

# Classroom Observation Report

Instructor evaluated Nate Koser

Observer(s) Crystal Akers

Number of students present 29 Course 201

Date Feb. 21, 2019

**Instructions.** Several days prior to the classroom visit, the instructor should provide the observer(s) with a copy of the course syllabus containing course objectives, content, and organization.

**Procedure.** The observer(s) should meet with the instructor several days **in advance** of the visit to learn the instructor's classroom objectives as well as the teaching methods to be used. Within several days **after** the visit, the observer(s) should meet with the instructor to discuss observations and conclusions.

*Please feel free to use the reverse side of this page to elaborate on your comments*

## 1. Describe the instructor's content mastery, breadth, and depth.

Nate demonstrated mastery over the content, which included: the symbolism of phrase structure rules (PSRs), the use of PSRs to generate sentences and draw trees, and the use of trees to illustrate recursion and attachment ambiguity. The coverage of these topics was appropriate in depth and breadth for the class, and Nate easily handled the student questions about these topics.

## 2. Describe the method(s) of instruction.

The class alternated between full-class instruction and opportunities for students to work individually or with others near them. Nate began by distributing a handout summarizing important information, including: a list of PSRs; notes on notation, including how to read PSRs; definitions and examples of the terms *recursion*, *overgeneration*, and *attachment ambiguity*; and practice exercises. He also projected PowerPoint slides for this content. A side board allowed him to handwrite additional information or examples as needed.

During the initial review of the prior class, Nate primarily read through the text on the handout and students were quiet and attentive. Roughly 15 minutes into the class period, students were given their first practice opportunity. The students were very talkative and engaged, as they were at every opportunity to work together. Students across the front rows of seats asked Nate questions as he circulated across the front of the room. This opportunity to work together was followed by Nate returning to the board for a review of the answers. The remainder of the class period followed the same pattern: Nate introduced a topic with an example, students worked together to answer questions, then the full class reviewed answers on the board.

## 3. How clear and well organized is the presentation?

The presentation was very clear and organized. The order of the topics and examples covered demonstrated a thoughtful progression, and there was direct alignment between the activities in the

class and the questions students would be asked on the upcoming homework, which Nate had provided to me in advance.

#### **4. Describe the form and extent of student participation.**

Students were very attentive throughout the class period. During the full-class segments of the period – when Nate was introducing an example or reviewing answers – students would ask questions or volunteer solutions; however, it was primarily the students in the front rows who spoke in this time. When students had opportunities to collaborate, all seemed to be engaged and the classroom was appreciably noisy as they worked through questions. Students were given one opportunity to volunteer to draw their group's trees on the board; in other cases, Nate drew trees as students narrated their answers.

#### **5. What specific suggestions would you make to improve this instructor's teaching?**

The methods of instruction seemed to be working in this class. While the class was quite quiet during the initial review portion, it was obvious that the students were attentive, and it was good to hear the level of noise rise in the room as the students talked through the practice questions together.

I would only encourage Nate to be alert to the dynamics of the groups and check that students appear to be working comfortably with each other. At the start of this class period, it seemed that most male students clustered on the side of the room closest to the podium and most females on the side farthest from the podium, with some mixing in the middle. My sense was that students were choosing to sit beside students they already knew, and this habit might be helpful if it's the reason why the groups were so talkative when given the opportunity; however, I would encourage Nate to be mindful of these dynamics. I noticed one female student arrived late and found a seat toward the back in the section that was primarily occupied by male students. Later, she volunteered to draw a tree on the board after a practice session, and her work was incorrect. From my vantage in the classroom, I did not have a good view to see whether she was able to work closely with the males seated near her or whether she worked independently, but I would encourage Nate to be alert to the dynamics and to lightly intercede if he notices a student working independently during these practice opportunities, particularly if that student appears to be struggling with the homework assignments.

