Using Academic Conventions to Meet (Inter)disciplinary Expectations through First-Year Writing

JACQUELINE J. SCHIAPPA

DOCTORAL CANDIDATE
DEPARTMENT OF WRITING STUDIES
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Jacqueline Schiappa
.com

Courses Taught
Fundamental Communication
First Year Writing Program
Advisor/Comm.
Director of Graduate Studies Advisory Comm.
University Writing Program Wide Assessor
First Year Writing Program Writing Associate
Dept of Writing Studies BS Representative
Writing Studies Graduate Curriculum Subcommittee
Environmental Rhetoric

Department Affiliations
Gender, Women, & Sexuality Studies
Writing Studies

Other Related Work
First Year Writing Program Advisory Comm.
Dept of Writing Studies GS Representative
Writing Studies Grad Curriculum Subcommittee

Mingus the Dog
Presentation Overview

- **Conventions in Academic Writing**
  - The Pillars: Attention Getter, Literature Review, Preview/Review, Thesis Statement, Conclusion
  - Organization, Citation

- **Strategies for Communicating Writing Assignments**
  - Using the Assignment Prompt
  - Giving Examples of Every Major Assignment
  - Little Rules, Peer-Reviewing
  - Teaching the Reference Manual

- **Addressing ESL/NNES Student Writing Habits**
  - Ideas v. Grammar
  - Crutches
  - Student Resources
Session I: “Using the Framework for Success”

Developing Knowledge of Conventions

• “Conventions are the formal rules and informal guidelines that define what is considered to be correct (or appropriate) and incorrect (or inappropriate) in a piece of writing.

• Conventions include the surface features of a text such as mechanics, spelling, and attribution of sources, as well as more global concerns such as content, tone, style, organization, and evidence.”
Session I: “Using The Framework for Success”

- Rhetorical Knowledge
- Critical Thinking
- Writing Processes
- Knowledge of Conventions
- Ability to Compose in Multiple Environments

Kirsten Jamsen, Director, Center for Writing
Conventions in Academic Writing

- **Introduction**
  - Attention Getter
  - Relevance
  - Preview
  - Thesis

- **Body**
  - (A) Literature Review,
  - (B) Analysis/Discussion
  - Organizational framework
    - (Spatial, Chron., Temporal, Topical)

- **Conclusion**
  - Transition
  - Review
  - Restate Thesis
Teaching Conventions in Academic Writing

- Have students form groups
- Provide groups with 3 academic article introductions
  - Each article should represent a distinct discipline
- Ask groups to identify the following conventions:
  - Introduction
    - Attention Getter
    - Relevance
    - Preview
    - Thesis
“I can’t work on a problem if I cannot name it.” The complaint was registered gently, almost as a musing after-thought at the end of a June 2012 interview I conducted by telephone with one of the nation’s prominent environmental leaders.

Harvard University
January 2013
‘Low-density lipoprotein binds to proprotein convertase subtilisin/kexin type-9 (PCSK9) in human plasma and inhibits PCSK9-mediated LDL receptor degradation’

by Tanja Kosenko, Mia Golder, Geoffrey Leblond, Willy Weng, and Thomas A. Lagace.

doi:10.1074/jbc.M112.421370
Proprotein convertase subtilisin/kexin type-9 (PCSK9) is a secreted protein that binds to the epidermal growth factor-like (EGF)-A domain of the low-density lipoprotein receptor (LDLR) and mediates LDLR degradation. Gain-of-function mutations in PCSK9 are associated with autosomal dominant hypercholesterolemia in humans. Size exclusion chromatography of human plasma has shown PCSK9 to be partly associated with undefined high-molecular-weight complexes within the LDL-size range. We used density gradient centrifugation to isolate LDL in plasma pooled from 5 normolipidemic subjects and report that >40% of total PCSK9 was associated with LDL. These data suggest that association of PCSK9 with LDL particles in plasma lowers the ability of PCSK9 to bind to cell surface LDLRs, thereby blunting PCSK9-mediated LDLR degradation.
Teaching Conventions in Academic Writing

A black person has to ask herself, ‘If Oprah Winfrey can make it, what does it say about me?’ They no longer have any excuse.

—Oprah Winfrey, quoted in Mair (1994, p. 183)

The journey of Oprah Gail Winfrey from Hattie Mae’s pig farm in Mississippi to the pinnacle of wealth, power, and success in American television is a journey we must all admire. . . . She is the ultimate American success story. That a tiny, illegitimate black girl from dirt-poor Mississippi can transform herself into the richest and most powerful black woman in the world is a triumph of the human spirit and the American dream.

(Mair 1994, p. 349)

The story of individual triumph over humble beginnings is a staple of a culture steeped in Horatio Alger mythology, in the service of an inegalitarian economic order buttressed by an ideology of individual achievement and responsibility. As Weiss (1969) summarizes in his book on the Horatio Alger myth,

Dana L. Cloud is Assistant Professor of Speech Communication at the University of Texas, Austin. She thanks Lauren Rabinovitz at the University of Iowa, Keith Hutchinson, and several anonymous reviewers whose helpful remarks guided revision of this article.
The article theorizes the concepts of hegemony, tokenism, star personae, and biographical narrative, arguing against Condit’s (1994) reframing of hegemony as an acceptable cultural negotiation or compromise. Then I summarize the generic Oprah Winfrey biography, drawing out its constituent elements, and describe how this narrative represents a rhetoric of tokenism. Third, the essay analyzes specific instances of biographical tribute to Oprah Winfrey, focusing on a televised video biography of Oprah aired in . Finally, I challenge the assumption of identity politics that representatives of oppressed groups automatically speak in an authentic oppositional voice.
"Imagine that you enter a parlor. You come late. When you arrive, others have long preceded you, and they are engaged in a heated discussion, a discussion too heated for them to pause and tell you exactly what it is about. In fact, the discussion had already begun long before any of them got there…"
Teaching Conventions in Academic Writing

Diagram:

- Introduction
- Body
- Conc.

- Introduction
- Body
- Conc. CLOSURE
Value the Assignment Prompt

- **Summer 2010 Writing Associate Experience**
  - **Focus Groups with First-Year Writing Instructors**
    - Discuss everything but the prompt itself and its functions
    - Frequent and detailed contextualizing
  - **Themes in prompts seemingly yielding “good” papers**
    - Extensions of in-class conversations (contextualized)
    - Included the hard logistics
    - Weren’t overly prescriptive
    - Clear expectations
    - 1-2 pages in length

- **Make the value of the prompt clear to students**
Give Real Examples of Every Major Assignment

ASSIGNMENT EXAMPLES

- Draft Annotated Bibliography Student Example
- Annotated Bibliography Example 1
- Annotated Bibliography Example 2
Little Rules for Low/Medium-Stakes Assignments

- Can’t begin any sentence with “it”
- No direct quoting
  - Or, limit to 5 words per quote
  - No hanging quotes
- Use 1-2 footnotes
  - Help students discern meaningfulness of content
  - Give students a safe space to comment, think, work-through
Teach the Reference Manual

Activity Suggestion: The Reference Race

- Bring diverse source materials
  - anthology, *another* anthology, article, newspaper, magazine, website, DVD
- Student groups “race” to collaborate on an accurate bibliography page with all sources
- Build student confidence and resourcefulness
- Collaborative activity, friendly competition
- Effectively teaches students how to cite
Make use of existing resources...

RESOURCES

- What is a scholarly source? What do other sources look like?
- Overview: What is a scholarly source?
- How to cite web sources in APA style.
- What is an Annotated Bibliography?
- OWL's APA Resource: The Basics
- OWL's APA Resource: Citing Authors
- OWL's APA Resource: Citing Books
- OWL's APA Resource: Citing Articles / Periodicals
- UNC Writing Center - How to Write a Literature Review
- University of Toronto Guide - How to Write a Literature Review
- UMN-Duluth - Guidelines for Writing a Literature Review
The Power of the Peer-Review

- When done well, students *enjoy* peer-reviewing
- Give ultra-specific instructions
  - Use the pillars
  - Ask students to identify the conventions in each other’s work
- Speed-dating style peer-reviewing
  - Use music cues
  - Opportunity for students to become more familiar
  - Get a lot of feedback to a lot of students in a short amount of time
Be Aware of [Digital] Practice Changes

- Unique digital communication modes/spaces necessitate unique writing approaches
- Use the ubiquity of communication technologies to encourage students seeing themselves as *already* writing
- Avoid assumptions about student relationships to technology
  - Autocorrect
  - Texting $\neq$ Not-Listening
- Consider multimodal assignments
Consider multimodal assignments

- Where “multimodal” storytelling means “narrating stories through a range of print, visual, and audio modalities.”
- Encourages students “to draw on their knowledge, experiences, and passions nurtured in their home communities to tell new stories and become more deeply engaged in the academic content of school.”
- Key point: “The introduction of new composing tools and processes provided students with the opportunity to take on a broader range of available identities as “successful” students in an academic setting”

Ask for conventional components in unconventional form
ESL/NNES Student Writing Habits & Needs

- Quick Tips
- Ideas v. Grammar, Syntax
- Seeking appropriately complex language
  - the “right-click syndrome”
- Cultural differences in student perceptions of claim-making authority
  - Overuse of quotations
  - Space-Taking-Strategies: Overuse of graphs, images
- What and where are student resources?
Quick Tips

- Put it in Writing as often as possible
- Invite taking pictures of the board or activities
- Avoid explanations that depend on familiarity with popular culture
- Use synonyms often (frequently, regularly)
- Smaller Group Activities
  - Use the board
PEOPLE WHO STRUGGLE FOR AMERICAN DREAM

Abstract

"American Dream" was able to be rooted in people's minds and immortal, because the free land given people who living in this land possible to come true their dream. Sound legal system, freedom of speech and respect for personal values was made every individual in this country can courageous follow their own dreams and move forward. Meanwhile, those people who came true the American dream from generation to generation show their action to telling everyone if you dream, nothing is impossible.
In my opinion the first half of the classification of freedom is right. That is really freedom and is similar to the concept of American dream. But I disagree that viewpoint which is he used women as example. He think that women’s subjection to her husband’s authority makes her free. He have made a good example of how women, as humans, behave well and not do evil things to have a nice family and a well life. However, all I encountered with this analogy was just how they had a lack of individuality, a low status and little freedom and rights living under men.

I think that is kind of contradictory to civil or federal liberty. Everyone should have equal status. Within the legal framework, to pursue their own freedom and dreams instead of women should subjection to her husband’s authority.
During this year, it was not bad as I thought before. “I had been a teacher at this school since the 1960s. At that time, the brand new Boxue Building looked magnificent.” Here is the memory of my teacher. After 52 years’ vicissitudes, this building now becomes timeworn. It has become a tradition that every grade-nine student has to study in Boxue Building, for creating a good learning area. So Boxue
Student Perceptions of Claim-making Authority

FIGURE 1

The minimum wage in 1999 dollars, 1955-99

Figure 1 shows the inflation-adjusted minimum wage from 1955 to 1999, in 1999 dollars.

Source: The federal minimum wage deflated by CPI-U-X1.
Quotation Crutches

According to Sheldon Danziger and David Ratner, changes in the labor market over the past 35 years, such as labor-saving technological changes, increased globalization, declining unionization, and the failure of the minimum wage to keep up with inflation, have made it more difficult for young adults to maintain their economic stability and self-sufficiency that are the key objects that assist their transition to adulthood. They recommend policies that could help increase the returns to work, especially for the less educated workers, which is increasing the minimum wage and annually adjusting it to maintain a median wage. The writers also claim that expanding the income tax credit for childless low-wage workers and are stating that new policies should provide work and opportunity for those young adults that cant find a stable job. Finally, the authors recommend increasing federal Pell grants for college and improving access to credit for would-be college students to raise the educational attainment of young adults from low-income families. (End P.133). The source explains that over the past 30 years, changes to the labor market have made it more difficult for them to become financially independent. Nowadays, a student with more than a high school degree has more difficulty in supporting his family that
The Writing Center can help students think through:

- how to get started on an assignment
- approaches to organizing a draft
- ways to improve clarity
- opportunities for revision and editing
- show strategies for proofreading

The Writing Center does not:

- proofread a paper for a student
- write a paper, or tell a student what to write
- speak for an instructor
- evaluate or guarantee a grade for a paper
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