They say, I say

Approximate time required: Reading time + 10 min

Purpose/function: The following exercise helps students to enter academic discourse by citing a statement from the source text and adding their own stance to the citation. Students are asked to select interesting claims in the source text, paraphrase these claims and add a personal comment that could agree with the original statement, contradict it or limit its validity.

Material needed:

- Various source texts, each with varying lengths
- Handout with verbs for academic discourse

Instructions:

1. Choose one of the envelopes and read the text.
2. After reading the text, pick a few statements from the text and add your own perspective to them. You can use the following examples (from Graff/Birkenstein 2007) to help you:
    a. She argues..., and I agree because...
    b. He claims that ..., and I have mixed feelings about it.
    c. On the one hand, I agree that .... On the other hand, I still insist that ...
3. Repeat the task two more times.

Sources consulted to develop the activity:

Graff Gerald/Birkenstein, Cathy (2007): They Say / I Say: The Moves that Matter in Persuasive Writing. Illustrated reprint. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.

Text 1 (Station: They say, I say)

"Does Qualifying For The World Cup Make Countries More Nationalistic And Aggressive?"

Author: Travis Waldron

It's not exactly a secret that international soccer brings out nationalist tendencies in people. The English have a unique talent for putting this nationalism on display. A popular English chant when they play Germany — "One World Cup and two World Wars, doo dah, doo dah" — reminds the Germans of English superiority both on the pitch and on the battlefield. Another chanted at Argentina during the World Cup a decade ago — "Where is your navy? At the bottom of the sea!" — reminds the Argentinians of the destruction of the Falklands War. I don't mean to slander the English, because it isn't just them. It's just that they have seemingly mastered both chanting and nationalism when it comes to their beloved and often beleaguered national football team.

But plenty of studies have measured the increased nationalism that occurs during international sporting events. Now, Cal-Berkeley Ph.D. student Andrew Bertoli has found that the increased nationalism in countries that qualify for the World Cup leads to a marked uptick in nationalistic aggression. As Bertoli details in a new working paper flagged by The Monkey Cage, teams that barely qualified for the World Cup showed larger increases in nationalism and took more aggressive military actions in the three years following qualification than did teams that failed to qualify:

Not only did those countries take more military actions, their actions "tended to be more violent," Bertoli found. And they also happened more in non-democratic countries, which experienced larger boosts in nationalistic aggression following these events than their democratic counterparts even when the Soviet Union was removed from the equation.

I tend to believe that nationalism induced by sports is a good thing when it's constrained, a way for people to channel pride in their country toward a positive outcome like a World Cup victory as opposed to a negative one like war. We already know that nationalism around sporting events can produce positive social ends — studies have shown that hosting or succeeding in the World Cup can have positive effects on happiness and public health. But even though I'd like to see more research on the issue, Bertoli's findings seem rather intuitive, and it's worth remembering that nationalism induced by sports or anything else is often easily exploited in a way that can have damaging effects both inside our own societies and on other societies too.

It's impossible remove all of the nationalist feelings that surround sports — think, for a second, about the possibility of a Brazil-Portugal match in Sao Paulo at the 2014 World Cup — and we shouldn't want to. But perhaps instead of thinking of sports as a proxy for the real wars we fight, we might benefit from looking at them simply as separate battles for a different sort of superiority. It's perfectly fine when two countries choose to hate each other on the field, as long as they realize that it doesn't mean they have to hate each other, or fight each other, off of it too.

Travis Waldron (19.07.2013): Does Qualifying For The World Cup Make Countries More Nationalistic And Aggressive? http://thinkprogress.org/sports/2013/07/19/2328641/does-world-cup-nationalism-make-countries-more-aggressive/ (last accessed on 16.06.2014).

Text 2 (Station They say, I say)

"Writing With Teachers: A Conversation with Peter Elbow"

Author: David Bartholomae

[...]

I want to argue that academic writing is the real work of the academy. Ialso want to argue for academic writing as a key term in the study ofwriting and the practice of instruction. In fact, I want to argue that if youare teaching courses in the university, courses where students write underyour supervision, they can't not do it and you can't not stand for it(academic writing, that is) and, therefore, it is better that it be done out inthe open, where questions can be asked and responsibilities assumed, thanto be done in hiding or under another name.To say this another way, there is no writing that is writing withoutteachers. I think I would state this as a general truth, but for today let mesay that there is no writing done in the academy that is not academicwriting. To hide the teacher is to hide the traces of power, tradition andauthority present at the scene of writing (present in allusions to previouswork, in necessary work with sources, in collaboration with powerfultheories and figures, in footnotes and quotations and the messy businessof doing your work in the shadow of others). Thinking of writing asacademic writing makes us think of the page as crowded with others-orit says that this is what we learn in school, that our writing is not our own,nor are the stories we tell when we tell the stories of our lives-they belongto TV, to Books, to Culture and History.

To offer academic writing as something else is to keep this knowledgefrom our students, to keep them from confronting the power politics ofdiscursive practice, or to keep them from confronting the particular representationsof power, tradition and authority reproduced whenever onewrites.

Now-I say this as though it were obvious. Students write in a spacedefined by all the writing that has preceded them, writing the academyinsistently draws together: in the library, in the reading list, in the curriculum.This is the busy, noisy, intertextual space-one usually hidden in ourrepresentations of the classroom; one that becomes a subject in the classroomwhen we ask young writers to think about, or better yet, confront,their situatedness.

And yet, it is also obvious that there are many classrooms wherestudents are asked to imagine that they can clear out a space to write ontheir own, to express their own thoughts and ideas, not to reproduce thoseof others. As I think this argument through, I think of the pure and openspace, the frontier classroom, as a figure central to composition as it iscurrently constructed. The open classroom; a free writing. This is themaster trope. And, I would say, it is an expression of a desire for aninstitutional space free from institutional pressures, a cultural process freefrom the influence of culture, an historical moment outside of history, anacademic setting free from academic writing.

[...]

Bartholomae, David: Writing with Teachers: A Conversation with Peter Elbow. College Composition and Communication, Vol. 46, No. 1 (Feb., 1995).62-71. http://www.jstor.org/stable/358870(last accessed on 16.06.2014).

Text 3 (Station They say, I say)

"The Myth of Assessment"

Author: Pat Belanoff

There are four myths of assessment. The first is that we know what we're testing for. Tests assume, falsely, that we can judge when writing is good enough for some purpose, to satisfy a requirement or to graduate, and they assume that we know what constitutes improvement. The second myth is that we know what we are testing. We cannot test ability, though: we simply judge the quality of a hastily written product, the result of a meaningless task, without reference to the writer at all. The third is that we agree both on criteria and on whether individual papers meet the criteria. But because texts do not contain meaning, readers inevitably differ about whether abstract criteria have been met. The final myth is that there is a standard of good writing that can be applied uniformly, an obvious misapprehension. Even communal portfolio assessment does not eliminate differences in judgment, but, by promoting discussion of teaching and criteria, it improves teaching, and, moreover, appears to be the best way to approach consensus.

Belanoff, Pat (1991): The Myth of Assessment. Journal of Basic Writing Vol. 10.54-66.http://bb.bedfordstmartins.com/content/myth-assessment#sthash.0QzsPM4w.dpuf (18.06.14).