Incorporating the ideas and words of others in your academic writing

By Madeline Walker

Crowded by the literature; drowning in detail

- According to Belsey (2002:57), Jacques Lacan reinterpreted Freud in the light of Lévi-Strauss and Saussure – 'to delineate a subject was itself the location of a difference'. Belsey goes on to explain that, for Lacan, the human being is 'an organism in culture'. According to Lacan, speech was central to psycho-analytic practice. He argued that during the first two months of life a child's emergent sense of self was formed in relation to subjects, capable of signifying. Lacan calls this the 'Otherness of language'. 'The big other', states Belsey, 'is there before we are, exists outside us and does not belong to us'. The early writing of Barthes, says Norris (1982:8), was aimed at a full-scale science of the text, modelled on the linguistics of Saussure and the structural anthropology of Lévi-Strauss. In *Elements of Semiology* (1967), Barthes takes the view of structuralism as a kind of 'mastercode' capable of providing higher-level understanding. Culler (1976:58) states that Barthes, in *Elements of Semiology*, speculated upon the ways in which 'langue and parole', 'signifier and signified', 'syntagmatic and paradigmatic' might apply to various non-linguistic phenomena. Culler goes on to say that, for a semiologist studying the food system of a culture, 'parole' is all the events of eating, whereas 'langue' is the system of rules that underlies all these events. These would define, for example, what is edible, which dishes would be combined to create a meal and the conventions governing the syntactic ordering of items. (p. 30)

Invisible scholar: he said/ she said

- Mortimore (1998) also contributes to the school effectiveness research agenda. He explains that school effectiveness researchers aim to ascertain whether differential resources, processes and organizational differences affect student performance and if so, how. He is also of the view that school effectiveness researchers seek reliable and appropriate ways to measure school quality. Hopkins (2001) suggests that one of the earliest studies that was done compared the effectiveness of some secondary schools on a range of student outcome measures. Reynolds and Cuttance (1992) also point out that the effective schools research entitled 'Fifteen Thousand Hours' characterised school efficiency factors as varied in the degree of academic emphasis, teacher's action in lessons, the availability of resources, rewards, good conditions for pupils and the extent to which children were able to take responsibility. It was emphasized that effective school researchers claim that there are significant differences between schools on a number of different student outcomes after full account has been taken of students' previous learning history and family background. Hargreaves and Hopkins (1991) also endorse the view by stating that there is evidence to support the argument that the characteristics of individual schools can make a difference to pupils' progress since certain internal conditions are common in schools that achieve higher levels of outcomes for their students. (pp. 30-31)

Hands on hips – using the literature

- Kamler and Thomson encourage student writers to take a stance

- Don't let the literature use you – don't be a passive onlooker – USE the literature in the service of your argument -

Adopting a critical yet respectful stance

- Being critical involves making a number of judgments and decisions about which literatures to engage with, and which to ignore, which aspects of texts to stress and which to omit or downplay. Adopting a critical stance to a text means paying attention to: definitions; underpinning assumptions; theoretical resources mobilized; epistemology and methodology; method (who, what, where, how); and findings. These perspectives can be brought together to establish points of similarity and points of difference. It is through such focused interrogation and intertextual work that students come to identify major debates in the field. (p. 40)

In charge of the literature

- The question of whether senior bureaucrats play an active role in policy development or if their influence is more limited, even an impediment to the will of elected ministers, is contested. There seems to be a pervasive view that ministers set the policy agenda of government with the bureaucracy represented as a 'necessary evil' for enacting policy. Meanwhile, there is literature that positions the bureaucracy more favourably, even suggesting a more authoritative role in policy development. But, there appears to be no concurrence on the extent of involvement. While many scholars agree that bureaucrats, either actively or tacitly, do play an important role in policy development, it is safe to say that this does not represent the consensus view (Levin, 2002; Stone, 2002; Birkland, 2001; Lynn, 1996; Majone, 1989; Goodsell,1985).

In charge, cont'd

- The casting of politicians as policy leaders assumes that a public servant, senior or otherwise, is a 'servant' to the public, but more to the point, a servant to the minister. Some see senior public servants as instruments of political processes but with a severely limited role in policy formulation (Wilson, 1999). This theoretical orientation is consistent with new corporate management ideologies that are believed to foster a stronger separation between public administration and politics but, as I will argue, do more to motivate bureaucrats to seek a more direct role in government policy. As Cohn (1997) suggests, under such arrangements ministers rely on deputies and other senior administrators to provide direction and advice on policy, but the actual decisions are made at a political level. In framing policy development in this way, there is some recognition of the role of the permanent public service, to be sure, but it is one of implementation, stopping short of policy formulation.

What's different

- What are some ways this example is different from the previous two?

Start small – think big

- All examples from **Helping Doctoral Students Write: Pedagogies for Supervision**
- Written By: Thomson, Pat; Kamler, Barbara
- Thus – for PhD students/ supervisors
- Start small by summarizing – get big picture of the debates and connections between articles
- Use help from Wiki or other sources to fill in background (though can't be used as source)
- *Use* the literature with your own argument/ ideas/ voice as central—what do you think? What is your position?

Final tips

- Quote sparingly (max 10% of word count)
- Select only key, relevant quotations and then contextualize and comment on them (how do they fit your argument)?
- Paraphrase rather than quote: Understand what you are reading and put into your own words
- Remember that your argument and voice comprise the glue that holds it all together