

Report of Class Visit for Kevin Cassell  
Submitted by Irene Fairley

On Monday, April 14, 1997, I visited Kevin's ENG 1005 International English I class which met at 10:30 in 2 Cahners. He began class on time with 15 students present; 2 others arrived soon after and settled in quietly. Kevin started by chatting with members of the class, sometimes using expressions in students' native languages, and by making announcements; he used the board to record deadlines coming up: Their rough drafts would be due next Monday. He took attendance.

Then Kevin returned their exams from the previous class and went over the answers, the correct order of sentences in the scrambled paragraph and the sentences that contained unnecessary information to be deleted from a second paragraph. Students who failed to delete the last sentence were given a follow-up assignment (due the next class hour) to revise the sentence so that it ties in to the paragraph. A useful and clever assignment.

That done, Kevin led the class in a review of the previous week's discussion of paragraph structure. Students were forthcoming, showing an understanding of principles of coherence, focus, thesis, order. Kevin indicated they would take up mechanics and style later in the week. The next class would be devoted to developing their paper topics, Friday to organizing.

He then turned to the main discussion for the hour, criticizing the essays they had been given to read over the weekend. He indicated there would be time this hour to discuss only one, and selected "Meeting Mom" (an essay about an adopted young woman meeting her biological mother for the first time). Kevin asked students to "critique" it in terms of what was effective or ineffective. He paused to paraphrase, to be sure that they understood what was expected of them as "critics". The discussion was quite lively with students making astute observations and judgments. Kevin recorded their judgments on the board, sometimes converting their rough language into the familiar composition terminology. Students certainly demonstrated an understanding of the principles of focus and organization. They impressed me as well prepared for this exercise.

Kevin then told the class that the essay was actually a rough draft, and gave out copies of the revised, final version. The class saw how every paragraph had been changed, the points where focus wandered, corrected, and the entire essay made much more effective. This was a really valuable lesson for them. They could see the difference between a rough draft and revised essay, a distinction that would be important for their own writing tasks over the next two weeks.