More than Paraphrasing and Citing: The Real Rhetorical Functions of Referencing

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To get started…

Turn to someone next to you and articulate what rhetorical functions of referencing are.
To ground us in theory

References to sources serve a variety of rhetorical functions
(Harwood, 2009; Hyland, 2015)

Writing teachers should teach the functions
(Mott-Smith, Tomaš, & Kostka, 2017; Pecorari, 2013)

Teaching the functions requires embedding referencing in reading

Our lessons are for high intermediate to advanced college writers
Lesson 1: Rhetorical Functions of References within a Discourse Community

WHAT:
• Students read references to the same source from different articles and identify the rhetorical functions of each.

WHY:
• To learn that references have different rhetorical functions.
• To learn that referencing is a form of academic conversation.
Overview of Lesson 1 Steps

1. Discuss error correction.
3. Read references in chronological order to trace the conversation.
4. Identify which function each reference serves.
Step One: Discuss Error Correction

• Think back on your experience getting feedback on your writing. Did it include grammar correction? If so, did you find it beneficial? If not, why not?
• There is a controversy over whether correcting grammar in writing classes is a good idea or not.
• Even though a paper may get better, that doesn’t mean that the student will write the next paper better.
• There is more to writing than grammar.
• Truscott is against error correction; Ferris is for it. They speak directly to one another in published articles.
Step Two. Read & Summarize Truscott

Read pp. 327-328 excerpt

Identify Truscott’s thesis

“My thesis is that grammar correction has no place in writing courses and should be abandoned” (p. 328).

Identify Truscott’s purpose in writing

“To go beyond this uncritical acceptance and to look more seriously at the evidence, at the logic of correction, and at the problems it creates” (p. 328).
Step Three. Read references in chronological order to trace the conversation

- **1999**: Ferris wrote an article to speak back to Truscott and refute his thesis.
- **1999**: Truscott responded to Ferris, defending his thesis.
- **2003**: Chandler published a study that began with a discussion of the debate between Ferris and Truscott.
- **2004**: Casanave wrote a book on controversial topics, one of which was the error correction debate.
Step Four. Identify which function each reference serves

**Rhetorical Functions of References**

- Provide a specific context for a discussion
- Create a space for a research study
- Present an argument to build on (The writer agrees with it)
- Present an argument for objective evaluation (The writer doesn’t take a stand on it)
- Present an argument for rebuttal (The writer doesn’t agree with it)
- Provide supporting evidence
- Direct readers to a place they can find more information
- Demonstrate that the writer is informed
John Truscott’s 1996 *Language Learning* article, “The case against grammar correction in L2 writing classes,” has led to a great deal of discussion and even some controversy about the best way to approach issues of accuracy and error correction in ESL composition. This article evaluates Truscott’s arguments by discussing points of agreement and disagreement with his claims and by examining the research evidence he uses to support his conclusions. The paper concludes that Truscott’s thesis that “grammar correction has no place in writing courses and should be abandoned” (1996, p. 328) is premature and overly strong and discusses areas for further research.
b) (Truscott, 1999, p. 116):

The first reason that Ferris (1999) proposes for continuing to correct is that students believe in correction and want to receive it, so teachers should give it to them. I believe I have already provided an adequate response to this familiar argument (Truscott, 1996, pp. 359-360). I will not repeat my earlier comments here, but rather expand on them.
c) (Chandler, 2003, pp. 267-8):

In 1996 Truscott wrote a review article in *Language Learning* contending that all forms of error correction of L2 student writing are not only ineffective but potentially harmful and should be abandoned. This was followed by a rejoinder by Ferris (1999), and 1998 saw the publication of several books that gave significant attention to the topic (e.g., Ferris & Hedgcock, 1998 and James, 1998)… The one implicit point of agreement in Truscott and Ferris’ articles was that the existing data are insufficient to resolve the question of whether error correction can be an effective way to improve the accuracy of L2 writing. The present study addresses this issue directly by presenting empirical data comparing the improvement in accuracy over a college semester of an experimental group that corrected the grammatical and lexical errors marked by the teacher on each assignment before writing the next assignment with a control group that did not.
As I indicated earlier, there is a specific debate about the value of treating grammatical errors in students’ writing. This issue has been articulated most prominently in the published literature by Truscott (1996, 1999) on the anti-treatment side and by Ferris (1999a, 2002; Ferris & Helt, 2000; Ferris & Roberts, 2001) on the pro-treatment side. In this debate, “improvement” refers to increased grammatical accuracy in students’ writing. Truscott (1996) does not condemn all response to student writing, just grammar correction, which is what many teachers spend most of their time on. He makes the strong, unhedged assertion that, according to his review of the literature, teachers’ correction of grammatical errors does students no good and may actually harm them by discouraging them from further efforts and by robbing them and their teachers of time that could be spent on more productive activities.
To summarize…

References

- are used in an academic conversation
- provide context for a discussion
- promote a writer’s authority
- define alliances
- direct readers to additional information
- provide more than support
Lesson 2: Making Claims with References

**WHAT:**
- Students contrast how two writers used PRRI poll data.

**WHY:**
- To learn how writers use references to construct claims.
- To learn that even supported claims are claims, not facts.
Overview of Lesson 2 Steps

1. Discuss ACA mandate to cover contraceptives.
2. Read two articles.
3. Identify points made, survey results cited.
4. Compare claims.
Step One. Discuss ACA mandate to cover contraceptives

• Many people in the US get health insurance through their employers.
• Some people believe that contraception should be covered and some don’t.
• Freedom of religion: religious employers should not have to pay for contraception.
• Equality: everyone should have the same access to health insurance coverage.
• ACA mandated coverage, with exceptions for religious employers.
Vocabulary

mandate  Republican  Democrat  contraception  sterilization  coverage  bishop  layperson  HHS  Health & Human Services

ACA = Affordable Care Act = Obamacare
Step Two. Read two articles

Public Religion Research Institute polls

Markoe (2012):
Contraception Mandate Not A Threat To Religious Freedom According To Catholics

Catholic News Agency (2012):
New Poll Shows Catholic Voters Oppose HHS Mandate
Step Three. Identify points made, survey results cited

a. What is the “lead”?

b. What survey results are given?

c. What points do the results support?

d. Is the lead balanced by another view?
Huffington Post:

Contraception Mandate Not A Threat To Religious Freedom According To Catholics

WASHINGTON (RNS) A vocal contingent of Republican presidential candidates and church leaders are railing against the Obama administration's “war on religion,” but most Americans can't seem to find the fight.

National Catholic Register:

New Poll Shows Catholic Voters Oppose HHS Mandate

WASHINGTON (CNA)—Most Catholic voters oppose the federal rule requiring religious institutions to buy insurance that covers contraception and sterilization, according to new research published Feb. 7.
**Huffington Post:**
“A majority (56 percent) of Americans say religious liberty is not threatened in the U.S.”
“Catholics reject -- by a 57 to 38 percent margin -- the idea that religious liberty is under siege.”

**National Catholic Register:**
“52% of voting Catholics do not believe the contraception coverage mandate should apply to religiously affiliated colleges and hospitals. Only 45% of Catholic voters said the rule should apply to these ministries.”
Step Four. Compare claims

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How are the leads different?</th>
<th>What differences are there in the statistics that are given?</th>
<th>Compare the sentences that report the bishops’ objections to the mandate.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How do the leads relate to the political leanings of the newspapers?</td>
<td>Were you surprised by any of the differences?</td>
<td>Quote or paraphrase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Word choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Strength</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Huffington Post:**

“The mandate, the bishops say, tramples on religious liberties by forcing church-affiliated universities and hospitals to provide a service that Catholic teaching deems sinful.”

**National Catholic Register:**

“The bishops said the rule makes schools, hospitals and charities act ‘against their conscience, to pay for things they consider immoral.’”
In conclusion…

Effective referencing

- is more than correct citation format
- involves using references for particular purposes
- involves choice of quote or paraphrase
- builds truth claims
- connects to purpose in writing
- involves word choice
In conclusion...

• L2 writers able to draw upon a larger variety of functions are evaluated better than writers only utilizing basic functions (Petrić, 2007)
References


References (continued)


Questions? Ideas to share?

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For more lessons on the rhetorical functions of references and on source use, please check out our book, which will be out later this year: