Reflection on Passive Speaker Project

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On day one of this course, I still had a lot of self-doubt about my potential to feel comfortable and competent in the shop, particularly around certain machines. The overload of information coupled with having to use equipment I have never touched before, had me on edge for much of the day resulting in several moments where I thought “what did I get myself into.” I was genuinely overwhelmed when faced with the steepness of the learning curve in front of me; however, having to face my fears directly that first day was also exhilarating. There were several points throughout the day that can be best described as “stepping outside of myself” and being amazed at what I was able to accomplish. At the same time, I was still anxious, inadvertently leading me to be unnecessarily hard on myself, often forgetting that this was my first attempt at learning a new process, so making a mistake was okay. Instead of dwelling on the mistakes I made, I needed to focus on how I was lessening my initial learning curve. The realization throughout the process was that it was essential for me to give myself permission to revel in the amazing growth I was making in such a short amount of time and learning not to get stuck on the mistakes. I am, though, self-aware that this will continue to be an area of growth for me.

After part one of the assignment, when I submitted my pieces for evaluation, I found it both cheesy and slightly annoying that Jon wrote the words ‘believe in yourself” in the feedback section. I think this reaction was because I was trying to, but I was also feeling overwhelmed by how much more I still had to do. That said, as I progressed through the remaining sections, it was admittedly reassuring to look back on those words each time I reopened the booklet. Those three little words had a real impact on my focus, reminding me that he had set high expectations for me that he knew I could achieve. Like my students, I had to make the choice to rise to those expectations. It reaffirmed the fact that, as a teacher, sometimes the simplest feedback can fuel a student to improve and work towards the expectations you have set for them. Our choice of words and their timing hold power, and they can shape learners in profound ways.

The most rewarding part of the process was the opportunity to participate in an activity that many of my students complete. It has been a valuable experience to work through the process and develop empathy for an exploration that can be daunting/ overwhelming for some of them. My favourite part was when I went into the shop and worked alongside some of my students. It was great to relate with them through a different lens, as a true co-learner. Asking students for help gave me the strength to embrace my vulnerability in this new area. It also gave me permission to be a learner and not the expert in the room. Furthermore, a few times while I was in the shop, I found students turning to me for help as well, allowing me to take on a small role as teacher in the shop. These small moments were essential components of my growing confidence.

As a big picture person, knowing how I was being evaluated was essential for my learning. I found that by understanding what Jon was looking for helped me narrow my focus to each individual task and calm my uneasiness about the scope of the assignment. Even if I couldn’t achieve a perfect score, I became more self-aware when it was time for him to evaluate me; thus, internalizing my own growth. I am motivated to try this project again, because I would like to apply the knowledge gained from my first attempt at learning new skills, processes, and tools.

Overall, I found the project a great way to introduce a newbie like myself to a wide range of new tools and processes. The design of the project allowed me to use skills multiple times in order to build my confidence. Ultimately, though, I found tremendous personal and professional value in stepping into the role of student and being able to see my growth as a learner and student in this field