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2012

Felt Sense

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Recommended Citation

Miller, Jessie and Stoyka, Lindsay, "Felt Sense" (2012). *Honors Projects*. 369.
<http://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/honorsprojects/369>

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Felt Sense

“Felt sense is a kind of bodily awareness that...can be used as a tool...[and] encompasses everything you feel and know about a given subject at a given time.... It is felt in the body, yet it has meanings. It is body *and* mind before they are split apart.” -Eugene Gendlin

Felt sense is the physical and emotional reactions experienced while writing. It can point us “to what is going on within us or to what lies beneath the words or to what lies at the edge of our thoughts” (Perl).

When to Use Felt Sense

In a consultation, felt sense can help a writer better articulate what he wants and needs to improve. Felt sense can help students delve deeper into a topic, find a new path for their paper, or determine the true meaning behind their ideas. In our case study, consultants found there were times when felt sense was more reliable than other times. The following table lists scenarios when felt sense is or is not a reliable tool in a consultation.

<i>When Felt Sense is Reliable</i>	<i>When Felt Sense is Not Reliable</i>
In personal writing With global issues When students self-identify feelings With students who have a background knowledge of composition	With defeated students When editing In academic writing With international students When consultants rely too heavily on their own felt sense

How to Use Felt Sense in a Consultation

Based on our findings, felt sense can be beneficial at any stage of the writing process, but in particular, felt sense is most commonly addressed in the brainstorming, expanding, and revising stages. While consultants are most likely familiar with the strategies outlined below, recognizing that these are indeed examples of felt sense will improve their awareness of felt sense and benefit future consultations.

Brainstorming Strategies

Using felt sense can help a student feel comfortable talking about his ideas. To begin, try the following questions:

1. *Determine an obsession:* What are you obsessed about? How might that tie into this assignment?
2. *Find the interest and excitement in the obsession:* Why does that obsession interest you? Why are you excited about it?
3. *Discuss thoughts about interest:* What is related to your interest? How could you argue something about it?
4. *Ask:* Why does this matter? What will your reader learn from this?

Expansion Strategies

Using felt sense can help a student expand upon her ideas. The following three strategies can help her connect with her ideas and content:

- *Freewriting*: Use freewriting to eliminate some of the pressure the student has placed upon himself. Have the student use one of the following prompts to guide him as he freewrites for five minutes.

Prompts:

- Write about your topic
 - Write about anything associated to your topic
 - Finish this sentence: My paper is about...
- *Rhetorical Strategies*: Talking about the audience, purpose and context for a given essay or assignment can help a student connect with his piece in a new way.

Topic vs. Purpose: Ask the student to first identify the topic and then to identify the purpose. She should be able to understand the difference between the two. With the identified purpose, the student will begin to find direction for the piece.

Audience and Context: Ask the student to identify the audience and the context in which the paper will be received. Use this to help the student get a sense of how to best convey his message to someone other than himself.

- *Metacognitive Stage*: Ask the student questions about her writing that encourages her to think about what she has learned. This will cement in her brain what she has learned and the writing process she used. The questions below will also guide the student to find the main focus of her piece.

Questions to ask:

- What have you learned?
- What new information have you found?
- What piece of this is most interesting to you?

Revision Strategies

When a student has a complete draft of his assignment, a consultant can incorporate felt sense into the consultation by providing both directive and non-directive feedback. The following questions will help the student identify areas to revise:

1. *Ask feeling-based questions*: How do you feel about this paper/paragraph/sentence?
2. *Ask guiding questions*: Why do you feel that way? How can we get rid of that feeling?
3. *Use directive questions*: Where is your thesis statement? What is this paragraph telling your reader? How does that relate to your thesis?