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Citation Difficulties

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Abstract

Issues of citation have interested us for some time, especially as they relate to reductive and dismissive representations of student work in our professional discourse: for example, how scholarly articles foreground the status of students as "student" or how the move of referring to students by first name only is infantilizing (see Salvatori and Donahue, 2010). We also have a long standing interest in writing about teaching in ways that our primary field (English Studies) and SoTL would recognize as "scholarly": intellectual inquiries into processes of teaching and learning that build upon previously published research, cite it appropriately, and acknowledge its theoretical influences and sources. In this essay, we want to draw attention to certain incongruities in scholarly publications about teaching—we shall call them "citation difficulties." We have been noticing them for many years, but have been moved to write about them only recently.

Keywords
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Introduction

Issues of citation have interested us for some time, especially as they relate to reductive and dismissive representations of student work in our professional discourse: for example, how scholarly articles foreground the status of students as "student" or how the move of referring to students by first name only is infantilizing (see Salvatori and Donahue, 2010). We also have a long standing interest in writing about teaching in ways that our primary field (English Studies) and SoTL would recognize as "scholarly": intellectual inquiries into processes of teaching and learning that build upon previously published research, cite it appropriately, and acknowledge its theoretical influences and sources. In this essay, we want to draw attention to certain incongruities in scholarly publications about teaching—we shall call them "citation difficulties." We have been noticing them for many years, but have been moved to write about them only recently.

Citing Citations

The precipitating occasion for our contribution to this issue of IJ-SoTL is an essay recently published in one of the leading journals in English studies. We have chosen not to provide its title or its authors' names because we want to avoid sounding defensive or retributive. We also trust that the point we've made is recognizable and clear enough. In fact, the identity of this essay is really beside the point because it is not its argument, or its examples, but rather its citations, specifically its citational <u>moves</u>, that we think require attention. We also want to stress the point, up front, that we admire the pedagogical work described in this essay. It represents the kind of scholarship about teaching and learning which is sorely needed these days, especially in English Studies, where SoTL has not yet made much headway.

Without going into much detail, we can say that what we call "Essay X" offers an insightful and nuanced examination from the SoTL perspective of how students in literature courses can be encouraged to read in a "literary" way. Essay X performs several different and discipline-specific moves. It explains how a "lesson study," an approach developed in Japan but further theorized by others, can be used in literary pedagogy to break down the private walls of a classroom so as to create a collaborative teaching practice, a community of teachers. It describes and enacts this kind of collaborative teaching both in the shared production of the essay itself and in the essay's form as a venue for published scholarship that other teachers can reproduce, learn from, build upon, and write about (see Shulman).

The essay quotes from, and so acknowledges its indebtedness to sources that describe the lesson study approach and the kind of "literary reading" which its authors want their students to perform: a type of reading that recognizes verbal ambiguities and identifies textual difficulties. The conventional use of citation to establish disciplinary and theoretical affiliation is most evident in the opening and concluding pages of Essay X where previous scholarship by several literature and composition scholars, us included, is mentioned. It gave us much pleasure to see our recent work on SoTL in English Studies ("English Studies in the Scholarship of Teaching") and our textbook on teaching difficulty [*The Elements (and Pleasures) of Difficulty*] referred to in an essay we believe is doing important work.

However, our pleasure reading this essay soon turned into puzzlement, and for two reasons. First, the only work on difficulty cited in the essay is the *Elements* book, a textbook we co-authored. No mention is made of the prior and extensive theoretical and pedagogical work on the subject of difficulty (begun in the 1980's) which informs the textbook. Some of this work has appeared in composition journals (see Salvatori 1996) and edited collections (Salvatori 1988), and some has also appeared in *Opening Lines* (Salvatori 2000), a publication sponsored by The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. The dates of these publications indicate that attention to difficulty as a learning strategy goes back several decades. Second, to argue that students can and should learn to engage ambiguities on their own, the essay relies on, among others, two specific quotations, the very same quotations repeatedly used in the above mentioned publications (Once again, we trust our point is clear without our having to mention names). In those publications these quotations are juxtaposed in order to argue for the pedagogical advantage of transforming moments of difficulty into sources of understanding. Furthermore, in the *Elements* textbook, these two quotations re-appear as crucial epigraphs.

Granted, being part of a community of <u>scholars</u> attunes us to certain voices, certain positions. For that reason it is entirely possible that the authors of Essay X might have located the quotations mentioned above on their own. But a longer and more accurate archival search might have led them to acknowledge the intellectual genealogy of their research project. Our point is not to argue for "originality" or "intellectual priority," but rather to say that if the scholarship of teaching and learning is ever to acquire the academic status it deserves, its practitioners must be vigilant: they must be willing to undertake the effort of "source digging," however laborious and time-demanding it may be. Fortunately, a citation practice for the tracing of another's research trajectory already exists: "as cited in..."

In the rest of our essay, we want to examine in more detail some of the concerns raised by our discussion of Essay X. We want to characterize certain kinds of citation difficulties. And we want also to hypothesize what might be the cause of such truncated citations and various elisions. Once again, we will not name any essay specifically, although we will offer exempla based on what we have read or experienced first hand.

Two Effects

We'll call the first citation difficulty "Miranda Effect." It appears most often in work submitted to journals, although not necessarily published by them (in our own work as journal reviewers and editors we are encountering this effect more frequently). But it is operative even in published pieces, especially in those that represent teaching from the perspective of the "merely" anecdotal. In its name, we are obviously referring to the final

act of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, when Miranda, exclaiming on the beauty of the kind of men whom she is seeing for the first time, is corrected by her father who says, "new to you." By the term "Miranda Effect," we draw attention to work that describes a teacher's classroom experience, experience which appears to be significant to the teacher only because it is new—new to her or to him. And we certainly do not want to take this experience for granted. But we think that when the experience moves from the private context of a classroom to the public arena of scholarship, and claims to make a contribution to it, authors should be expected to determine whether others have passed this way before, whether what strikes this particular teachers as a "first" might be for others a "second" or a "thirtieth"—which might be significant in and of itself.

We understand that such work may be of personal interest—to the individual teacher and his/her colleagues; but it offers little to a larger professional audience. And in so far as teaching still has difficulty being accepted in academia as scholarship, those of us who choose to change this situation would do well keeping in mind the definition of "scholarship" provided by Glassick, Huber, and Maeroff, in *Scholarship Assessed: Evaluation of the Professoriate*: "Scholarship is, in essence, a conversation in which one participates and contributes by knowing what is being discussed and **what others have said on the subject** (our emphasis, 27). Essays that begin and end with personal discovery about teaching, but elide the responsibilities of shared inquiry, undermine scholarship for the sake of self-expression.

The second effect is the "autochthonous," a gesture to Hesiod's *Theogony*, in which a race of men arises full-grown from the ground, lacking a discernible origin. The citation difficulties we identified in Essay X are largely of this kind: in the form of incomplete genealogies which go far, but not far enough. But they can assume other shapes as well. For example (and here we provide an example that is partially made-up), a graduate student is assigned a text to teach and participates in several departmental conversations about the text. He leaves for his first academic position, and writes a book—in many ways a strong and important book—that discusses how the text can be taught. He never refers to the earlier instructional scene, when he was his teachers' student. Nor does he acknowledge an essay about teaching this same text, published in a prominent academic journal in his field several years before the publication of his book. Here is a situation in which a story about teaching a text can be said to have originated in different sites: a graduate school classroom, the professional situation of a newly hired assistant professor, and an academic journal, but only one of these lineages is acknowledged.

There is something about teaching, and consequently writing about teaching, that might encourage careful and meticulous scholars to suspend standards of due diligence. There is something about teaching, something about the dispersion of ideas in the classroom setting itself, that seems to encourage otherwise responsible scholars (those who would never write about Shakespeare or Hesiod without first reviewing the critical literature) to proceed differently: to put aside issues of originality or derivation. So the question now becomes, what motivates these effects? What is the larger problem?

SoTL as "Community Property"

It occurs to us that even those of us who profess the merits of SoTL might contribute, inadvertently, to the problem of "unscholarly" dispersions of teaching; and, we suggest, it might have to do with a misappropriation of the notion of "teaching as community

property." In Essay X, it is obvious that the authors seem to think of their work about writing as a way to help create a larger body of work about writing—a pedagogical archive—that others can draw upon and implement. Isn't that often what the "best teachers" do? Share their practice? Share their wisdom? Isn't this what Lee Shulman encourages university teachers to do with their teaching, both to make it visible, and to break down the walls that isolate one teacher from another? In his essay, "Teaching As Community Property: Putting an End to Pedagogical Solitude," Lee Shulman explains how teaching can become "community property":

> ...scholarship entails an artifact, a product, some form of community property that can be shared, discussed, critiqued, exchanged, built upon. So if pedagogy is to become an important part of scholarship, we have to provide it with this same kind of documentation and transformation (142).

As Shulman suggests above, there is nothing haphazard and facile about the Scholarship of Teaching: it becomes community property only when it is provided with the "same kind of documentation" that other forms of scholarship require. An essay which beings *ex nihilo*, which shares only personal discovery, which exists in the absence of shared inquiry, mitigates against the establishment of scholarly community.

The challenges and the responsibilities of entering and sustaining this pact of community property are remarkable. And here is Shulman again:

> If teaching is going to be community property it must be made visible through artifacts that capture its richness and complexity. In the absence of such artifacts teaching is a bit like dry ice; it disappears at room temperature. You may protest, "But that's so much work!" Notice that we don't question this need to document when it comes to more traditional forms of scholarship. . . . scholarship entails an artifact, a product, some form of community property that can be shared, discussed, critiqued, exchanged, built upon. So, if pedagogy is to become an important part of scholarship, we have to provide it with the same documentation and transformation (142).

Is it possible that SoTL practitioners might be unwittingly contributing to the kinds of problems we registered in Essay X by misappropriating what we take Shulman's "teaching as community property" to mean? That because teaching should be understood as "Community Property," that the standards of publication can be lightened when teaching is its subject? That those standards don't matter as much? Or in the same way? And is it possible that this misunderstanding of teaching bleeds into the scholarly work, shaping and affecting the scholarly artifact that should capture the richness and complexity of teaching? If so, it might be time for us to revisit and re-engage Lee Shulman's impeccable scholarship as a model of our own.

In conclusion we ask, and we invite this community to consider, could the Miranda and the autochthonous moves be the effect of what might reveal itself as an unresolved tension in SoTL between the conventions and demands of "solitary" traditional scholarship and a misunderstanding of the scholarship of teaching and learning as "Community Property"?

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