Source Documentation 101: Developing Intertextuality

Sigrun Biesenbach-Lucas and Donette Brantner-Artenie

In U.S. academic culture, most writing tasks involve the construction of arguments based on synthesizing and integrating ideas of other writers into one's own thought framework, but one has to distinguish points authored by others from one's own commentary. For students from non-U.S. education systems, understanding the obligation to identify such ideas and words that are not their own, realizing that there are prescribed ways of referring to them, and recognizing that violating those conventions is unacceptable is a complex process (Hirvela & Du, 2013).

We suggest that mastering source citation conventions be an *ongoing process* throughout a course instead of limited exposure during major assignments. Pecorari and Shaw (2012) confirm that it is "beneficial for students to receive consistent messages about what source use is and is not appropriate, but some evidence suggests that university teachers and other gatekeepers may fall short of this consistency" (p. 149). We describe how you can begin incorporating citation conventions and build on them in a 16-week semester so that learners recycle and repractice what they have learned with each assignment.

Curricular Goals

In most academic preparation programs, curricular goals prescribe students' use of academic honesty conventions. Typical outcomes include:

- quoting sources fairly and appropriately;
- paraphrasing accurately using a variety of vocabulary, grammar structures, and sentence patterns;
- using discourse signals to mark source ideas; and
- using a standard system of citation (e.g., APA).

These citation tasks imply that source citation is not merely about using a citation style format but also involves language manipulation at the sentence level. However, students must first understand what behavior and language use is considered plagiarism in U.S. academic culture.

To help your students understand the gravity of violating academic honesty, discuss academic honesty scenarios with them, as provided on the TESOL International Association website (PDF) and the University of Technology, Sydney website. Also, explicitly refer to your institution's honor council or academic integrity website. To ensure that students familiarize themselves with information on such sites, create a quiz, which students complete while navigating these websites. This example quiz, "Introduction to Academic Honesty and Plagiarism*," is based on our school's honor council site.

To stress the importance of academic integrity and avoidance of plagiarism, have your grading rubrics include, *from the beginning*, assessment of students' observance and implementation of academic honesty standards and documentation conventions. See "Sample Excerpted Grading Rubrics*."

Progression of Citation Tasks

Understanding source citation conventions, especially when the entire idea of having to document sources is a new paradigm for students, is difficult and requires *regular and repeated practice*. Do not assume that students know that they need to properly reference an idea and remember how to reference it if this topic has been introduced only once. Therefore, do not wait until the students' final assignment to teach source documentation, but start this learning process at the beginning of the semester. With each subsequent task, introduce another source documentation aspect, so that with each assignment students are responsible for practicing what they already know and add a new citation aspect. You can create controlled citation practice activities through which students solidify the skills they need in more extended research and writing projects later.

Early in the Term

Using Language Signals to Identify Words/Ideas Not Your Own

Early in the semester, structure tasks that require students to refer to a text they have read in class, and introduce students to the idea that they need to use explicit language signals to help readers distinguish which ideas are those of the author and which are not. Language signals like the following are useful for such explicit distinction:

- According to (Author), …
- (Author) writes/adds that …
- In the text "(Title)", …
- In (Author's) view, …

In such early, short paragraph-length tasks, you do not need to require a specific citation format, nor require students to explicitly mark quotes or paraphrases. Encourage your students to use their own words as much as possible. Try these "Early-Term Task Prompts*."

Paraphrasing Practice

When paraphrasing, "the writer [retains] the same level of specificity as the original source text" while "[recasting] individual sentences … [in] new words and grammatical structures" (Hirvela & Du, 2013, p. 88). Use sentences or short portions from a text that the students have read so that they are familiar with the ideas. Before you ask students to paraphrase, have them complete a parts-of-speech grid for key words in the sentences to be paraphrased. We have found that if students identify the noun, verb, adjective, and adverb for critical words in the original, knowing a different part of speech helps them restructure the original sentence instead of rewriting it with mere synonyms.

Here is an example parts-of-speech grid, with the original critical words in bold:

NOUN	***VERB***	***ADJECTIVE***	***ADVERB***
interest	to interest someone in	interesting	**interestingly**

	something		
procrastinator/s	to procrastinate	procrastinating	
action/s	to act/**acting**	active	actively
intention	to intend to do something	intentional	**intentionally**

Original sentence: "**Interestingly**, most **procrastinators** do not feel that they are **acting intentionally**."

Paraphrase: It is interesting that people who procrastinate think that their actions are not *intentional*/not intended.

Before the first major writing task, introduce students to the basic citation practices for portions of a source that are quoted or paraphrased. Have students complete practice tasks in which they need to identify parts of a source that should be quoted with quotation marks or paraphrased more effectively. Use a text with which students are familiar so that they can focus on citation aspects and do not simultaneously have to struggle with text processing. Li and Casanave (2012) believe that this type of "patchwriting [is] an important strategy…that deserves…attention as an instructional device" when "students are learning to write from sources" (p. 178). Here is an example worksheet, "Determine Which Ideas Need Quotation Marks*."

Ideas That Need Source Citation

In another preparation step before a writing assignment in which students are expected to identify and document ideas they have taken from sources, have students identify which ideas in a text might need source citations. In this example worksheet, "What Needs In-Text Documentation*," we inserted spaces after each sentence and created imaginary sources. This task requires information-prominent citations (at the end of a sentence with a quote or paraphrase, with no direct in-sentence reference to the author), but it highlights the need for writers to determine what information they could not likely have known before engaging in research on the topic.

Midterm

After students have developed comfort with writing in-text citations, begin introducing the corresponding format for end-of-text references. Provide students with "cheat sheets" for formatting the references for the most common sources they are likely to use: journal and magazine articles, online sources like websites, and books and book chapters. Our students complete a variety of recurring tasks.

Bibliography Task

A research portfolio project* encourages students to engage in generating end-of-text references in the proper citation style format without the pressure of having to write a paper as an outcome. In this activity, students conduct a practice search for appropriate sources for a sample research topic, take notes on the sources they select, and eventually create a bibliography of those sources

that could be used as references for a paper. In this task, students are free to focus on honing their research skills and gain practice in using their assigned citation style.

Citation Practice Tasks

Give your students plenty of practice with reference citation writing, and do not require them to memorize citation formats; instead, allow them to use a cheat sheet or access a style format guide.

1. First, have students merely identify the type of source that a specific reference citation in your preferred style format represents: Is the cited source a book, a journal article, or another source type?
2. Move on to tasks in which students edit and correct provided reference citations; as you create the to-be-edited references, limit errors in each citation to one or two.
3. Then, provide the pieces of information that students need to identify the type of source and write the reference citation: the author's name, the title of the article or book, the name of the source, and so on.

The example, "Reference Citation Practice*," shows these exercise types combined in one task sheet, but each task can easily be adapted into individual exercises for practice and quizzes.

In-Text Citations and End-of-Text References

When the focus shifts from writing in-text citations to writing end-of-text references, students often become confused. Therefore, provide regular practice activities that combine both aspects of source documentation. In the example "In-Text Citations and References*," students have to use source information to format appropriate in-text citations and arrange the references in correct alphabetical order.

Later in the Term

Citation Boundaries Review Task

It is important for students to revisit, frequently, the steps to indicating clear boundaries between their own and others' ideas, particularly later in the term. These opportunities help students routinize the process of using language signals and reference indicators to keep the origin of ideas separate while reinforcing the notion that avoiding unclear boundaries is critical to preventing unintentional plagiarism. Furthermore, these review activities encourage students to expand reporting signals and other sentence structures they have been using to mark varying sources of information.

In this example task, "Showing Citation Boundaries*," students are given a sample essay with questions about excerpted parts of the writing; for the excerpts, students must identify the specific language or technique the writer used and decide *if* and *why* an idea from a source is clearly distinguished from information from the writer.

Final Research Paper

A final paper in which students integrate a variety of sources can now present the cumulative product demonstrating students' ability to integrate, through paraphrases and quotes, outside sources. In guiding materials for project completion, as well as in assessment rubrics, remind students again that they must adhere to indicating and referencing their sources. As the pressure of a final paper builds, source documentation then becomes less of a distracting focus as students can shift attention to content and organization of ideas.

Remaining Challenges for Students

Despite following a well-organized and recurring cycle of instruction and practice in using and documenting sources, students typically continue to face the following difficulties with citation conventions:

- Concept and seriousness of plagiarism: "There are only two words that are the same."
- Overly depending on direct quotation: "The author said it so much better than I can."
- Paraphrasing nightmares: "I used the thesaurus to find synonyms."
- Fine line between common knowledge and information requiring documentation: "I thought everybody knew that."
- Domination of sources in writing (especially in secondary research): "I don't know anything about the topic." (See "Domination of Sources*," an example for both teachers and students)
- Blurred boundaries between sources and student's voice: "You said I shouldn't use *I* in my writing."
- Inconsistent application of source documentation basics: "I can't remember what needs italics or when I need the author's first name initial."

Expect such hurdles, as "the period of one [term is] not long enough for students to become confident in this crucial aspect of academic writing" (Thompson, Morton, & Storch, 2013, p. 107); therefore, source citation practice needs to be ongoing throughout the term, and students need to be aware that they will not only continue this learning process, but they may also likely have to learn other documentation styles later on. As students embark on their academic studies, we encourage them to seek out resources in their university programs.

**To access and download the example documents and worksheets, go to the online version of this article.*

References

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Sigrun Biesenbach-Lucas *received her MAT and PhD degrees in applied linguistics from Georgetown University. She has taught ESL, linguistics, and teacher training courses, and she is currently an associate teaching professor in the Intensive English Program at Georgetown University; she has also served as a site reviewer for CEA. She regularly presents at TESOL conferences; she has published articles on email communication, and she is the coauthor of* Next Generation Grammar 4.

Donette Brantner-Artenie *has an MA in linguistics from Ohio University and is an associate teaching professor at Georgetown University, where she teaches in the Intensive English Program. She has taught EFL at the high school level in Romania, and she has been an ESL instructor at Ohio University and Ohio State University. She has conducted teacher training workshops in the United States and abroad and is the coauthor of* Next Generation Grammar 4.