

“learning”) to students. Additionally, students often find more culturally relevant clips than we do, despite our efforts to stay “hip.”

We also recommend using YouTube clips as presentation requirements for students. Have students assume responsibility for not only finding the video, but introducing it to the class, describing how the clip relates to course content, and discussing its theoretical and real world implications. Offer additional class points if students identify and describe content or theoretical errors in the clip itself. In a YouTube video I once showed to my learning class, college students had staged a Pavlovian conditioning demonstration. Although the video was entertaining, the video actors actually confused conditional and unconditional stimuli in their demonstration description. Instructing students to find such errors enhances their critical thinking with regard to the subject matter.

### Future Implications

#### Audience

This technique works for all class sizes, academic levels, and course disciplines. To modify the activity with larger class

sizes, request video clips from only 5-10 members in the class at a time.

#### Tools

Access to a “smart” classroom with internet access and the technology to show web-based video clips.

#### Implementation

Implementation time requires reading a few emails from students and clicking on a few links to watch clips, which is far more time efficient than looking them up ourselves.

#### Outcomes/Assessment

We have not formally assessed the use of this technique, but students report that this activity directly contributed to their learning in course evaluation feedback.

#### Modifications

In an on-line or hybrid class, this activity should work equally well.

*(Thanks to Todd Zakrajsek at UNC for the initial idea for this tip).*

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## “READING IN CONTEXT” FOR NETWORKED ENGAGEMENT WITH COURSE READINGS

DANIEL T. HICKEY

INDIANA UNIVERSITY BLOOMINGTON

*Keywords: reading, online assignments, discussion forums*

### Framework

“Reading in Context” is a networked instructional activity. I have been using it to help graduate students efficiently learn to (a) locate, interpret, and critique personally relevant articles, (b) uncover the ultimate meaning of those articles and assigned core articles as they have been taken up in the literature more broadly, and (c) learn the subtle nuances of scholarly referencing. These proficiencies are crucial for graduate students but difficult to foster in classroom contexts. They require extensive individualized guidance from someone with deep knowledge of the relevant literature. Some graduate students never really appreciate how the broadening meaning of a specific article ultimately resides in the way it is taken up and interpreted in the broader literature (Rose, 1996); this challenge is heightened within digitally networked scholarship (Ingraham, 2000). As such, many students don’t appreciate the broader meaning of core readings, or even see how they came to be “core” in the first place (Diezmann, 2005). Many don’t tackle the nuances of referencing (such as the appropriate use of e.g., i.e., and c.f.) in their own writing until they get to their

thesis or dissertation (Cafarella & Barnett, 2000). This is laborious for advisors and aggravating for committee members. Worse still, some graduate complete their studies with culminating papers that knowledgeable editors or search committee members dismiss outright because of sloppy referencing.

### Making it Work

This activity uses tools that are free (Google Scholar), open-source (the Zotero referencing plugin for the Firefox browser), and available in most course management platforms online teaching resources (e.g. wikis and discussion forums). Students first locate and critique personally-relevant articles that reference a core article. Students then use networking tools to collaboratively identify which of the articles are “more appropriate” and “less appropriate” references to the core article. By searching for references that are relevant to their specific interests, students see how the core article has been being taken up by others, and expand their knowledge of the relevant research literature. Critiquing the range of references naturally reveals subtle nuances of this crucial scholarly practice.

I developed and refined this activity in the context of two courses in Cognition and Instruction in a graduate school of education. I use a more modest version in an online introductory course. Students use Google Scholar to locate professionally-relevant articles that reference a widely-cited core article. They then examine how the core article was referenced, as well as the broader arguments in the referencing article. The specific assignment has them locate at least one “more appropriate” reference and at least one “less appropriate” reference. Students then post their references and their observations to their wikifolio for that week for discussion (Figure 1.3). I provide feedback and support discussion with classmates via public comments posted directly to the wikifolios (Figure 1.4). A discussion forum is used to identify the “most appropriate” and the “least appropriate” reference. Students complete the activity by reflecting on three types of engagement (*consequential*, *critical*, and *collaborative*). Points are awarded based on evidence of learning in the reflections; the actual content of the assignment is not formally graded. The activity is quite ambitious for MEd students in an introductory course. Nonetheless, every student was able to complete it successfully in the most recent course. The reflections showed convincing evidence of disciplinary engagement with the core article and referencing articles, and a developing appreciation of the nuances and pitfalls of scholarly referencing.

In the more advanced hybrid course, I had students complete the activity with each of the core articles that comprise the course reading. Students are shown how to use Zotero and a shared Zotero database that was set up for the course (Figure 1.5). For each of the core articles, students locate and cite referring articles that are themselves widely cited and relevant to their specific sub-interest. They then save PDF’s of the articles in which they comment on whether or not the authors have referred to the core article appropriately, and then discuss those comments (Figure 1.6). Students are specifically encouraged to search for articles that (a) misrepresent the point of the core article, (b) use the core article to warrant arguments that the core article does not actually support, and (c) use inappropriate referencing abbreviations. When the class meets, the culminating activity is identifying the most appropriate and least appropriate reference to the core article. Compared to previous classes with similar students, literature review papers completed for the most recent course showed referencing that was more ambitious and more precise. Compared to previous classes, the instructor feedback and individual discussions of papers were able to delve more immediately into the substantive issues in the paper, without having to also identify and explain referencing errors.

**Reading in Context Wiki**

**Least Appropriate Reference**

After reviewing the following article called An Investigation on Experienced Teachers’ Knowledge and Perceptions of Instructional Theories and Practices by Leping Liu, I feel that the author did not correctly inform the audience of Brown and Adler’s view on learning. In the article listed above, the author states different instructional strategies used by teachers. For Brown and Adler the author stated “open education” as an instructional strategy used. I do not feel this use of terminology really portrays the fact that Brown and Adler view that students learn best by learning and collaborating with each other through various forms of discourse: in person, blogs, wikis, facebook, etc. In fact, when I looked up what “open education” means it said that there are no admission requirements for higher education and should not be confused with open educational resources. This is far from what Brown and Adler wrote about in their article, which in fact talked about open educational resources. Lastly, the article talks about Web 2.0 and integrating the use of technology into the classroom as a means of learning, and doesn’t even cite Brown and Adler. Therefore, the article doesn’t portray Brown and Adler to their fullest beliefs and ideas about educating students of today.

Here is the link to the article (access on campus): [\\*http://pdfserve.informaworld.com/338405\\_731200576\\_919333832.pdf](http://pdfserve.informaworld.com/338405_731200576_919333832.pdf)

**More Appropriate Reference**

After viewing a few different articles, one of the articles that I felt referenced Brown and Adler most accurately was an article written by Rick Kopak called Open Access and the Open Journal Systems: Making Sense All Over. This article did a great job of explaining how many individuals are learning through Open Educational Resources, such as journals, which was highly stressed throughout Brown and Adler’s article. Brown and Adler made note that due to the vast amount of career changes this mode of learning is ultimately needed because there is not enough time to return to school for every new experience. Thus, the article stressed the importance of making more journals available via the internet to further this growth. Another important component that this article stated that relates to Brown and Adler’s beliefs is that there is a growing need for “demand-pull” rather than supply-push”. By making more articles available via the internet, students could access information and collaborate with others who are interested in the same ideas. Kopak even used a specific quote from Brown and Adler’s article to support his claim.

Here is the link to the article (access on campus): [\\*http://asselindoiron.pbworks.com/f/14\\_2kopak.pdf](http://asselindoiron.pbworks.com/f/14_2kopak.pdf)

**Conclusion:**

After reviewing a few articles, it seems like articles related to higher education tend to incorporate the ideas of Brown and Adler more accurately; whereas, articles written related to elementary education do not seem to have a good understanding of Brown and Adler’s view point. Therefore, it is important that elementary educators and researchers get on board with the important ideas presented by Brown and Adler because younger students can learn as well through social interaction with their peers and the teacher.

Figure 1.3. Example of “Less Appropriate” and “More Appropriate” references to core article (i.e., Brown and Adler’s 2007 Minds on Fire).

## Future Implications

So far, I have learned that shared public and persistent discourse allows struggling students to learn from the posting and discussions of their classmates, while substantially reducing instructor workload. Providing detailed feedback on early posts allows the instructor to simply reference those examples when providing feedback to others. The focus on personally relevant articles and the grading of reflections seem to have eliminated the risk of plagiarism. All of the students in the introductory course engaged with articles and referencing practices that were heretofore only attempted in the advanced course. And all of the students in the advanced course developed referencing skills that previously had required intensive review of course papers and one-on-one feedback.

A near term goal for both of these courses is the incorporation of social bookmarking tools (e.g., Digg). Another near term goal for both courses is creating a challenging set of items for the course exam that will efficiently provide valid

evidence of the understanding that each student takes away from the activity. These items will support the long term goal of iteratively refining the feature of the activity each year, documenting the consequences of those refinements, and convincing more instructors to attempt it.

## References

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Daniel Thomas Hickey (2010-12-09 00:05:25.0) [Comment](#) | [Edit](#)

Wow, great insights and nicely articulated. I am glad that you did enough background work to give you the insights and confidence to make a broad conclusion like this. The difference between elementary contexts and post secondary contexts are vast and will never go away, but your conclusions point to the need to consider the differences.

C... (2010-12-11 16:05:54.0) [Comment](#) | [Edit](#)

First... thank you for your comments on my posts. In regards to your assignment I really loved your insight. You really drew some awesome conclusions about the articles you were exposed to for the assignment beyond the basics of how the article was cited. I think a big point I took away from the original article was the importance of this new type of learning environment because of the quickly evolving world and workplace. Your more appropriate citation you say "Brown and Adler made note that due to the vast amount of career change this mode of learning is ultimately needed because there is not enough time to return to school for every new experience" and the need for "demand-pull" rather than "supply-push" perspective. This is a really important aspect of the application of the goals of "Minds on Fire". How do you think the ideas you discovered about higher education use can be transferred or used in a high school or younger? I agree that it is important to address social learning with all ages...but how can we promote more people getting "on board"? Overall, awesome insight and great choices.

... (2010-12-12 11:37:33.0) [Comment](#) | [Edit](#)

I think that more workshops need to be provided to inservice teachers. I know when I was teaching, we didn't have people coming in to give us professional development. I think we need to create organizations willing to do this kind of work in order to keep teachers up to date. Teaching takes a lot of work to begin with and I know teachers are not finding the time to look up best practices on their own time.

Figure 1.4. Example of instructor and peer commenting on post.

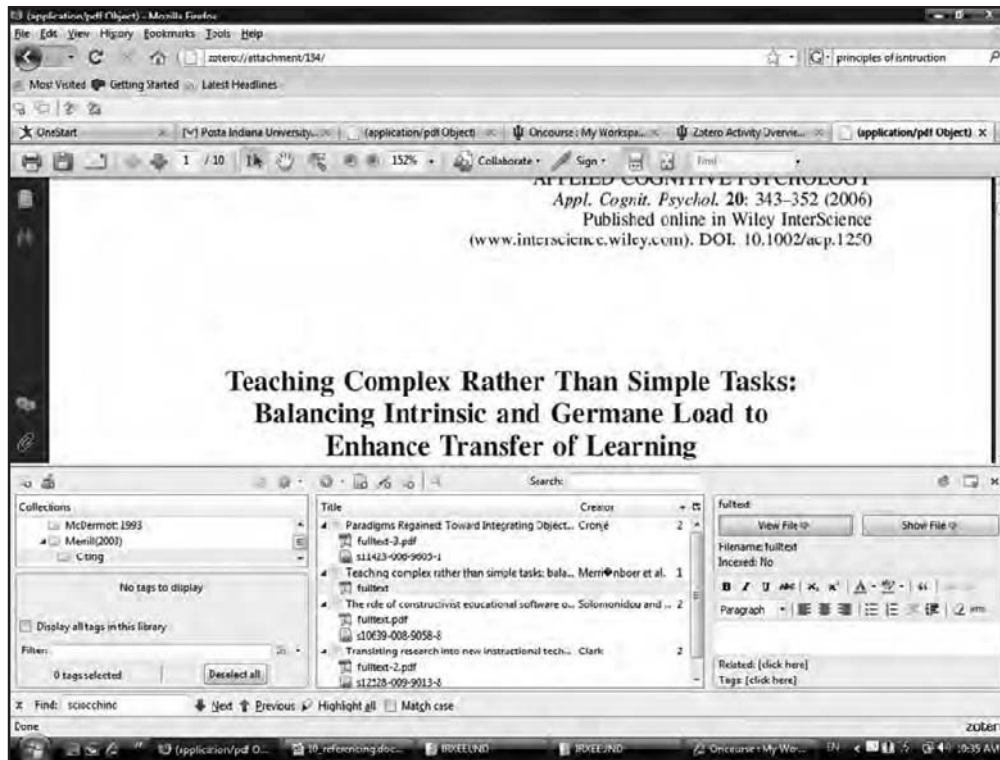


Figure 1.5. Articles referencing core articles in shared Zotero database in advanced course.

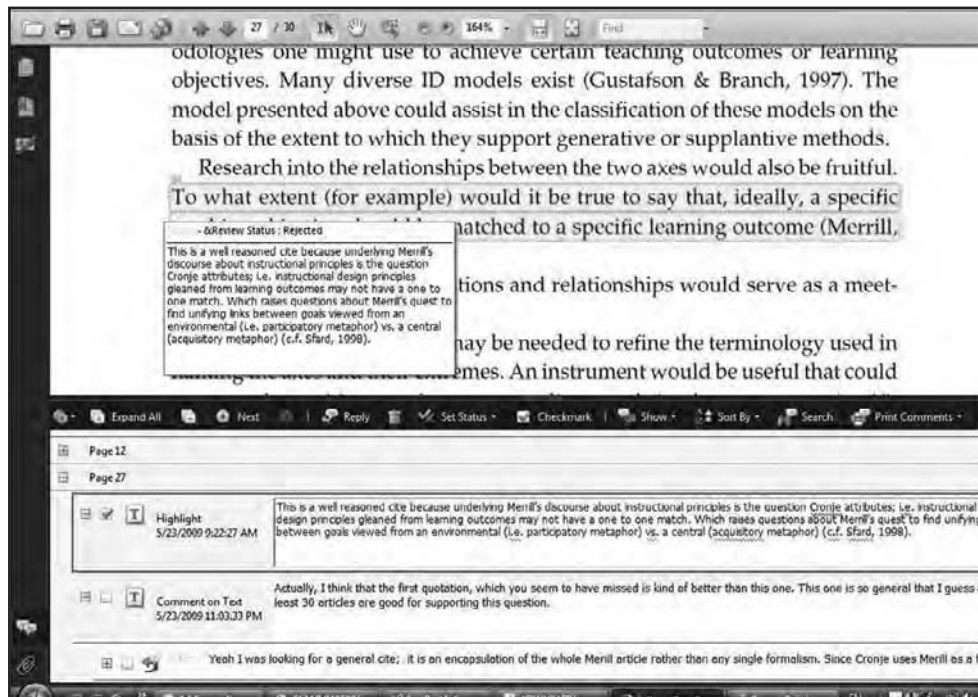


Figure 1.6. Embedded discussion of references to core articles in advanced course.