

Commentary on Julie Wachtel's SPN
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This SPN offers an excellent example of several important features of scholarly personal writing.

1. Notice how in Chapter 1, Julie connects her personal troubling moment to a broader issue in the teaching of Second Language Learners. This begins to create a bridge between *personal* experience and a broader educational issue.
2. Through her reflections, she offers a good description of the difference between academic learning and on the job experience. She does this in a non-judgmental way, meaning that she doesn't criticize her teacher preparation program for not adequately preparing her. Rather, she frames this as a new phase of learning. This contributes to her credibility as a writer and thinker.
3. The photograph of the gamelan concert (page 11) illustrates how visual images can be incorporated into an SPN, not as mere decorative touches, but to convey information non-verbally. The insertion of the YouTube link to a gamelan performance is a good way of incorporating technology to augment the verbal text.
4. Julie opens her SPN with an anecdote about her student, Kaito. She then references him at transition points throughout the document. This provides continuity as she develops the major theme of the SPN and provides an anchor point for many of the key issues she raises about the teaching of ESL.
5. Read the first paragraph on page 16. Julie poses a number of questions and then says, "I do not have all the answers to these questions—it is beyond the scope of my study. So, who does? SLA researchers have turned to several theoretical frameworks that have influenced approaches to second language learning to find the answers to these types of questions." In three sentences with 46 words, Julie accomplishes three important points. First, she sets the boundaries of her inquiry. Second, she indicates her awareness of multiple points of view in the literature. Third, she transitions to the theoretical concepts she wants to discuss.
6. Her use of the gamelan analogy is another major element that gives coherence to the SPN. The analogy is not inserted merely as a clever idea, but is used thoughtfully to draw comparisons between her own learning and the learning of ESL by her students. She also uses it to clarify what she means by "communities of practice." This multifaceted use of the analogy shows how relevant and applicable it is. It is not forced or artificially contrived.
7. On page 29, the first paragraph opens with "I've written quite a few research papers in my career as a student. I've written scientific research about bacteriophages and viruses, and I've written ethnomusicological-style research about gamelan from Indonesia, reggae from Jamaica, and Rajasthani folk music from northern India (sadly I have never visited those places to do *real* ethnography, though)." This is a nice illustration of "warranting" a claim. Julie claims she has written quite a few research papers. Many times, I read SPNs where students make this type of general claim, not necessarily about writing, but about some past activity or effort. Then they say nothing more. By offering just a few examples of the type of papers she has written, Julie provides warrants for her claim. In other words, readers are now more likely to believe the claim and also to have a better understanding of her previous experience. Again, notice how much information Julie conveys in two sentences of 52 words. One could argue that the parenthetical phrase is not needed. However, I think it conveys self-awareness of the level of expertise she is claiming.

8. Throughout the SPN, Julie does a nice job of introducing and integrating information from the literature. She provides a frame of reference for those she is quoting, by indicating an author's field, areas of study, or general expertise. She also makes appropriate use of statistical data sources.
9. Throughout the SPN, Julie connects past experiences with current learning and new ways of thinking. She also poses questions about her own understanding of ESL. In this way, she demonstrates a capacity for reflection without having to say explicitly, "I'm a reflective person." I mention this to emphasize the point that the SPN author's voice and stance, in conjunction with thoughtful reflection on ideas, contribute to the overall credibility of the author's claim to be a scholar-practitioner.