

Observation Report: 3.22.13

Syelle Graves

ENG. 331-02 (T & F 9:45AM-11AM)

Ms. Graves began class by taking attendance. The topic for the session was phonology, and it was the second installment of the unit.

Ms. Graves's pedagogical approach is slide-based, and she is a very skillful user of the medium. Some of the initial slides detailed a number of class announcements and the day's agenda. She began the session with an active review by asking the class what had been gone over the previous session, which elicited a very good student response. Ms. Graves then initiated a summary of the previous session's key concepts, focusing on how phonemes are a "psychological reality" for humans. This summary was broken down into a clearly delineated linguistic explanation and illustrative explanation.

Ms. Graves then transitioned into a conversation about what psychological reality was in greater detail. This led to a very serviceable and clear description of and distinction between phonemes and allophones, which combined both her linguistic and illustrative explanations.

Throughout the session, Ms. Graves did an excellent job of providing the students with examples of the various linguistic situations being considered, and would reinforce the understanding of the situations by asking students to name a particular linguistic property in the example – students eagerly, and often successfully, did so.

Ms. Graves then transitioned to a more thorough description of English phonetic rules. At one point, Ms. Graves shrewdly noticed that the dimmed lighting, intended to make for easier slide viewing, may have been having a soporific effect on some of the students, and immediately (and good naturedly, I might add!) called attention to it and raised the light. Given the students' general high level of engagement throughout the session, I am confident that any drowsiness Ms. Graves noticed was in no way due to her excellent instruction. On the contrary, her keen classroom awareness is both admirable and indicates a sincere desire to maintain a high level of comprehension. Ms. Graves then concluded that portion of the lesson with a discussion of the various general phonetic constraints that result in the numerous language/dialect differences in humans.

She then transitioned into some textbook-based review of the concepts discussed over the two sessions on phonology. Ms. Graves distributed a handout, and took great care in explicating the concepts as presented by the textbook with discussion of her handout, calling special attention to the identification of minimal pairs. She did an excellent job of driving home the proper understanding of minimal pairs by having the students identify them in the data set provided in the textbook. Ms. Graves also engaged in a series of guided phonetic translations with the class. She

concluded the session with handing out and going over the homework assignment, as well as briefly discussing the midterm review.

I found Ms. Graves to be a highly effective educator, and perceive that her students believe this to be the case as well. She is an asset to our department.

In conclusion, this is a **very favorable** review.

Respectfully submitted,