Workshop: Teaching Revision

Date: 21 Nov 2011
Time: 1:30-2:30 pm
Room: Allen 117
In attendance: see sign in sheet

I.   Opening Remarks:

- Welcome. Thank you for coming. Today's topic is revision—we've heard from you that this is a skill that students really struggle with. Hope to start the conversation here about strategies that work in your classrooms, so that we can fill our collective bag of tricks with great teaching ideas.

II.   Dena Ratner: Exercises for sentence-level revision.

- Objective:
    - exercises in writing in a neutral, objective tone for the issue analysis essay. Students seem to struggle with this, especially because the research they do is mostly argument.
- Procedure:
    - See handout (From *Writing Worth Reading*)
- Discussion:
    - Qualifiers: we often teach students never to use them, because they tend to avoid taking a stand by excessively qualifying statements. This is a way to teach them how and when to use them for the sake of accuracy rather than for tentativeness.

III.   June Pulliam: Using MS word to give substantive feedback efficiently

- Objective:
    - Programming comments into MS Word, including links to grammar sites, small notes and lengthy comments based on common student errors.
    - Note: We don't know how to do this on a Mac as of yet (LJ will research). Mac users can read your comments just fine, though.
- Procedure
    - See handout
        - For most things go to **Insert → Quick Parts→building blocks organizer**
        - Alternative (Jean Rohloff): If you save something as an autotext, you can type the first few letters of it and it will pop up. Must be in Word 2010.

- Can save comments to a flash drive as well by setting up a template folder under "normal"
- Contact Jean for help with this (and look for a workshop this Spring!)
- Discussion:
    - Do you use this on Moodle?
        - Answer: Yes. Students upload essays on Moodle, I grade and comment on them, save a copy, then upload the marked and graded copy back to Moodle.
            - In order to do this, set up the assignment as "Advanced File Upload" on Moodle.

IV. <u>**Martha Strohschein:**</u> Sample lesson on what macro revision looks like..

- Objective: Teaching students how macro-revision can turn an above-average essay into an excellent one.
    - Macro: organization and development. Do I have enough information and is it in the right place?
    - Micro: have all the sources been tagged, listed on works cited, MLA format, surface errors, etc.
- Sample essay: Seth (see handout)
    - Original draft (1225 words): comments from peer reviewers included
        - Sources are not well integrated
            - Lack of "attributive tags" or any indication of who writers are and why readers should trust them.
            - Ex. cites "Mike Sleive" but nobody knew who that was. Same with "Nixon says;" "Kays"
        - Organization holds up, but transitions are very mechanical
            - "There are many reasons…" "First, second, third"
        - Development is lacking.
            - Readers had questions about information, didn't have necessary background information to understand the issue.
    - Revision (1472 words)
        - An example of adding words in a strategic way rather than fluffing it up. Macro revision as opposed to micro, based on reader's feedback.
        - He added attributive tags and an explanation of who's who (Bill Hancock, Mike Slieve, Leslie Nixon, Todd Kays). We can see why those people are experts on the topic.
        - Transitions: He pins ideas together, building on those already introduced.
            - "In addition to," "Besides," etc.
        - Develops points more fully

- Intro: compared to original, revision reveals trend of beefing the essay up with more information.
            - Also in par. 3 (host cities; sponsors), par. 6 (how it's not good for student athletes).
            - Mostly a matter of sharing useful and relevant background information.
    - Using Seth's revision as a lesson:
        o Objective: learning how to revise an above average paper to build on its strengths.
            ▪ Assign students to read original at home.
            ▪ In class, gave them the revised version, along with pointed questions.
            ▪ In groups, students highlighted the differences.
        o Question: do you have a list of things students should look for as they revise?
            ▪ Yes.
            ▪ Those would be useful for developing peer review forms.
        o Question: do students give written or oral feedback?
            ▪ First, written. But then as they hand forms to each other I ask them to explain what they wrote.
        o Process question: how do you set up peer review?
            ▪ They're in self-selected groups of 3. I circulate (if I don't, they tend to blow it off) and check in with groups. Students know the drill: first, read without making any comments, then mark it up.
            ▪ Jean: I think students have a hard time digesting the whole essay. I have them do it paragraph by paragraph. Have students do a round of first, second, third paragraph.
                - Hard to do in 50 minute class.
        o Do you teach lessons on the skills you mention?
            ▪ Yes—for example, I have a lesson just on transitions, talked a lot about tagging sources. All of it is covered in exercises and group practice.
            ▪ I use a lot of past semester student writing as examples (and nonexamples).
                - Ex. A paragraph without transitions, have groups add them and then share them & compare meanings.
    - Peer review: unpredictable, depends a lot on the class dynamic. Might work beautifully in one class and flop in the very next one. There's no silver bullet.

V.   Closing/Next Meeting:
    - January: look for a workshop on argument early in the semester.
        o Also, perhaps, a follow up from Jean Rohloff on how to set up templates for commenting on student essays.