Self-Assessment: Evolving Thoughts and Writing Skills

It has been a year since I last took the writing course. I didn’t get an ideal grade in either Writing 97 or Writing 98 (and to be honest, I think the grades were poor.) This disappointed me and made me feel frustrated about writing. Since I usually had no interest in the assigned readings that the professors in Writing 97 and Writing 98 gave us, my reflections after reading those essays couldn’t go deep. This resulted in superficial thoughts and perfunctory words in my paper. I think that might be the main reason for receiving low grades. Therefore, after a year, when I started to challenge myself to be an academic writer again, I told myself that I must choose a topic that I would be really interested in in order to put more effort in writing. Fortunately, I saw this N1 section with the topic of “ Food for Thoughts” and chose it without any hesitation, because I am 100 percent a foodie. Initially, I thought this course would probably teach us how to write food comments: how to describe the taste, the appearance of the dishes and the feeling while tasting the food or introduce us different types of food from all over the world. (See exhibit source: *Initial Thoughts*) However, “Food for Thoughts” is much more than that. During this semester, I learned that food could be connected to a lot more comprehensive things, for example, interpersonal relationship as well as consumption and operation in markets. While involving in the deeper thinking processes, I have also improved my writing skills: sentences changed from verbose to short and clear, thesis statement changed from ambiguous to explicit. Through Writing 100, I feel I am more able to both think and write as an academic writer.

Paper 2 is an analysis essay about Ang Lee’s film *Eat Drink Man Woman*. This is my first time to analyze a film. Before taking this course, watching film is just watching film for me, but during Writing 100, I learnt to analyze some important scenes in the movie, drove myself to think more profoundly about how food plays an essential role in a movie and what is the function of it. After analyzing several scenes of actors cooking or having meals, I understood that food is not just a stuff to keep people from hunger, but more importantly, it is a bridge for people to communicate with each other and develop more intimate relationships. (Here relationships could be relationships between family members, lovers or friends. See exhibit source: *Final Paper 2: Food Love and Sex*) Another reading *The Supermarket: Prime Real Estate,* written by Marion Nestle also inspired my thoughts on food. This time food is related to the supermarkets’ tactics for profits and customers’ consumption choices. The writing exercise for this article let me think about “to what extent is the supermarkets’ tactics justifiable”(for instance, the way they place products and how they price the products), and “who has the most responsibility for over-purchasing unnecessary goods.” Before reading Nestle’s essay, I had never thought about there was a particular way that supermarkets place their food products, and I had never thought about that using these tactics could be an ethical issue. However, after reading, I realized that different position of food and low pricing of food would lead to higher profits for supermarkets but unnecessary consumption finally causes health problems for consumers. (See exhibit source: *Writing exercise: The Supermarket: Prime Real Estate*) These two assignments helped me develop some deep and novel thoughts about food.

I used to think that long sentence represents high skill of writing, so I wrote plenty of them in my essays. However, I even didn’t realize I was not able to handle those long sentences until Professor Kim pointed out some mistakes in the long sentences of my writing exercise “Food Memoir”, for example, missing subjects and inconsistent verb form with subject. Professor Kim told me: “In order to form a clear sentence without grammar mistakes, I need to delete those unnecessary words and separate one long sentence into several short sentences. Then readers could find out the subject of every sentence easily.” And I made a correction for my “Food Memoir” exercise, as the example shown below:

“**I** enjoyed the overall experience in that French restaurant ~~was enjoyable and unforgettable,~~; maybe because it was my first time to try these ~~extremely~~ delicate and palatable dishes; or maybe because ~~for~~ the dishes ~~did~~ tasted so delicious; or maybe it was because of both ~~of them~~.”

Another improvement of my writing skills is the change of the claims: from vague to clear. I benefited a lot from the peer review during this semester. My peer Callie helped me to develop better thesis statements in the first two papers. In my rough draft of Paper 1, Callie pointed out that I even didn’t have a thesis statement in my essay. She said that I needed to stand a side so that the rest of my essay would not confuse readers. Thus, I rewrote my introduction paragraph and form a clear thesis statement. (See exhibit source Paper 1 Draft)

In my draft of Paper 2, Callie suggested me to add some information about the author Leonard Klady before my thesis statement rather than just having his name at the beginning of the claim, pretending every reader knew who he is. Therefore, I added a few sentences to introduce Leonard Klady in the middle of my first paragraph and then change my claim from:

“Contrary to Leonard Klady’s view, I think the purpose of preparing food elaborately for Mr.Chu is to let everyone gather together and provide opportunities to communicate with each other rather than avoiding interactions.”

to:

“Contrary to Leonard Klady’s view of “ the ritual of preparing food is a means to avoid interaction”, I think the real purpose of preparing food elaborately for Mr.Chu is to let everyone gather together and provide opportunities to communicate with each other instead of maintaining isolation (Klady).”

Then, my thesis statement would make sense to readers. Clarity is very important for an essay. After this semester, I think I have had an improvement in clarity for sentences.

During these four months, my thoughts and writing skills have gradually evolved to a higher level. I have learned a lot from Professor Kim and other classmates, and I really appreciated their help. I hope I could get a better grade in Writing 100, and I am looking forward to Writing 150 in Spring semester.