

Peer Observation of Teaching - Report

PART 1 – ABOUT THE OBSERVATION

Peer Observation of Teaching Report prepared for: Adeline Piercy

Class: BCSC 216 (BC11) | Professional Communication

Student enrollment: 11

Lesson Topic: Evaluating successful communication

Location & Date of Observation: Room 11-449 Allard Hall, March 23, 2023

Observation conducted by: Catherine Dyer, MEd. & Luiza Guimaraes, Educational Developers, Centre for Teaching and Learning

NOTE: This peer observation of teaching report is confidential and is the sole property of the course instructor. The peer observers will not share this report nor discuss it with anyone other than the course instructor unless explicitly authorized by the course instructor.

Goals of Observation

Prior to this date, Adeline Piercy, Luiza and I met to discuss the course in general, the lesson objectives, teaching and learning context, and the type of feedback the instructor required.

This report provides:

1) A brief summary of the lesson and teaching and learning activities

AND

2) Outlines key observations, strengths and questions/comments in the following 3 areas identified by Adeline:

1. Pacing of Instruction
2. Student Engagement – Facilitation of Discussion

The Lesson

Lesson Objectives:

Upon completion this lesson, learners should be able to:

- Evaluate messages for consistency (in terms of tone, frequency, content, and channels) with audience characteristics and preferences, and
- Evaluate the success of the communication: did it “fit” the audience, achieve the objectives and the goal.

Teaching and Learning Context & Constraints

This 2nd year course is a requirement for students acquiring degrees in Professional Communications and Journalism. While the majority of students enrolled in the course are working towards their degree in Professional Communications, others come from a variety of areas including Business, English and Journalism.

This course is offered at 8 AM - 9:20 AM, face-to-face on Mondays and Wednesdays. While 11 students are enrolled in this course, 10 students attended this particular lesson.

THE OBSERVATION: OBSERVATIONS, STRENGTHS AND QUESTIONS/CONSIDERATIONS

PART 2 – The Lesson Summary (Lesson Organization & Teaching & Learning Activities)

Prior to the Lesson

Adeline arrived early to class and set up her PPT presentation and wrote the outline for the group work on the whiteboard. As it is an 8AM class, the students settled in and were very calm and quiet. Adeline stated, “We’ll give 2 more minutes for people to arrive and then start”

Lesson Introduction

Adeline began the lesson promptly at 8:02AM asking learners “How is everyone today?” Recognizing how tired the student were, she reassured them saying, “We will get there together.” Adeline then established the agenda for the day and introduce the observers sitting at the rear of the class. Adeline reassured students and clarified that the observers were focused on her teaching practice and not them. Adeline’s tone was calm and professional. She gave the class reminders regarding the upcoming student presentations, due dates, marking of assignments course evaluation and the final exam. She then introduced the main topic of the lesson saying “Ok let’s jump in.”

Body of the Lesson

Adeline gave a 15-minute introductory lecture that outlined how communications could be evaluated in terms of their consistency by examining message for tone, frequency, content, and the appropriateness of communication channels given the audience characteristics. To support her instruction, Adeline used PowerPoint slides that were clear, well-structured, and visually appealing. At every opportunity, Adeline gave practical real-world examples that were relevant to the lives of her students (for example, messages intended to reach GenX mothers, or the communications students receive in the form of class updates). Prior to moving onto a new concept, Adeline checked-in with learners asking: “Does this make sense? Are there any questions on measuring consistency?” Adeline then introduced the next concept, asking students: “How do we know that a communication has been successful?” Adeline again, gave learners practical examples that were meaningful to students, asking: “Can you think of any others?” At 8:20AM, Adeline concluded the lecture portion of the lesson reassuring learners, “Remember that communication is never perfect, and that’s ok”. Adeline reinforced this message stating: “This is very true. I deal with this every day.”

Next, Adeline instructed students to get into groups of three. Each group was assigned one of the following scenarios:

- SAMU Election Votes (poster & presentation)
- Covid policies in a Nursing Home (posters & notices)
- Guest speaker at MacEwan (posters & social media)

Each scenario was written on the board along with space for students to write their responses. Adeline gave clear and concise instructions to students, stating: “For each scenario, you need to indicate how you would evaluate the communication for its 1) consistency, 2) effectiveness and 3) provide alternative options. I’ll give you 10 minute to work in your groups and then you can write your answers on the board”. At which point students began brainstorming in their groups. Adeline circulated throughout the room, checking in with groups one at a time ensuring that they were on track, making clarifications and giving examples. And Adeline did so she would crouch down so she was at the level of the learners and she would ask questions such as: “Does this make sense? What is your plan B?” Students were immersed in small group discussion. The atmosphere of the class was fun, collegial, and lighthearted. At 8:31 students began writing their responses on the board. As the last group was finishing up, Adeline requested that all of the students come closer to the front of the class so they were standing in a semi-circle around the white board. This created a sense of community. An individual from each group presented the work. As they did so, Adeline listened intently, nodding her head in acknowledgment. After each presentation, Adeline provided thoughtful feedback affirming the groups’ ideas, making suggestions and/or pointing out “layers” or complexities that the group needed to be aware of. At 8:42AM a student arrived late to class and took a seat. Adeline concluded the discussion and commended the students for their work saying “Good job. Are there any questions? Everyone get the just of it?”

At 8:45 Adeline announced that the remaining class time would be used to work on their group projects, stating “I will be here to answer questions. Feel free to work in the classroom or out in the hall”. Students settled into working on their group projects and the class was filled with energy. Meanwhile, Adeline went and checked-in with the student who had arrived late to class. Adeline then circulated the room touching base with each group to ensure they were on track, answering questions and clarifying expectations. Adeline provided reassurance, making statements such as, “I am just checking in. Are there any questions?”, “Your presentation is your chance to test the water. This is your chance to get feedback before you submit your assignment. And you can pick and choose which feedback to take,” and “I’m excited for your topic”, “this is such a great topic”. Students were deeply engaged in their group projects. The class was vibrant, and the atmosphere was often punctuated by laughter. At 9AM one of the students packed up and went to speak to Adeline. Adeline spent the next 5 minutes providing one-on-one support.

End of the Class

At 9:11, Adeline took photos of the students work before she erased the board. Students had the freedom to leave once they had concluded their group work. Most of the students had packed up and left by 9:15AM. Adeline said goodbye to the students saying, “Have a good weekend”. Adeline stayed to address any remaining questions.

PART 3 - Observations Related to Items Identified by the Instructor

Content and Pacing of Instruction

The pacing of instruction was excellent. Adeline did an excellent job of prioritizing content, targeting critical/need to know concepts and providing information in manageable chunks as to not overwhelm learners. Learners were given enough time to learn new concepts, think through related examples, and then demonstrate their understanding during group work. Adeline was also extremely mindful of how tired her students were at 8 AM this late in the semester. Leading in with a 15-minute lecture allowed time for her students to gradually become accustomed to engaging with both the content and other students.

Questions/Comments

When you begin teaching 3-hour classes, I wonder if you would consider viewing it as 2 – 3 separate 20 minute mini-lectures, with opportunities for learners to apply and then demonstrate their learning after each mini lecture?

Student Engagement – Facilitation of Discussion

Adeline wanted feedback on how to effectively facilitate discussions and more specifically, on how to get students involved in class discussion when they have no desire to participate. During the lesson, Adeline skillfully maneuvered this problem by providing a structured approach to small group discussion. Requiring that students apply concepts from the lecture to real-world examples and produce evidence of their learning (discussion summaries written on the whiteboard) was an effective way to engage all learners in the process. When assigning students to break-out groups, Adeline openly acknowledged students' prior reluctance around working in groups. However, during the class students seem to embrace group work and at every stage in the lesson and students were deeply engaged with the content, each other, and the instructor.

Questions/Comments

- I wondered what would happen if you managed student expectations around group work at the start of the course, stating: "As this is a class on professional communications, we will be working in groups throughout the semester. Perhaps we can discuss and reach a collective understanding what active participation in group work looks like".
- Would you consider exploring other structured forms/approaches to group work? (See resources)

- I wondered if you would consider assigning group roles so the same students are not taking on the roles of note taker and presenter each time. For example, each role could be written on a popsicle stick and students could draw popsicle sticks to determine their assigned role.
- Would you consider giving students warnings to signal when the time for group discussion is almost up and that they should begin writing their findings on the board, etc.?

PART 4 - Summary and Appreciation

Reflections -Strengths & Key Suggestions

This is Adeline's first year of teaching at MacEwan University. She has always dreamed of becoming an instructor. Adeline is very comfortable and confident in the classroom and as such, it is clear that the classroom is where she is meant to be. Adeline's approach to instruction is relational. She follows a mentorship model and approaches learners as she would a colleague.

Adeline's reassuring nature and concern for student learning are her greatest strengths. She cares about her students and actively demonstrates this taking the time to connect with learners one-on-one and in small groups. In doing so, she is inclusive and responsive to learner needs. Adeline's empathetic and compassionate approach to instruction stems from her desire to support the mental health of students and create a safe space for learning. And her learners have responded in kind, demonstrating a willingness to actively engage in the learning process.

Overall, this class was well conducted by a skilled instructor. The considerations/suggestions given in this report serve only to enhance what is already a vibrant teaching practice.

Thank you for allowing me the privilege of observing your class. I learned a great deal about Professional Communications. I am inspired by your dedication to your teaching practice and the care and concern you show your students.

Report written by: Catherine Dyer, MEd., Educational Developer, Centre for Teaching and Learning

Signature of observer:

