiar with the students and the students are not familiar with me—and the literature argues that we need to establish a trusting relationship between the teacher and the student in order for the student to accept the information taught. The other weird thing is when I taught my class, everything seems to go wrong—and its my class! What’s going on!!!!!! It should be the opposite. In my class, I could not cover everything I wanted to cover because the students were so confused – actually a specific number of students. The assignment was to do an argumentative essay for the final essay. But, one student in particular was very upset on the notion that he has to restructure his essay and thesis statement to fit the argumentative style. He said that if he had to put an argument, then he would change his thesis statement and he does not want to do that. The discussion went for on and on and some students tried to mediate to explain to that student how to make an argument of his topic, global warming, but he still wanted to continue the cause & effect topic. What are the variables that caused my lesson to my class not succeed as well as my lesson to the other class? Both classes use/have the same room, same projector, same class, same instructor, same assignments, and receive the same instructional materials. The only different is the students in the class, and it is a strong variable. But one would expect that the lesson

would go completely well the class the class that he/she knows well. Humm. Also, in the second session, some of my thoughts disappeared, and pulling an in-flight decision was challenging. I usually would do them quickly, but in the second session I couldn't. Could it have been from the fact that I was surprise to see the different flow of the lesson? My mentor and I were saying that I should have recorded the first session instead of the second one because it went much better. But this is reality, and this is what happened. Although the lesson did not go well in my third teaching, the first and the second went very well, and it was with the same class. One of my friends said it could have been from the camera, but I do not think that it is case because my earlier teachings were recorded and they were fine. I am curious to find out what went wrong—but maybe nothing went wrong and the fact that my lesson plan did not go the way I want it was okay because at the end of the day the students had one of the longest discussions ever about one topic – counterargument—an I, the teacher, did not have to talk that much because the other students wanted to explain.

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2) **Moment-to-Moment Reactions with the Videotaped Footage noted**

- 0:05: I was talking to the students about their final exam week as I was trying to have the PowerPoint load up. It would be much better than sitting in silence for a number of seconds. Also, it would prepare them to be engaged with me as soon as the class starts. However, I really did not like it when I turned my back on the student who was speaking. It seemed that he was comfortable with it because I was listening to him, but when I turned my back, he was still looking at me.
- 0:17: oh! I am so glad that the other student spoke as I was getting the projector to start. I love this kid! He reminds me so much of someone I really respect. I am glad that he started talking because the students would have a dialogue with each other as the projector starts.
- 0:40: when the student mentioned his hope of getting an A, I directed the comment to the instructor because I thought it was funny. This student is very active in class and very bright. So, hearing this comments from him is no surprise, and I find it very funny too ☺
- 0:50: oh no! How can I forget that I placed the handouts at the end of the room right after I finished my lesson with the other section? I should have placed on the table.
- 0:52: I hear some of my Korean students talking.
- 1:10: here I was thinking and talking at the same time. When I taught the first group, I had them select the topic that they want because they were really quite and shy. For this group, however, I decided to mix it up a little. I wanted students to work with different people because I fear that if I had them select the topics, others try to the people that they are familiar with in that group. However, come to think of it now, it would have been better if I had the choose their topic because the topic that they would have selected, would have been the topic that they held most interest in. hummm

- 1:30: I can complete my sentences! Why!! Although
- 2: 56: so I ask them a question where the answers were right in front of them! I told them not to look, but some did actually look! How can they resist such a beautiful triangle! But, I am glad I did that because the students laughed and they were smiling ☺ But, it was not necessary
- 3:47: I don't like the fact that I am turning my back on the students! I hate it
- 4:16: the student gave an excellent answer and I did not give an excellent response like "fantastic." I know that they are not kids, but it would have been nice to say. I ask myself as I write this if the reason I did not give a "good job yee" is because I know the student very well, and he knows me too. I think that for the students who interacted with me the most, may become the students who I may not give the compliments to because they are fantastic. I would give the compliments to the students who are less active in the class hoping that they would engage more in the class. But, if I my assumptions of my actions are true, and I positioned myself in the students' shoes, than as I student who wants to hear those compliments may decide to participate less in order to get them.
- 4:44: whats wrong with me. Everything went smoothly when I taught the other class. My thoughts didn't clash—but at this moment I originally wanted to say something as a transition to the next slide. But then, I forgot it. Then when I was about to click the next button, I remembered it. Then I articulated what I thinking. Then I did what I was thinking. Is it because of the camera? Is it because I had the idea in my conscious that I will go back and reflect on this lesson with my teacher? Was it because this would be the sample in which my teacher would judge me upon? Maybe. If I wasn't worried or shattered in the other section—the camera-less section, why am I acting that way? Is it because of the déjà fu affect? I said it before, thus, my brain tells me that I already said in this section even though I only said it in the other section?
- 6:13 it is such a bad idea to pass the sign in sheet during class. It should be before class starts. Look at the students, they are distracted because of this sheet. And, for the students who are late, it will not cost them any point because when they come in, they sign it.
- 6:30 this student is wonderful student and an excellent writer. Both my mentor and I think highly of him and his writing. However, I don't know why he is late sometimes to class. I know my mentor said that there are one or two students whose previous class is at the other side of campus. Thus, they may be late to class some times. But, I wish he came earlier. He missed the first part of the introduction.
- 8:22 I like to give a lot of examples
- 8:52 Two students were chatting on the side for a while, and that it self distracted me. So I called on them. But, that wasn't nice of me considering the fact that these two students are on top of their class
- 9:20 I transcribed a classroom interaction before and I realized that the teacher uses a lot of "okay" in his lecture. And I did not like it. I realized that I do use lots of "okay." And I don't like that either
- 9:35 the students were passing papers, and I was distracted so I mumbled.
- 10:16 that was so confusing. I have no idea how the student understood this.

- 12:50 the example was excellent. But I should stop saying “okay”
- 14:40 when she said that she was in the middle, I said to my self “nooooooooo.”
When I took ESL 15, I wrote about Wal-Mart. In that essay, I decided to be neutral. However, when I got my paper back, the teacher gave me a C/D for not having an argument. She was kind enough to let me redo the essay. But for me, it was another assignment on my shoulders. I did not want this to happen to any of my students. I, then, give the same reason that my teacher gave me—and the reason that I used to convince my self that you can not be neutral in an argumentative research paper. You can be neutral when you are writing an informative essay.
- 16:50 my use of “okay” is like my friend use of “like”
- 17:24 I was reading in a blog once that they are people who thought that a spaghetti ball caused global warming. Although the example served its purpose, the example may not be like what the student going to face—real arguments. Different positions are not necessarily black and white—some times they are gray. I should use one of the gray counterarguments instead.
 - And someone else is late ☹ he missed the first 17 minutes of my class
- 17:52 Wait! Now it makes sense why I used that example! I wanted to kill two birds with one rock. I wanted to say that if we have a very weak counterargument, then our ethos level would be low because it is clear to the reader that we are being biased
- 18:39 a teacher once used this example of the topic of ‘evolution’ as an ethical/spiritual topic. I should have not used it because to others it would be scientific. Technically, the topic of evaluation is scientific and spiritual because of the religion and Darwin. This example could have open a can of worms. Mental note: don’t use it again.
- 19:20 here, I wanted to represent all the students with different spiritual background. I knew that I opened a can of worm, but, I can not only represent my side. I have to represent the other sides.
- 20:03 the students laughed upon seeing the picture of two cats. I wanted to display the “turn back” step in counter argument. Is this appropriate for this age group? I don’t want them to think that I think of them as kids. I wanted to lighten up the topic a little.
- 20:25 I like my explanation. I was impressed with myself after the big mess that I made
- 22:15 the student asked a very good questions
- 22:49 since not all the students have the same topic, I gave a background on the topic and restated the student’ question. Before I did not do that at all. However, I took a class last semester, and it was very helpful. Now, whenever a student talks about something that only I and few other students know of the subject, I would give background info into the topic. Also, if the student voice is not clear (since I have been setting back most of the time, I came to know whose voice is low/high, which helped me
- 26:14 : I like it when the students responds instead of me. It tells me two things: the student was paying attention and that the student was interested in the topic being discussed. Here, I had the students take the floor, and I wanted them to use

- the points that I discussed with them minutes ago and apply it. I used many examples throughout my presentation. Thus, I was hoping that the other students would clarify the concept to the student who was asking the question.
- 27:7: by saying “excellent point” I did not mean that I agree with him. But it seemed to others that I did even though I didn’t.
 - 28:30: the students tried to give many examples of how to make an argument with the
 - 29:30: I still did not interfere. Is that okay?
 - 29:39: here the student asked a question that the class was discussing for the past couple of minutes. I was very disappointed and surprised to hear ask that question because it simply illustrated to me and to everyone else that he was not paying attention. Although I should accept the fact that not all students will pay attention like the student I mentioned earlier, but, I am sad to know that and now I need to find a reason for that.
 - 29:50: you know, I am glad that I gave a summary of what’s going on. But, I am disappointed at my self to know that I did not call one of the students in his name. instead, I used “you”. His name was Rushil. Why didn’t I say it? Was it the fear that I may mispronounce his name in front of everyone? When we are in small groups, I say it. Now, I couldn’t
 - 30: 10: this student always astonishes me. He went again to answer the question that the other student produced.
 - 30:40: look at how my face is changing! I did not imagine that my thoughts would immediately be reflected on my appearance. The student who was talking was the same student who asked the question about counterarguments for global warming in the first place. This student is not one of the best students in the class. He sleeps in class sometimes and many times he is tired (there is a story behind him). But, here, it seems that he still did not get counterargument even when the students explained to him. When he asked his second question, I was about to respond, but another students replied.
 - 31:05 here I had an idea, I decided to tie this discussion with the concept that I presented “skeptical reader.” I did not do this with the other group because they easy got the point even when they did not like it necessarily.
 - 32: 00 I really don’t like this classroom. I feel that I am trapped in a tiny spot. If I moved, it had to be only few inches or few foots across the projector. I really hope that I would teach in a bigger room in the future. When I taught the students how to do research, I did it in a computer lab, and the computer lab was much bigger than our regular room. I was able to move around, and talk to each student face to face. Here I am trapped. And I don’t like it ☹ nor do I think my students like it ☹
 - 32: 20 so students did not understand what the instructor meant my an argumentative essay. Their draft was due soon, so not all of them have looked at the guidelines. But, I wish that those who were confused emailed me or the instructor with their concern. Then, I would have addressed “argumentative essay” again for few minutes before I begin my lesson on counterargument.
 - 32:28: here another students admit that she saw it, but she wasn’t sure

- 33:20 So my mentor went in to mediate, and as she was talking, the student who asked the question that triggered the debate was talking at the same time—loudly. I could not hear what the instructor said nor what he said.
- I can't believe this. A big section of the discussion was not recorded. The person whom I asked to video tape the class, got engaged in the discussion and forgot it!
 - I will write down what happened: the mentor stopped her mediation till that student finished. She then continued talking about what she originally said and she decided to do. Then that student starting speaking again, and she told him that they need to talk privately after class because he wanted to specifically talk about his topic, which many not interest many of the students. at this point, I was telling myself, what's going on here? Where did I go wrong? I am still teaching the same materials, in the same classroom with the same teacher. Why did it work fine at the other class, but did not work that well in this class? I have thought of multiple reasons, and here what I came up with:
 - The students in this class are familiar with me and with my style. Maybe some students thought that they could bend the rules a little with me in regard to their paper
 - The students in the other class only saw me twice or three times before. Thus, they are not familiar with me. Thus, they may have not felt comfortable to disagree with me.
 - However, they were very comfortable in sharing their thoughts and questions. Humm?

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- 00:28: here that same student asked a question that I addressed earlier—why do we add a counter argument. That was the first thing that I addressed after the rhetorical triangle. What would I have changed to make that student understand the concept better? I told them to take notes so that they would return to them. But he did not. Thus, he may have forgotten that we covered this early on in the presentation.
- 1: 45 here the student asked a question, and I did not get what he said. I asked him to repeat his question again, but I still did not get it. At the end, I realized that he was trying to say that if we are adding a new paragraph, we would need to change our thesis and our essay. Of course they will need to change their thesis and the essay a bit. He was very upset to know that he will change his thesis because he knew that if he changes his thesis, the essay and the “topic sentences” as he argues, will be changed as well. And that is correct. I think that the reason that he did not get the concept is because he was not aware of the fact that the third paper is not simply adding few paragraphs to the already existing essay.
- 2: 53: my activities! I will not have time to do all of my activities ☹
- 3:23 it is clear from looking at the video, that the other students lost interest in the subject. And they are board. I feel bad for all of them and for the confused students. but it is not fair that the other students are *suffering* because of one students who may not represent the best students in the class.

- 3:35 so I decided to let my mentor talk to that student. And I decided to move on to the concern of the other student. Is this acceptable? If I am treating students equally, than that act I alright, but if I am not looking at that student, he may think that I am not interested in his talk. What a dilemma.
- 5:20 so here I wanted to move on to my activities because I knew that they *hopefully* have them understand the topic better. However, as soon as I moved, one student was responding to another student's question about poverty, which lead to another discussion that may not interest everyone in the room.
- 5:46 so that student said the word "billion" incorrectly. He said "milyar" which is billion in Arabic. Here is an example of language transfer! Yay. But, I wonder how the students perceived my response. Did they feel isolated from this discussion? I fear that some might have because I would if I was in their situations.
- 6:48 its still going -- one minute
- 6:57 is it okay no to comment on what the students were discussion for the past minute? At that time I was telling my self that if I responded, I might not be able to do the first activity not even the second activity.
- 8:30 too many okays. I don't know how the students take it. They probably see it as an annoying filler ☹
- 10:10 I am so glad that I used these example of argument & counterargument. I saw some smiley faces around. Also, these few slides displayed both major topics
- 10:49 I used the example of talking to your siblings, then I realized that many of the students do not have siblings. I realized that in a course of half second after I gave my example. Hoping to make an example that would relate to most students, I used "uncles." Come to think of it now, I should have said newscasters.
- 12:40 so I showed the student different phrases used in making counterarguments. However, I was telling myself that I should have given the students a handout with all of the phrases. How did I miss that? I originally thought that they would write them in the notes section, but not all of them did that. And many may have thought that did not need to do that because they will find the PowerPoint online.
- 18:31 I looked at my mentor wanting her to give me a hand in this situation. Luckily she did. Students do not argue that much with my mentor. But, some do it all the time with me. Is it because I am a TA in that class? But also, I felt stupid because the instructor said that although this essay is supposed to be an argumentative research essay, she was fine with the students who did not want to make an argument. I totally disagree. I think that we should give them a taste of different genera
- 23:20 the student asked to change his topic (Did Armstrong really land on the moon?) And I agreed because we discussed the topic during class already. Thus, there would not be that much to discuss.
- 28:18 I talked to the students about their homework that they need to bring on Thursday when they meet the instructor for their conferences. I also told them that I need to collect their group work assignment. Some of them didn't like it. And I understand why. They did not spend that much time doing it, so they feared

having a bad grade. Then, my mentor interfered and said that they do not have to submit it.

- 30:01 I really like group activities. I get to hear all students contributing and implementing some of the ideas covered in the lessons.

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3) Retrospective Account of the Overall Lesson

Writing this part of the assignment is some what difficult partially because I am reflecting on teaching two sections. If it was only one section, this response would have been quite different because the effect of teaching two sections produced an effect that is only unique to that situation. To avoid reiterating this issue, which is clearly stated in the free-write and moment-to-moment response, I will answer the following questions:

- *Do you feel you achieved the objective(s) for this lesson? If so, how. If not, why?*
- *What appeared to be influencing your instructional decisions the most?*
- *What do you feel your students gained most from this lesson?*
- *If you were to teach this lesson again, what might you do differently?*

Do you feel you achieved the objective(s) for this lesson? If so, how. If not, why

The main objectives of this lesson are to teach the students 1) how to create a counterargument and 2) the benefits of having a counterargument. In regard to creating a counterargument, the students in both sections had no problem creating one. They either illustrated their knowledge of counterarguments during the discussion, class activity, and in the homework assignment assigned that day. The issue that some students had was related to their understanding of the benefits and the usage of a counterargument. Some students were not convinced on how a counterargument would actually strengthen their essay. Although only few students had this issue, I was not satisfied. Thus, I started reiterating the benefits again and again until I realized that the student who understood

the benefits in the first place got board. In the first section, the objectives were met. In the second section, not all of the objectives were met by all of the students.

In regard to what influenced my instructional decisions, I would say that students' reaction influenced it the most. My in-flight-decisions on whether I would spend more time on a slide were a result of students' response regardless of whether it was articulated orally or reflected in their behavior. For example, in the second section, I had a student who did not understand the concept of counterargument. As I went to respond, his peers started explaining it to him—and that was fine with me since I was monitoring the discussion. However, when I saw that he continued his same response, I had to move on especially since the rest of the students got board. The students' reaction influenced my speed, my examples (as I was trying to give them an example that they can relate to), and type of activities and assignments I gave.

Although I received mix reactions to this lesson, I believe that the students got the point behind the lesson clearly after the memorable discussion. They learned that their audiences to whom they are writing their essays to are, like their classmates, have different opinions and beliefs. Thus, having a counterargument that includes all of the diverse perspectives would not only make the others (with those different opinions) feel included into the essay, but also show that the writer is knowledgeable in the field and that he/she have looked at all of these opinions and settled on a specific argument because it was the most credible one. Having the discussion in the class between the students made the goal behind counterarguments a concrete one as the students participated in making it.

If I were to teach this lesson again, there are a number of things that I would have changed. First, I will begin the lesson by contextualizing it into the assignment that they are doing. Thus, I will begin by discussing the fact that they will be doing an argumentative essay. I will explain what an argumentative essay *is* and what the characteristics of an argumentative essay *are*. I believe that the students had a hard time with the lesson because of their misunderstanding of the assignment and their misunderstanding of what an argumentative essay is. Therefore, clarifying these two topics would make the transition toward the topic of counterarguments much easier.

This particular teaching experience was a learning experience different from the other teaching experiences I had throughout the semester. I taught this class before on the topics of plagiarism and on how to do research. However, each teaching experience was different from the other. For example, what I learned from teaching this lesson was rather different from what I learned when I taught the class on plagiarism (i.e. the topic of plagiarism is dry). I am grateful to have students who are willing to learn from another student who is learning about teaching from teaching them.