RHETORICAL GRAMMAR: A VISION FOR RESEARCH-BASED GRAMMAR INITIATIVES TO BRIDGE THE GAP BETWEEN SECONDARY AND COLLEGE WRITING INSTRUCTION

by

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Abstract

Chapter 1

Introduction and Overview: Grammar Scholarship 1960s-Today

1.1 Introduction

Grammar instruction is often a polarizing conversation topic: Teachers and scholars tend to have a binary interpretation of it, viewing the teaching of grammar as either good or bad, useful or meaningless, a site for writing improvement or a distraction from "good" writing. The dichotomous opinions of grammar instruction have a foundation in the study of writing—as seen in publications such as *Research in Written Composition*—and, unfortunately, have left little room for the possibility of reconceptualizing the study of grammar in secondary education. Despite the contentious topic of grammar instruction and its place in English classes, this thesis attempts to redefine grammar, using Martha Kolln's idea of rhetorical grammar, and to advocate for its use in secondary education as a way of bridging the gap between high school and college writing instruction. I promote an epistemic view of grammar that reveals its use as a heuristic for writing and invention.

This first chapter provides background information on grammar instruction and grammar pedagogy, reviewing existing research from scholars in education and in rhetoric and composition and dispelling some common myths about grammar instruction and its ability to enhance student writing. I synthesize and analyze research from a combination of rhetoric and composition scholars, such as Kolln, Laura Micciche, and Robert Connors, and from education scholars, including Deborah Dean, Sylvia Read, and Lynn Sams. Tracing the trends in grammar instruction from the 1960s—when direct grammar instruction went out of fashion—to the present time in which scholars have begun to redefine and modify their definitions of grammar

instruction, illuminates new approaches to the study and teaching of grammar. Drawing from a range of scholars and fields allows me to investigate grammar instruction and pedagogy from several sides to see whether grammar, specifically rhetorical grammar, has a place in secondary education.

In what follows, I define the terms of this study and address the grammar debate and opposition to grammar instruction. These introductory elements provide context for the focus of this chapter in which I provide a thematic organization of scholarship to highlight trends in grammar and writing instruction that suggest potential grammar pedagogies for secondary education. The scholarship discussed in this chapter addresses the use of grammar in both college and high school settings; however, I will interpret all of the research through the lens of secondary education, looking specifically at the use of rhetorical grammar as a way of preparing students for college-level writing. The four themes are 1) error and correctness; 2) the role of grammar in writing curriculum; 3) a pedagogy of rhetorical grammar; 4) and delving into rhetorical grammar. The last two sections both point toward rhetorical grammar, with the pedagogical suggestions making room for the successful teaching of rhetorical grammar. I begin with error and correctness to explain the type of grammar instruction that has proven to be effective and to expose the idea that an emphasis on error (in teaching and evaluation) detracts from productive grammar and writing instruction. A move away from error and correctness in the curriculum leads to the question of where grammar instruction belongs if it is not solely the domain of editing and teacher comments. From here, I discuss scholarship that points to alternative pedagogies of grammar and offers tools for and insight on contextualizing grammar instruction in writing. Finally, I bring together

research on rhetorical grammar, specifically discussing Kolln's work and the work of scholars who have expanded on her ideas.

1.2 Terminology

Throughout this thesis, I will be using the terms *grammar*, *formal grammar*, and *rhetorical grammar* to characterize the approaches to language study. Before addressing the research and aligning my position with rhetorical grammar, I must first define these terms. Grammar has been used and defined in many ways, but its most general definition is the system or structure of a language. While this definition reminds us that a grammar is simply a way of understanding the syntax and function of a language, the term grammar is often associated with grammar instruction or a set of grammar rules. Because grammars change as a language evolves, we often include additional considerations in our discussion of grammar, including usage, punctuation, and syntax. However, it is important to remember that grammar and usage are not the same: Unlike grammar, usage comes from the culturally accepted habits of language and continually evolves to shape how we communicate. Put simply, grammar refers to the function of words while usage deals with the application of combining words for communication. Usage tends to lead to conversations of correctness, and over time, has resulted in Standard English versus vernacular English(es). Formal grammar—the teaching of a strict set of grammar and usage rules according to Standard English—attempts to standardize the English language through a prescriptive approach to grammar. In essence, formal grammar, generally taught from a textbook, provides lessons in parts of speech, punctuation, and proper usage in the hopes that students will internalize the rules of grammar and apply those rules correctly in their writing.

However, formal grammar is typically taught in isolation from writing, and transfer is not directly encouraged.

Unlike formal grammar, rhetorical grammar attempts to situate grammar instruction within the context of writing, continually reminding students of the audience, purpose, and context to ensure that the grammatical choices students make send the intended message. As Kolln defines it, rhetorical grammar means "understanding the grammatical choices available to you when you write and the rhetorical effects those choices will have on your reader" (*Rhetorical Grammar* 3). In this thesis, I extend Kolln's definition to include the use of rhetorical grammar as a heuristic for invention in which students use sentence-level analysis and tools of rhetorical grammar as an aid for writing, revising, and editing.

1.3 Opposition to Grammar Instruction

Beginning in the 1960s, scholars published research that found the teaching of formal grammar ineffective for the improvement of student writing.[1] The findings reported in these early studies have been widely circulated and are often taken out of context to perpetuate negative opinions about the effectiveness and utility of grammar instruction. Despite recent scholarship on innovative approaches to grammar instruction and pedagogy, opponents have carried over negative views of the teaching of grammar from outdated research, making it difficult for the new scholarship to stake its claim in the fields of education and rhetoric and composition. While conversations about grammar instruction and pedagogy continue today, the debate has shifted away from *whether* to teach grammar to *how best* to teach grammar. However, the opponent

[1] See Braddock et al. pages 37-38, "The teaching of formal grammar has a negligible or, because it usually displaces some instruction and practice in actual composition, even a harmful effect on the improvement of writing" and Elley et al. page 17, "The results presented show that the effects of such grammar study are negligible."

choice to ignore newer research and to promote a unilateral view of grammar undermines the possibility of different approaches to grammar instruction and perpetuates the grammar debate in a dichotomous form. This chapter attempts to correct a few misconceptions about grammar instruction by synthesizing scholarship that provides a more complete view of grammar study and that supports grammar taught in the context of writing.

Given the history of the grammar debate and the continued confusion over how to teach grammar, understanding the scholarship on formal grammar—specifically the studies that proclaim the negative effects of grammar on student writing—allows readers to understand what newer scholarship is arguing against. According to Debra Myhill and Annabel Watson, both education scholars, grammar lost its place in the curriculum following the Dartmouth Conference in 1966 (42). Myhill and Watson claim that "the conference was prompted by growing dissatisfaction with classroom practice in grammar teaching" and that "the general consensus was that grammar teaching was 'a waste of time'" (42). However, Kolln, a grammar scholar and professor of rhetoric and composition, argues that the "negative attitudes toward grammar" expressed at the 1966 conference and again in 1973 by Frank O'Hare and in 1981 by Peter Elbow "came to be the prevailing, if not the official, policy of our profession back in 1963 with the publication of *Research in Written Composition* by Richard Braddock, Richard Lloyd-Jones, and Lowell Schoer" ("Rhetorical Grammar" 26). In their study, Braddock et al. set out to provide conclusive research about the teaching and learning of composition, including the use of grammar as a tool for improving writing. Kolln goes on to state that "one sentence in that NCTE report succeeded in changing the direction of language study" ("Rhetorical Grammar" 26). In "Rhetorical Grammar: A Modification Lesson,"

she calls that sentence the "harmful effect" statement, quoting the Braddock study as saying, "The teaching of formal grammar has a negligible or, because it usually displaces some instruction and practice in composition, even a *harmful effect* on the improvement of writing" (Kolln 27, emphasis added). This statement effectively changed scholars' view of grammar instruction by promoting the idea that teaching grammar was actually doing a disservice to students. For years after the report was published, the field of rhetoric and composition spoke negatively about grammar and worked to decrease grammar's place in the study of writing.

Reinforcing the negative view of grammar instruction, in 1976, W. B. Elley et al. published "The Role of Grammar in a Secondary School English Curriculum," in which they review several types of grammar programs to determine whether grammar provides benefits for student writing. The Elley Study has become one of the foundational articles that denounces the use of grammar instruction in high school because Elley et al. claim that the effects of "grammar study are negligible" (17). Further, the authors assert, "It is difficult to escape the conclusion that English grammar, whether traditional or transformational,[2] has virtually no influence on the language growth of typical secondary school students" (Elley et al. 18). In addition to deeming the effects of grammar study negligible, Elley et al. declare, "It seems that grammar has no practical benefits in an absolute sense. And we cannot ignore the negative feelings that grammar students showed at the end of the experiment" (20). This study propagated the negative opinions toward grammar, as scholars increasingly believed that not only would grammar instruction decrease their students' writing ability but would also make the students miserable in the process.

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[2] For more about the transformational approach to grammar see Noam Chomsky's *Syntactic Structures*.

Twenty years after the Dartmouth Conference, George Hillocks, Jr. published an updated report titled *Research on Written Composition: New Directions for Teaching* in which he, according to Kolln, "omits from his summaries the possibility of teaching any description of grammar other than the traditional variety" ("Rhetorical Grammar" 28). Hillocks argues that "none of the studies reviewed for the present report provides any support for teaching grammar as a means of improving composition skills" (qtd. in "Rhetorical Grammar" 28). Further, Hillocks admonishes that if teachers insist on teaching formal grammar, "they cannot defend it as a means of improving the quality of writing" (qtd in "Rhetorical Grammar" 28). While Hillocks—as well as Braddock et al. and Elley et al.— wrote only about formal grammar, the harsh language leads readers to generalize his comments to all forms of grammar, effectively obscuring possible benefits of other types of grammar and scaring teachers away from grammar instruction altogether. The Braddock, Elley, and Hillocks reports became the prevailing position on grammar instruction, and instructors who wanted to teach grammar had to overcome the negative stereotypes promoted in these foundational studies.

While these negative reports only discuss the lack of transfer from formal grammar to improvement in writing, the comments about negligible and harmful effects pervaded scholars' and teachers' opinions of grammar instruction, and grammar became a contested area within secondary writing curriculum for over twenty years. For several decades after the 1963 publication of *Research in Written Composition*, scholars and teachers denounced grammar instruction and removed the study of grammar from the classroom, convinced that grammar did not contribute to successful writing. However, several scholars took up the proponent side of the grammar debate in the years following the widely discussed report, asserting that grammar *is* a necessary part

of successful writing curriculum (as discussed in more detail later).[3] As the grammar debate raged on, scholars began to consider the possibility of nontraditional approaches to grammar instruction that might help students become proficient writers. Kolln identifies the first signs of change at the 1994 NCTE Convention in Orlando when the Council resolved "that the National Council of Teachers of English appoint a committee or task force to explore effective ways of integrating language awareness into classroom instruction" ("Rhetorical Grammar" 30). Following the professional shift in attitudes toward grammar instruction and language awareness in the early 1990s, scholars began to modify grammar to include functional and rhetorical components.

As scholars shift toward new forms of grammar instruction and advocate for grammar's use in secondary education, many current publications address the research of the 1960s and 1970s, positioning favorable opinions in opposition to the negative proclamations in these familiar texts. These overviews of scholarship tend to point out flaws in previous research as a way of supporting the author's argument in favor of grammar rather than illuminating all of the benefits of grammar instruction as discussed by scholars who study alternative forms of grammar.[4] For example, Debra Myhill et al. acknowledge the negative findings about grammar instruction before asserting, "There have been no large-scale studies that investigated the benefit of creating an integration of writing and grammar" (103). While disagreeing with research from the 1960s has effectively placed rhetorical grammar in opposition to formal grammar, it does not convey the bountiful research in support of grammar instruction

[3] See "A Generative Rhetoric of the Sentence" by Francis Christensen, "If the new grammar is to be brought to bear on composition, it must be brought to bear on the rhetoric of the sentence" (155), "Teaching Grammar to Writers" by Janice Neuleib and Irene Brosnahan, "when writers learn grammar, as opposed to teachers merely 'covering' it, the newly acquired knowledge contributes to writing ability" (29), and *Errors and Expectations* by Mina Shaughnessy Chapter 1.

[4] See "Mechanical Correctness as a Focus in Composition Instruction" by Robert J. Connors pages 62-65, "The role of grammar in the writing curriculum: A review of the literature" by Debra Myhill and Annabel Watson pages 42-44, and "Rhetorical Grammar: A Modification Lesson" by Martha Kolln pages 25-28.

as a tool for improving writing and for empowering students. Therefore, the rest of this chapter will not defend against the scholarship that denounces grammar instruction. Rather, I will synthesize scholarship that puts forth successful theories and practices for grammar instruction to highlight the trend toward rhetorical grammar, beginning with how to address error and correctness in a way that encourages the study of grammar.

1.4 Error and Correctness

A key component of the grammar debate resides in the question of how to deal with errors in student writing. Many opponents to the teaching of grammar claim that emphasizing grammar rules and focusing on error prevents students from improving as writers because students avoid taking risks in their writing in favor of error-free prose. Supporters of grammar instruction do not argue this fact, and in 1977, Mina Shaughnessy gave scholars and teachers a new framework for understanding error in student writing through her book, *Errors and expectations: A guide for the teacher of basic writing*. As the title implies, Shaughnessy's landmark book was written as a guidebook for teachers of writing to explain student writing in a way that embraces error and promotes writing growth through language exploration. Rather than lamenting problems that continue to plague student writers, Shaughnessy addresses typical sources of error by investigating the underlying causes and illuminating the root of several common writing problems. Shaughnessy attempts to "understand the logic of [basic writers'] mistakes in order to determine at what point or points along the developmental path error should or can become a subject for instruction" (13). The key is to identify major problems without allowing correctness to take over the writing classroom.

In an effort to move away from formal grammar, Shaughnessy broadens the scope of error beyond the sentence to investigate error at every stage and level of writing, reminding teachers that error is a widespread problem in student writing and cannot be treated unilaterally. Importantly, Shaughnessy believes that basic writers "write the way they do, not because they are slow or non-verbal, indifferent to or incapable of academic excellence, but because they are beginners and must, like all beginners, learn by making mistakes" (5). Similarly, Darren Crovitz argues that errors actually reveal "students grappling with meaning rather than simply being careless or stupid" (32). Therefore, mistakes are seen and discussed as a point of entry into writing instruction, not as the object of elimination, emphasizing process over product. When Shaughnessy's approach to error is implemented, errors can be used as a catalyst for language exploration, which leads to growth in student writing. In accordance with Shaughnessy's argument, Crovitz suggests, "Language is learned through a process of experimentation, error-making, and self-correction"; therefore, instructors should value error, encouraging students to identify and discuss errors rather than simply marking the error as incorrect (32).

Not only can error lead to specific courses of grammar study but Constance Weaver also contends that errors are actually necessary for student growth in language and grammar (*Teaching Grammar in Context* 50). In her book, Weaver states, "Something learned may be temporarily not applied as the person is trying something else" (*Teaching Grammar in Context* 60). She broadens the scope of this assertion beyond grammar instruction to reveal that this type regression occurs in drawing, spelling, and math as well, which furthers Shaughnessy's call to embrace error as a natural part of the learning process. Drawing on John Mellon's 1967 study, Weaver

argues that more sophisticated errors replace less sophisticated errors as students become more linguistically mature. In other words, students do not have fewer errors as they progress; rather, students make different types of errors as they grow as writers. As students work through new and difficult grammatical concepts, they necessarily make mistakes. Shaughnessy, Weaver, and Crovitz assert that errors made during the learning process are important and should not be condemned; rather, students should be encouraged to investigate their errors to understand the many grammatical concepts used in their writing.

In addition to the necessity of error, Shaughnessy stresses, "correcting errors is an editorial rather than a composing skill and requires the writer to notice features of the sentence he would ordinarily have to ignore while composing" (128). Similarly, in "Explaining Grammatical Concepts," Muriel Harris and Katherine Rowan argue that "editing is . . . almost as demanding as composing" and that editing for grammatical errors is a complex process (21). Essentially, error correction should not be taught through direct instruction in grammar but through lessons in revising and editing. While it is important to reduce error in student writing, teachers need to separate error from grammar instruction, allowing students to explore grammatical choices and reserving correctness for the editing stage. Shaughnessy claims, "What is most useful is a repertoire of approaches to a relatively small number of problems rather than an allegiance to a school of grammar" (156). The idea of varied approaches is echoed by Harris and Rowan who contend that error comes from a lack of tools: The problem is not that students do not understand grammatically correct sentences but that students do not have the tools for composing appropriate sentences in writing (Harris and Rowan 22). While this approach saves grammatical considerations for the editing stage, it does

so through a productive approach that conveys editing as its own complex process within the writing process. In a similar manner, Weaver argues that it is necessary to teach a recursive writing process to show students that writing is never finished. Like Harris and Rowan, Weaver suggests teaching revision, editing, and proofreading through editing workshops and productive teacher comments as an alternative to error-focused writing instruction (*Teaching Grammar in Context* 83). Although error is and always will be a component of grammar instruction, Shaughnessy, Weaver, and others point us toward ways to use error as a tool for language exploration and to help students grow as writers.

It has been established that error should not be the focus of grammar instruction; however, grammar and writing cannot be taught without some consideration of error and correctness. As Robert J. Connors argues in "Mechanical Correctness as a Focus in Composition Instruction," grammar should not be taught as error avoidance; rather, grammar should provide *tools* for use in student writing (67). Like Crovitz, Connors does not think that standards of mechanical correctness should die out completely; rather, "Striking a balance in our teaching between formal and rhetorical considerations is the problem we now face, and it is a delicate one" (Connors 71). The transition to rhetorical considerations allows scholars to move away from the idea of correct and incorrect grammar toward grammar that is fit or unfit for a specific rhetorical situation. Similarly, Weaver suggests that teachers carefully consider what counts as error, arguing that stylistic preferences should not be included as error. To further her point, Weaver highlights effective stylistic choices that break traditional grammar rules, raising questions about how to address "effective errors" in student writing (79). This discussion of error opens avenues of conversation among scholars who struggle to

define grammar as something other than error correction. Under an exploration approach to language study, scholars and teachers are able to embrace error and reconsider the place of grammar in writing curriculum.

1.5 The Role of Grammar in The Writing Curriculum

Scholars who dislike formal grammar tend to do so because it is taught as an individual entity—a distinct topic, separate from writing. Teaching grammar in isolation requires teaching rules and correctness and focusing on student error to determine whether students understand the lessons. To move away from formal grammar instruction, we must look for methods of uniting the teaching of grammar and the teaching of writing to illuminate the ways these two content areas continually inform one another. Scholars have identified several uses of grammar that avoid a heavy focus on rules and error, including invention, investigation, and inquiry. Each of these approaches places grammar in conversation with writing, as students are encouraged to move beyond parts of speech to use grammar to create, explore, and question language. Unlike formal grammar, these alternative approaches emphasize the generative and communicative aspects of language and call attention to grammar's connection to every part of the writing process. For example, grammar enters the writing process at the drafting stage when it is employed as a system of language, helping writers form sentences. Grammar also assists in revision, as writers restructure sentences and consider innovative uses of language to reach their audience. Finally, and perhaps most obviously, grammar allows writers to edit their work, looking specifically for mistakes, improper usage, and illogical phrasing. Importantly, generative approaches position grammar as a tool for composing and inventing rather than as rules or guidelines that tell writers what they cannot do with language. Thus, the scholars in this section suggest

that grammar be situated within writing curriculum as a tool not only for writing but also as an instructional tool for the four literacy acts: reading, writing, speaking, and listening (Sipe 16). This dynamic approach to the teaching of grammar positions students as both creators and recipients of grammar and its effects, encouraging them to become audience-aware writers.

Education scholars and teachers have discussed the idea of grammar as a tool in a variety of ways and have provided insight into the implementation of this tool in the writing classroom. Deborah Dean and Sharon Kane analyze the use of grammar as a tool for writing and position it as a necessary component of clear communication. In her 2011 article, "Shifting Perspectives about Grammar: Changing What and How We Teach," Dean discusses her experience with the move toward contextualized grammar. Dean claims that when grammar shifted away from formal grammar, the point of grammar "was to improve writing. Knowing terminology didn't necessarily help writers write better" (21). In her class, Dean uses grammar to teach students "how certain language choices create effects," illuminating the rhetorical dimension of grammar (24). Thus, grammar works as a tool to identify options in writing rather than an area of instruction. Similarly, Kane, an instructor of education and former English teacher, uses current events to facilitate grammar lessons. Kane realized that she "could connect the study of grammar to the investigation of the power and usefulness and beauty of language" through events and articles that interested her students (88). Kane believes that "grammar is not just something for students to learn for tests, but rather a *tool* that helps writers convey various shades of meaning or to evoke desired responses from readers" (89, emphasis added). Dean and Kane begin to indicate the concept of rhetorical grammar as they discuss the ways in which grammar affects readers. As

students discover and discuss the effects grammar has on a particular news article, they are able to explore "grammar and style in other ways and apply their discoveries to their own texts" (Kane 90). Both Dean and Kane teach grammar as a tool, providing students with a toolbox of choices available to them as writers and allowing them to explore writing and language through these grammatical tools.

While Dean and Kane discuss grammar in relation only to writing, other scholars have investigated the use of grammar as a tool for all of the literacy acts. For example, Jeff Anderson and Eileen Simmons argue that grammar is a tool for not just writing but also for reading—helping students make meaning as both a creator and recipient of language. Anderson uses grammar lessons that shift between reading and writing to give students "power to make meaning" (29). In this way, grammar is used to create meaning in writing and to determine meaning while reading. In "The Grammars of Reading," Simmons takes Anderson's argument a step further when she argues that grammar and reading comprehension are linked. When students understand word function and the relationship between words, they are able to better understand difficult texts. To Simmons, "The point is to help [students] understand the connections within the sentence, to show how words work together to convey meaning" (49). Focusing on the function of the words rather than the grammar rules, Simmons helps students use grammar to improve reading comprehension while providing them with tools for their own writing. Taking a different approach, Anderson contends that grammar should be explored and discussed at the essay, paragraph, and sentence level. Anderson uses reading activities to highlight elements of grammar and style at every level of the passage and to open discussion about the effect of those choices on the reader. As an example, commas and apostrophes might be discussed at the sentence level while style

is best viewed at the essay level. Anderson further contends that switching between reading and writing helps students understand how they, as writers, might switch between grammar used as a tool to construct writing versus a tool to edit writing. Through this approach, students and teachers move away from grammar as error or grammar as editing to see grammar as an integral part of composing. Anderson and Simmons present grammar as a tool for several layers of literacy, equipping students with strategies for composing and for breaking down complex texts. We often overlook the role of grammar in reading, assuming that once students learn to read in elementary school, they do not need new tools for reading in high school. In reality, the reading tasks in high school differ substantially from those in previous years. Encouraging students to break down complex sentences using grammatical knowledge not only helps them read difficult texts but also cements the importance of grammar beyond English classes and isolated instruction.

When grammar is taught through each literacy act, it necessarily moves beyond formal grammar and even steps outside of the context of writing to ask students to become aware of grammar not just as writers but also as audience members (Richards and Reppen 20). Moving beyond reading and writing, Jack Richards and Randi Reppen suggest literacy activities that include using newspaper articles for illuminating the connections between grammar and reading, teaching grammar in the context of student writing, using speaking transcripts to show how grammatical choices differ in spoken conversations, and having students listen to recordings to identify grammatical patterns as a listener (19-21). Each of these activities asks students to participate in a different literacy act while still focusing on the use and purpose of grammar. Unlike the use of grammar as a tool for constructing writing or for making meaning, the use of literacy

acts asks students to do more than write grammatically correct sentences or tailor those sentences for a particular audience. Instead, literacy acts prompt language investigation and inquiry as writers, readers, speakers, and listeners to help students become aware of grammar beyond writing and beyond the classroom. Dean, Kane, Anderson, Simmons, and Richards and Reppen argue that the role of grammar in writing curriculum should be to bridge the gaps between literacy acts, asking students to employ and investigate grammar in a variety of contexts. This approach necessarily moves away from formal grammar to show the generative and productive nature of language as it functions in reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Essentially, the role of grammar is to serve as enrichment to writing instruction, adding nuance to students' views of language and its effects. While student writing does not improve from grammar instruction alone, student writing, reading comprehension, and overall communication seem to be enhanced through situated grammar instruction.

1.6 A Pedagogy of Rhetorical Grammar

The scholarship on grammar instruction's role as writing enhancement sounds interesting and innovative, but it remains unattainable without a pedagogy of grammar that illuminates specific methods of teaching rhetorical grammar to secondary students. Although each scholar above provided a slightly different use for grammar in connection to writing, scholars seem to agree that finding a place for and approach to grammar that works for a particular group of students is key. Similarly, grammar pedagogy needs to keep students in mind as it works to create more effective grammar instruction. In "Toward a Pedagogy of Grammar Instruction," Richards and Reppen call for a new grammar pedagogy, as they distinguish between grammatical knowledge and grammatical ability. They argue, "Grammatical knowledge refers to knowledge of the

rules that account for grammatically correct language" while "grammatical ability refers to the ability to use grammar as a communicative resource in spoken and written discourse and requires a different pedagogical approach" (Richards and Reppen 6). As established, the focus has shifted away from grammatical knowledge toward grammatical ability, yet we have not changed our pedagogy to effectively support students' grammatical ability. To complete this transition, teachers need to identify their students' "communicative needs" (Richards and Reppen 7). A productive pedagogy of grammar requires that teachers discuss the differences between spoken and written language, the range of uses of grammar for specific contexts, and the role of audience, purpose, and context in effective communication. In their approach, we see Richards and Reppen responding to calls for grammar situated in each of the four literacy acts in response to the suggestions made by Anderson, Simmons, and Sipe.

The call to teach grammar as a tool suggests that grammar needs to move beyond academic contexts to get students thinking about language in their daily lives and activities. In order to express the full power of language, teachers should identify how grammatical tools operate—both in the classroom and beyond. In terms of pedagogy, the goal is to help students think about grammar as an important part of their lives, not only as something taught at school. The connection to life outside of school can be facilitated by some of the suggestions made by Kane and Anderson. These scholars ask students to connect classroom content with newspaper articles and conversations with friends, drawing the outside world into the classroom and illuminating grammar through topics that interest the students. Creating a bridge between life and school allows teachers to draw connections between grammar and rhetoric as students begin thinking about audience, purpose, and context in new ways. Highlighting grammar and

language use that occur beyond the classroom teaches students that grammatical choices shape the way language is performed and received. Richards and Reppen state, "a pedagogy for the teaching of grammar seeks to develop learners' awareness of the nature of texts and the functions of grammar within them" by expanding the tools students make use of when they produce or engage with various texts (23).

Another key component of this approach to grammar pedagogy includes methods of engaging students with the study of language. While Richards and Reppen touch on this through activities, Debra Myhill et al. further emphasize this point when they propose a grammar and writing pedagogy that encourages language exploration. In "Playful Explicitness with Grammar: A Pedagogy For Writing," Myhill et al. discuss a writing pedagogy that focuses on the effective teaching of grammar. They assert, "A recent study has shown a significant positive impact on writing outcomes when the grammar input is intrinsically linked to the demands of the writing being taught" (Myhill et al. 103). The contributors argue for a rhetorical view of grammar to encourage language exploration in which they view "writers as designers" (104). Myhill et al. empower students by calling them designers and giving them control of the writing they create. Importantly, students are not just encouraged to explore language in the writing of others but are given the opportunity to playfully explore their own use of language, as students are encouraged to create, design, and explore. Myhill et al. offer seven pedagogical principles for teaching grammar:

> 1) Grammatical metalanguage is used, but it is always explained through examples and patterns; 2) links are always made between the feature introduced and how it might enhance the writing being tackled; 3) discussion is fundamental in encouraging critical conversations about language and effects; 4) the use of

> 'creative imitation' offers model patterns for students to play with and then use in their own writing; 5) the use of authentic examples from authentic texts links writers to the broader community of writers; 6) activities should support students in making choices and being designers of language; 7) language play, experimentation, risk-taking and games should be actively encouraged. (105)

Many of the principles described in this pedagogy have been discussed elsewhere; the main difference is Myhill et al.'s idea of language play. Unlike other approaches or pedagogies, Myhill et al. ask students to develop and define their own rules based on use in authentic texts rather than to blindly follow predefined grammar rules. Under Myhill et al.'s pedagogy, students can explore language through conversations in which "the teacher is not the authority in possession of the right answer, but where the students explore the possibilities of language and discuss their interpretation of effects" (106). As students engage with language in a variety of environments, including viewing language in action through authentic texts and imitating good writing, they are led to think in new ways and learn to think through writing. Myhill et al. paraphrase R. T. Kellogg to argue, "Teaching writing is as much about teaching thinking as it is about teaching writing" (107). Like Richards and Reppen, Myhill et al. seek to increase linguistic awareness through a pedagogy in which "contextualized grammar teaching, grammar as choice, helps young writers become more metalinguistically aware" (110).

Both of the pedagogies discussed above promote exploration and audience awareness as central features of an effective grammar pedagogy. But what does that mean, and how do the scholars suggest that teachers implement this kind of pedagogy? Myhill et al. provide seven example activities throughout their article that encourage playful experimentation and promote the idea of language designers. For example, table

six includes "a classroom example of an activity supporting the making of design choices" in which students learn how to write argument by focusing on "how sentence length and sentence structure can be used to create rhetorical effect in the closing of a persuasive argument" (Myhill et al. 109). This activity asks students to design the closing paragraph of a speech in two different ways using the sentences provided. The result is that students learn the impact of choice in argumentation and are given the power to design a desired effect in their own writing. Here, there is no "correct" answer; rather, students are given the freedom to design and argue for their choices as they see fit. Enhancing the playful quality of the pedagogy by encouraging all answers allows students to discuss the best solution.

Although the idea of a rhetorical grammar pedagogy is fairly new, Richards and Reppen and Myhill et al. are not the only scholars to advocate for its efficacy. In "Grammar—Comma—a New Beginning," Mary Ehrenworth calls for teachers to "fundamentally change the *way* we teach grammar" (90). The pedagogical suggestions set forth by Richards and Reppen, Myhill et al., and Erhenworth all point toward the use of rhetoric as a guiding factor in this new grammar pedagogy. For Erhenworth, incorporating rhetoric into grammar means, "We don't teach that fragments are wrong. We show how and when they are right" (91). This approach removes the stigma of error and breaks down the binary between right and wrong to highlight the contextual nature of grammar and writing. Thus, Ehrenworth, along with Richards and Reppen and Myhill et al., break away from formal grammar to reveal grammar's rhetorical elements, offering pedagogical approaches that illuminate the benefits of uniting grammar, rhetoric, and writing. All of the articles discussed promote students' ability to explore, play with, design, and investigate language through imitation and rhetorical choices.

Using rhetoric, students are taught to compose, generate, and invent with grammar rather than to memorize and repeat grammatical rules and terminology. These pedagogical changes point toward rhetorical grammar and its use as a heuristic for writing. Although each approach discussed differs slightly, I think the main principles can be combined to create a pedagogy that facilitates instruction in rhetorical grammar.

1.7 Delving into Rhetorical Grammar

Much of the scholarship discussed in the previous sections points toward rhetorical grammar—or grammar instruction that emphasizes audience, purpose, and context to help students use grammar as a tool for producing writing and constructing meaning. Kolln noticed the shift in attitude toward grammar at the 1994 NCTE Convention when it was resolved that a task force was needed to "explore effective ways of integrating language awareness into classroom instruction and teacher preparation programs" ("Rhetorical Grammar" 30). With the NCTE resolution, Kolln began the work on changing the way we think about grammar, declaring, "The time has come to modify *grammar* in ways that clarify its place in our profession" ("Rhetorical Grammar" 30, emphasis hers). While part of Kolln's book *Rhetorical Grammar: Grammatical Choices Rhetorical Effects*—first published in 1996—deals only with sentence structures (arguably formal elements of grammar), the majority of the book focuses on how writers can control their message through language use, which moves beyond the sentence level and asks students to consider authorial choices and the effect those choices might have on readers. Kolln discusses reader expectations, rhythm, and voice and provides explanations of how to use these elements rhetorically, highlighting the ways in which grammar aids in the choices writers make. *Rhetorical Grammar* is written as a textbook for college-level courses; however, many aspects can be adapted to high school

instruction that would work to prepare students for college writing, including the chapters in Part II: Controlling the Message and Part III: Making Choices. Further, full use of this text in college will only be aided by an introduction to the principles of rhetorical grammar in high school. Most importantly, Kolln paved the way for scholars to discuss new and different uses of rhetorical grammar.

Ten years after Kolln heard the first hints toward change, Laura Micciche answered the call for rhetorical grammar in a 2004 article titled "Making a Case for Rhetorical Grammar." Micciche argues that the "study of rhetorical grammar can demonstrate to students that language does purposeful, consequential work in the world—work that can be learned and applied" (716). Acknowledging that grammar has been separated from the teaching of writing and has gained the reputation of being ineffective, Micciche attempts to "establish grounds for teaching grammar rhetorically and for linking this pedagogical effort to larger goals of emancipatory teaching" (717). Like Kolln, Micciche positions "rhetorical grammar as a way of thinking," (720) contending that rhetorical grammar instruction is "central to composition's driving commitment to teach critical thinking and cultural critique" (717). Similarly, Lynn Sams, a high school English teacher, separates her approach to grammar instruction both from formal grammar and from "guided application of the rules," discussing her method of "writing as learning and thinking" (57). In Sams's view, writing does not lead to thinking; rather, it provides a path to thought. To promote writing and grammar as inquiry, Sams introduces a process of examination in which the self-correcting nature of questioning leads to "increased proficiency in adapting meaning to structure and structure to meaning" (59). Both Micciche and Sams extend Kolln's argument for rhetorical grammar as a way of identifying choices to assert that rhetorical grammar is

an essential tool for teaching critical thinking skills. According to Micciche, "the purpose of learning rhetorical grammar is to learn how to generate persuasive, clear thinking that reflects on and responds to language as work, as produced rather than evacuated of imperfections" (720). In accordance with Shaughnessy's argument, Micciche suggests that grammar cannot be reserved only for editing and that the focus of student writing should be depth of thinking rather than grammatically correct sentences.

Unlike Kolln, Sams, and others, Micciche comments explicitly on the power and importance of grammar beyond academic contexts, arguing, "Grammatical skill and instruction are linked to cultural attitudes, beliefs, and assumptions" (Micciche 732). She continues on to say, rhetorical grammar "offers students more tools for analyzing culture" (Micciche 731). In arguing for the cultural significance of rhetorical grammar, Micciche goes a step further than Kolln to suggest a larger impact for situated grammar instruction beyond its use as a tool for effective communication. Namely, rhetorical grammar gives all students an additional lens through which to analyze culture. Not only do the critical thinking and analysis skills afforded by rhetorical grammar lead to improved writing, but Micciche also suggests that these tools improve students' analysis and understanding of the world around them.

Promoting an analytical approach to grammar, Sams, like Weaver, investigates grammar within writing, arguing, "Grammar and writing are so inextricably linked as to be virtually synonymous" (57). Sams's goal is to illuminate the function of words rather than the predefined rules given to words by society. In focusing on authorial intent and the purpose of language, Sams aligns with the function-focused approaches of Weaver and Myhill et al.: Weaver's method of grammar in the context of writing teaches the function of words rather than the rules and terminology given to the words while Myhill

et al. ask students to create their own rules using the function of words. Sams's approach promotes a process of inquiry as students work to investigate why certain structures do or do not work for a particular situation. While Sams does not call her method rhetorical grammar, it performs similarly by allowing students to use a trial and error approach to see when certain grammatical concepts apply and when it might be okay to break arbitrary rules.

To further situate grammar within writing, Sams highlights the relationship between grammar and rhetoric to show the ways in which grammar defines "a heuristic that could be used as an aid to invention in writing" (63). Under this framework, grammar operates rhetorically to allow students to create meaning rather than confining students to accepted rules and uses for words and structures. Like Dean and Kane, Sams seems to view grammar as a tool for writing. However, unlike other scholars, Sams acknowledges that students do not automatically view grammar as a tool or understand its connection to rhetoric. Sams points out that it takes time and practice for students to view grammar as a heuristic for writing. To infuse writing with grammar instruction and to illuminate the generative aspects, Sams declares:

> We need to recognize that writing proficiency develops over a period of twelve years or more, and instead of having every teacher try to address all aspects of writing every year in haphazard and band-aid fashion, we need to implement a sequenced approach to grammar instruction that is designed to build students' competence gradually. (64)

Like Kolln, Sams believes that grammar must be taught systematically over an adequate period of time to see improvement in student writing: It cannot be reserved for one grade level and expected to work miracles. Sams's designs a grammar sequence that

aims to prepare students for instruction in argumentation and style in first-year writing courses by building on instruction from earlier grades to develop students' voice and maturity as writers.

1.8 Conclusion

The scholarship addressed in this chapter shows a clear progression away from formal grammar toward contextualized instruction and rhetorical grammar pedagogies. Despite the negative scholarship of the 1960s, some teachers still felt grammar was important for successful writing and began looking for alternate methods of instruction that moved away from formal grammar while emphasizing the importance of proper usage for successful communication. Since the 1960s—with a surge of research in the 1990s—scholars have examined the place of grammar in classrooms and curricula. Unfortunately, the grammar debate of the 1960s continues to haunt current conversations about grammar instruction and pedagogy as scholars review the negative comments of the Braddock and Elley studies to position their new research against the "harmful effects" of formal grammar. Because of this trend, I chose to avoid that pattern by making the scholarship on innovative approaches to grammar instruction the focus of this chapter—a choice that resulted in the discovery of not only benefits of grammar instruction but also possibilities to teach and use grammar beyond the context of writing.

The existing scholarship on rhetorical grammar presents the idea that intentionality matters in grammar instruction and that students do benefit from grammar when its rhetorical components are revealed. In essence, teaching grammar is less about teaching rules and facts than it is about teaching intentionality and audience-awareness as a way of focusing and strengthening student writing. The research also

reveals that grammar instruction of any kind cannot be seen as a one-size-fits-all approach. In other words, rhetorical grammar pedagogy and activities that work well for some students might not work for every group of students or every teacher. Rather than viewing a specific approach to rhetorical grammar as a definite solution to the grammar problem, instructors should take the scholarship under advisement to develop their own rhetorical grammar pedagogy that fits within the writing curriculum at their institution and that meets the needs of their particular students. After all, the goal of grammar instruction is to equip students with tools to effectively use language and to communicate in a variety of settings. In their own ways, the scholars discussed in this chapter tell us that rhetorical grammar should illuminate the power of language and engage students in the study of grammar and writing. The exciting calls for innovative changes in grammar instruction encourage me to continue the conversations by providing my own vision of rhetorical grammar and its use in secondary education.

The following chapters will present my vision for rhetorical grammar and its place in writing curriculum. In Chapter Two, I investigate current curricular standards for grammar instruction in secondary schools and position rhetorical grammar as a tool to fill some of the curricular gaps and to enhance writing instruction. While I hope that many scholars and teachers will find it useful and will benefit from the scope and sequence presented in the next chapter, I do not intend for my vision to be the only answer to curricular problems. Instead, I offer my vision as one research-based approach that I believe offers a path to improving grammar and writing instruction at the secondary level.

Chapter 2

A Proposed Vision of Rhetorical Grammar in Secondary English

2.1 Introduction

Scholarly agreement on the significance of rhetorical grammar has provided a productive step toward its integration into writing instruction, supplying a necessary platform for curricular change. However, the agreement and implementation thus far have stemmed largely from the university setting, opening an opportunity for a deeper look at rhetorical grammar in secondary education. While it is important to include grammar instruction in the conversation about college writing, it remains concerning that this innovative approach to grammar has not effectively made its way down to primary and secondary education despite what the scholarship advocates. For this reason, I focus my attention on how to bring these insights into the secondary writing curriculum and propose a four-year sequence for rhetorical grammar that aligns with the WPA Outcomes for First-Year Composition (FYC).

The research base outlined in Chapter One not only discusses the shift away from formal grammar toward rhetorical grammar but also indicates scholars' agreement that rhetorical grammar can be an effective way to improve student writing and can lead to a grammar pedagogy that prepares students for critical thinking, analysis, college writing, and writing beyond academic contexts. With the widespread, scholarly acceptance of rhetorical grammar, we are left with new questions: Does rhetorical grammar fit within secondary English curricula as a way of preparing students for college, and, if so, how can it be implemented? To answer these questions, we must first review the scholarly transition to rhetorical grammar within the context of secondary education. After providing an overview of rhetorical grammar, I look at what kind of grammar emphasis

already exists for secondary English education based on the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). Understanding the curricular guidelines for high school allows me to then look at the standards for introductory-level college writing to compare the existing outcomes at both levels and to propose the use of rhetorical grammar in facilitating transfer from secondary to college writing. I then explain my vision for rhetorical grammar and outline a sequence of instruction that aligns with the college learning outcomes.

2.2 Transitioning to Rhetorical Grammar: Stop, Start, Continue

Using a "Stop, Start, Continue" summary, I can capture key moments from existing scholarship while shifting the focus to my own ideas about rhetorical grammar and its place in secondary writing curricula. As several scholars have suggested, it is imperative that we *stop* teaching formal grammar.[5] Formal grammar is a prescriptive approach to grammar in which students are given a strict set of rules for Standard English conventions and usage. Promoted as an area of instruction separate from writing, formal grammar does not facilitate transfer to any literacy act. When taught in a vacuum, grammar does not benefit student writing because students are not asked to apply the isolated grammar rules to contexts beyond grammar worksheets and lessons. Further, by evaluating student work for correctness, this form of instruction conveys the idea that language use is either always right or always wrong. This can be confusing for students when common usage breaks these supposedly rigid rules. For example, many teachers and grammar textbooks admonish against the use of split infinitives. This rule was actually carried over from Latin in which infinitives cannot be split because they are

[5] See Martha Kolln's "Rhetorical Grammar: A Modification Lesson" pages 27-19, Constance Weaver's "Teaching Grmmar in the Context of Writing" pages 16-17, Debra Myhill et al.'s "Playful explicitness with grammar" page 103, Debra Myhill and Annabel Watson's "The role of grammar in the writing curriculum" pages 42 and 45-46, and Lynn Sams "How to Teach Grammar Analytical Thinking, and Writing" page 57.

one word. Constance Weaver declares, “In other words, the eighteenth-century English grammarians concluded that because Latin infinitives cannot be split . . . English infinitives should not be split” (4). Essentially, there is no reason not to split infinitives in English when it achieves the desired rhetorical effect. More importantly, it is contradictory to impose these predefined rules on students when the texts they are assigned in class and the published writing they encounter do not follow these supposedly mandated rules of the English language. Using a rules-based approach to grammar might actually dissuade students from engaging productively with the study of English because the language seems static and arbitrary and because students will have no trouble pointing to instances when rules are broken without explanation. Therefore, in accordance with the scholarship, I believe we must stop relying on formal grammar as the only kind of classroom instruction in secondary schools before we can move forward with a more productive approach to grammar instruction.

After putting an end to formal grammar, I believe it is time to *start* a sequenced rhetorical grammar curriculum in secondary schools. As modeled by Martha Kolln, Laura Micciche, Lynn Sams, and others, rhetorical grammar has proven to be highly effective for teaching grammatical concepts and improving student writing. Following the path of these scholars—while expanding on their work—I propose starting a sequenced approach to rhetorical grammar in which secondary students progress through a spiraling curriculum that builds on the ideas presented in previous grades rather than teaching discrete content at each grade-level that students do not return to later in high school. I advocate a spiraling curriculum over a step-by-step approach for two reasons: 1) The early concepts of grammar (parts of speech, subject-verb agreement, etc.) remain relevant at later stages of instruction, and 2) scholars have argued that

previously learned information may be temporarily overlooked as students work on new concepts.[6] For these reasons, I feel that students will benefit from an approach that builds on and returns to the fundamental aspects of grammar as the instruction becomes more complex and involves more elements of grammar and rhetoric. Additionally, grammar instruction of any kind benefits from a scaled approach because our language works by continually building on the foundational aspects. Parts of speech and independent clauses provide the basis of our language at every stage; however, our knowledge of the components of language and our ability to create rhetorical effects with them increase and change over time. We cannot assume that students taught the difference between a clause and a phrase in ninth grade will remember the distinction forever and know how to use phrases in innovative ways to achieve a desired effect. Rather, grammar asks us to return to foundational concepts as we work toward new ends and explore new uses. In this model, rhetorical grammar becomes a constant thread throughout the four-year secondary English curriculum not only to promote thorough learning and exploration of rhetorical grammar but also to enhance the tools available to students as writers.

To effectively begin this type of writing-based grammar instruction, we need to *continue* teaching grammar in the context of writing. Weaver advocates for the benefits of contextualized grammar instruction, which I believe needs to continue in order to develop the type of rhetorical grammar discussed here.[7] Grammar in the context of writing helps students move between the various levels of writing: The shift in view

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[6] See Constance Weaver's *Teaching Grammar in Context*. Weaver states, "Something learned may be temporarily not applied as the person is trying something else" (60).

[7] See also Debra Myhill et al., "contextualized grammar teaching, grammar as choice, helps young writers to become more metalinguistically aware" (110), Jack Richards and Randi Reppen's "Toward a Pedagogy of Grammar Instruction" pages 19-21, Laura Micciche's "Making a Case for Rhetorical Grammar" page 717, and Martha Kolln's *Rhetorical Grammar: Grammatical Choices, Rhetorical Effects* introduction.

between grammar and writing within the same context illuminates the use of rhetoric and grammar at the sentence, paragraph, and essay levels. Unlike other approaches to grammar, rhetorical grammar can never be separate from writing because it provides students with a heuristic for using writing as a meaning-making tool. As Kolln tells readers, "You will discover that understanding the tools available to you—knowing the terminology of grammar and using it to think about and talk about your writing—will give you confidence as you compose and as you revise" (*Rhetorical Grammar* 5). By stopping formal grammar, starting rhetorical grammar, and continuing grammar in the context of writing, we create a space for a new approach to grammar that builds on successful strategies suggested by scholars and creates an innovative method that meets students' needs and addresses previous concerns about grammar instruction.

2.3 Overview of Rhetorical Grammar

As noted in Chapter One, Kolln defines rhetorical grammar as "understanding the grammatical choices available to you when you write and the rhetorical effects those choices will have on your reader" (*Rhetorical Grammar* 3). In her book *Rhetorical Grammar: Grammatical Choices, Rhetorical Effects*, Kolln discusses these choices through explanations and examples of words and phrases, sentence patterns, verbs, and more. *Rhetorical Grammar* offers a guidebook and a resource for writing, so I extend Kolln's definition beyond activities for varied sentence structure and authorial choice to include a sequence for rhetorical grammar that moves from ninth through twelfth grade. Although *Rhetorical Grammar* was written for a college audience, Kolln's book can be adapted for use in secondary education and still work just as effectively at the college level. Using a rhetorical approach to grammar in both high school and college strengthens (rather than detracts from) the quality of grammar instruction received in

both secondary and postsecondary education because it acts as a supplement for writing instruction at each level and supports student writing along the way. A key component, of not only this vision but also writing pedagogy more generally, is that grammar and writing need to be taught systematically over time to facilitate writing transfer. Using the tools that help students identify and analyze grammatical and rhetorical choices, students will move from identification and application of appropriate choices in ninth grade toward argumentation and analysis in twelfth grade.

While rhetorical grammar might sound like grammar instruction that focuses only on sentence-level considerations, it actually includes both a micro- and macroscopic view of rhetoric and grammar to combine elements that lead to effective communication. Students are taught to view writing as a method for discovering and making knowledge; therefore, the object of writing assignments is not to relay known information but to produce knowledge. Rhetorical grammar assists with this knowledge-building by making students aware of how sentence-level choices affect the overall tone and message of a piece of writing. The arguments in favor of rhetorical grammar suggest that grammar should be used to expose the generative aspects of writing to convey that writing is a process of exploration and invention and to empower students in their use of language. Further, the exploration of language exposes the need to understand the effects of grammar, such as clear communication, effective style, and persuasive argumentation by allowing students to discover how such choices affect the audience, both positively and negatively.

Rhetorical grammar provides tools for not only writing but also critical thinking and analysis. As Sams discusses, writing is a mode of thinking and learning.[8] This idea

[8] See also Myhill et al. “Teaching writing is as much about teaching thinking as it is about teaching writing" (107), Francis Christensen’s “A Generative Rhetoric of the Sentence” in which he states, the

serves as the foundation for rhetorical grammar: Writing is a process of exploration and invention. Through rhetorical grammar, students learn to use the composing process in a way that helps them work through new or difficult concepts. For example, students might be asked to change the style or tone of a piece of writing using heuristics from rhetorical grammar. In this way, students are able to engage with the power of language as they explore the tools of rhetorical grammar to repurpose existing writing for a new audience or context. An example activity might include providing students with a formal speech that needs to be rewritten as an informal letter. Students must first identify the audience, purpose, and context for each genre before coming up with tools to construct the letter.

Encouraging students to use writing as a problem-solving method or way of thinking allows them to understand the value of language and writing beyond the classroom. Once writing becomes a tool for learning and solving problems, students begin to see that writing and language have power. More importantly, they learn that the power of language comes from control and intentionality of the message. Thus, rhetorical grammar transcends not only the classroom but also writing by illuminating language choices more generally. We all make rhetorical choices when we speak and write: Rhetorical grammar simply calls attention to those choices and makes available options known to students. As Kolln says, “You are the repository of the rules … not a book” (*Rhetorical Grammar* 1). The basis of rhetorical grammar is that students will learn a variety of tools and choices for writing and will use those tools to create meaning

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cumulative sentence "is dynamic rather than static, representing the mind thinking" (156), Micciche states, “Rhetorical grammar instruction "is just as central to composition's driving commitment to teach critical thinking and cultural critique as is reading rhetorically, understanding the significance of cultural difference, and engaging in community work through service-learning initiatives" (717-718) and pages 720-722, John Dawkins’s “Teaching Punctuation as a Rhetorical Tool” pages 544 and 548, and Larry Weinstein’s *Writing at the Threshold*.

and language, illuminating the generative aspects of writing. Scholars have emphasized the importance of choice because writing with intentionality asks students to be *mindful* of their composing strategies and to critically consider the choices they make when writing with specific rhetorical situations in mind. Knowing the tools available helps students feel comfortable and confident with their ability to think and write rhetorically. Beginning this work in high school not only assists students with the transition to college-level writing but also prepares them for the kinds of thinking and learning they will be asked to do in all of their college courses.

2.4 Current Guidelines and Curriculum

As most of the United States—forty-three states to be exact—transitions to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), we can look to the English Language Arts (ELA) Standards for grades nine through twelve to understand the current secondary grammar and writing curriculum suggested by the national guidelines. The CCSS breaks down ELA curriculum into reading, writing, speaking and listening, and language. These standards address each aspect of literacy and provide suggestions for what to teach at each level to promote specified learning outcomes. I look only at the writing and language sections for grades nine through twelve to investigate the place of grammar and usage in secondary education. Problematically, the writing section does not use the word grammar once. Although students are expected to "use a variety of techniques to sequence events so that they build on one another to create a coherent whole" and to "use precise words and phrases," the standards do not suggest that grammar plays a role in these outcomes ("English Language Arts Standards > Writing"). Additionally, students should "produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience," but again, the

outcomes give no indication that grammar or rhetoric help achieve effective writing and communication ("English Language Arts Standards > Writing"). Fortunately, grammar does appear in the language section under the heading "conventions of standard English," which states, students will "demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking" ("English Language Arts Standards > Language"). Unfortunately, this quotation is the only reference to grammar, and this vague objective does not indicate how or when students will learn the conventions of Standard English. Essentially, the outcomes expect that ninth through twelfth grade students should have command of Standard English but do not indicate that students will acquire tools for mastery or that grammar is in any way tied to writing instruction. According to the CCSS, grammar is not an integral part of writing instruction for secondary students. The guidelines do not even suggest that grammar might be used as an end-stage tool for editing. This approach is problematic for several reasons, including lack of attention to continued language development and unclear guidelines for the teaching of conventions. More importantly, the CCSS approach does not align with the suggestions in current scholarship about grammar instruction: Scholars view grammar as an important part of the writing process, yet the CCSS do not address grammar in the context of writing at all.

Because Texas has yet to adopt the CCSS, the state has its own guidelines for ELA. In the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) for ELA, grammar is mentioned once for the TEKS in each high school English course (English I-IV); however, the reference to grammar is the same for each grade level. Under the subheading "Writing/Writing Process," item D requires that students "edit drafts for grammar, mechanics, and spelling" (TEKS). Essentially, grammar is included only as an

editing task, and as with the CCSS, the TEKS give no indication as to how or when students will learn to edit for grammar and mechanics. If grammar is not taught elsewhere (as the TEKS indicate), how will students know what to edit for? As Muriel Harris and Katherine Rowan assert, errors in student writing are not a sign that students do not understand grammatically correct sentences but that they do not have the tools for composing them in writing (22). Additionally, Harris and Rowan discuss editing as a multi-step process: "Editing for grammatical errors is not a one-step process, but a complete series of steps which involve detecting a problem (finding a mistake), diagnosing the error (figuring out what's wrong), and rewriting (composing a more acceptable version)" (21). In this definition, we see that when grammar is taught as only an editing process, students lack the grammatical knowledge that would help them know that they made a mistake and figure out what is wrong in order to correct the mistake. Further, the TEKS suggest that students will learn and use grammar in the same way at every grade level. This approach does not leave room for student growth in or exploration of language and instead positions grammar as a unilateral concept that students must learn once and apply forever. Looking at the learning outcomes from both Common Core and the TEKS, the problem is blatant: Curricular standards and learning outcomes do not address the issue of grammar instruction and do not situate grammar as an important tool for successful writing. There is an obvious disconnect between what scholars advocate for in terms of productive grammar instruction and what is actually being encouraged in high school instruction. It is no wonder that a gap exists between high school and college writing.

2.5 College-Ready Writing

Rhetorical grammar offers a tool that might ease the transition to college writing when taught in secondary education. To be most effective, the rhetorical grammar lessons in high school must be geared toward specific expectations for college. Although college preparation is not the only goal of high school, I use rhetorical grammar as a method of preparing students for academic writing as I further the conversation about closing the gap between high school and college writing instruction. Scholars have identified a need to ease the transition to college writing,[9] but I have yet to find a scholar who argues that grammar, specifically rhetorical grammar, can promote this work. I suggest that, as students progress through high school, the use of rhetorical grammar should increasingly focus on skills associated with college-level writing and prepare students for instruction in argumentation and rhetoric. In "What We Talk about When We Talk about College Writing," Herb Budden et al. question, "Are the strategies required for successful instruction in writing that much different in senior English and first-year composition?" (73). This question suggests that one way to ease the transition to college is by preparing students for the kinds of approaches they will be expected to use in First-Year Composition (FYC), and, generally, one of the primary goals of FYC is argumentation. Thus, rhetorical grammar is designed to prepare students for college by introducing elements of rhetoric and authorial choice through each conversation about grammar and writing. Argumentation is the end-goal of this system because the conversations about the gap between high school and college point toward

[9] See Justin Young's "First-Year Composition and the Common Core" page 19, Patricia Sehulster's "Bridging the Gap between High School and College Writing" page 348, Joanne Addison and Sharon James McGee's "Writing in High School/Writing in College" page 152, and *Teaching Writing in High School and College: Conversations and Collaborations* section 3.

argumentation as a transferable skill for writing across the curriculum.[10] Additionally, teaching writing skills such as argumentation prepares students for college writing beyond what will be expected of them in FYC. Argumentation and inquiry introduce students to the range of writing tasks that will be required of them throughout their college career. Adequately preparing high school students for college writing is especially important when we consider that many students place out of FYC. In other words, students who take Advanced Placement or Dual Credit English classes in high school often do not have to take FYC in college. This pattern of course substitution provides a very clear exigence for aligning high school and college objectives for writing and for promoting transfer: Students who do not receive information on and practice in grammar and writing in high school may not receive it in college either. This shortfall means that many students will reach upper-level college courses without a clear understanding of audience, purpose, and context and why those are important considerations for writing.

While we cannot know all of the writing tasks that college students will be asked to complete, the Council of Writing Programs Administrators (WPA) created the "WPA Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition" to "identify outcomes for first-year composition programs in U.S. postsecondary education" (1). These outcomes provide some common goals for FYC students that the Council of WPAs believes will assist students throughout college. I will use the document as a benchmark for students completing four years of high school. Specifically, which aspects of the statement can rhetorical grammar align with by the end of twelfth grade to assist students in their

[10] See Greene, Stuart. "What We Talk about When We Talk about College Writing." *Teaching Writing in High School and College: Conversations and Collaborations*. NCTE, 2002. Print. Greene argues, "We teach argument. Argument is very much a part of what we do every day" (89). He goes on to state, "It is useful to think about writing as a form of inquiry in which students convey their understanding of the claims people make, the questions they raise, and the conflicts they address" (90).

transition to college? The "WPA Outcomes for First-Year Composition" provides outcomes in four categories: 1) rhetorical knowledge; 2) critical thinking, reading, and composing; 3) processes; and 4) knowledge of conventions. At this point, it might seem obvious to say that rhetorical grammar instruction works to prepare students for all four categories, but it is an important reminder that rhetorical grammar offers more than just grammar instruction per se. Rather, it works toward each of the WPA Outcomes by continually placing grammar in the context of rhetoric and writing.

The WPA Outcomes Statement defines rhetorical knowledge as "the ability to analyze contexts and audiences and then to act on that analysis in comprehending and creating texts" (1). Further, "Writers develop rhetorical knowledge by negotiating purpose, audience, context, and conventions as they compose a variety of texts for different situations" (1). Here, we see rhetorical knowledge taught in the context of writing as the outcomes ask students to create and understand written text through an awareness of audience, purpose, and content. Using a rhetorical grammar approach in high school prepares students for this work by introducing rhetorical situations, genres, and conventions within writing instruction to teach students that grammatical choices *are* rhetorical choices and that this kind of rhetorical knowledge and attention to conventions enhances writing confidence and ability.

Rhetorical knowledge sets the stage for students to learn critical thinking, which the WPA defines as "the ability to analyze, synthesize, interpret, and evaluate ideas, information, situations, and texts" (2). In addition, the Outcomes suggest, students should "use composing and reading for inquiry, learning, critical thinking, and communicating in various rhetorical contexts" (2). This objective unites with Kolln's and Sams's argument for the connection between analytical thinking, writing, and inquiry.

Using rhetorical grammar, students are taught to analyze through deconstruction of authentic texts, imitation, and composing strategies. As students break down complex sentences to read authentic texts or to imitate in their own writing, they must first critically consider the choices the author makes. Knowing the choices allows students to evaluate, critique, and respond as both audience members and writers. Further, students learn that analysis leads to inquiry and exploration by critically considering the audience, purpose, and context for their writing and adapting their choices accordingly.

Students learn the range and complexity of the writing process through rhetorical grammar, which is not reserved only for the editing stage of writing processes. Instead, it functions throughout the process as it works to help students compose, revise, edit, and analyze their own writing. Rhetorical grammar is generative, providing students with tools to construct effective sentences through sentence pattern and imitation activities. Knowing rhetorical grammar allows students to edit their writing, looking for mistakes or areas of concern. It also allows students to do more substantive revision in which they are asked to look beyond the sentence level to consider organization, clarity, and cohesion of their argument.

Likely, the most obvious connection between the WPA Outcomes and rhetorical grammar is the section on conventions, which includes grammar, usage, and punctuation in addition to style and organization. As expected, the WPA moves beyond the definition of conventions as error-free writing to contend,

> These expectations are not universal; they vary by genre (conventions for lab notebooks and discussion-board exchanges differ), by discipline (conventional moves in literature reviews in Psychology differ from those in English), and by occasion (meeting minutes and executive summaries use different registers) . . . .

> Successful writers understand, analyze, and negotiate conventions for purpose, audience, and genre, understanding that genres evolve in response to changes in material conditions and composing technologies. (3)

This definition makes useful connections to rhetorical grammar including genre, discipline-specific conventions, and occasion. As discussed, rhetorical grammar centers on the idea that conventions are not simply right or wrong; rather, grammatical and rhetorical choices differ within each genre and context. Using rhetorical grammar, students will learn the importance of subject-verb agreement, rhetorical punctuation, and effective subordination and coordination for reaching an intended audience or conveying a particular message. These kinds of conventions can be taught rhetorically as students learn to choose and negotiate choices among all of the options available to them—including varied sentence patterns, intentional use of nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs, and experiments with stylistic choices. While the topics mentioned can be taught through rules and worksheets, the use of rhetorical grammar better prepares students for the WPA Outcomes by highlighting the fluid nature of conventions.

As a result, rhetorical grammar can prepare students for all four categories of the WPA Outcomes. Using rhetorical grammar, students gain experience with rhetorical knowledge, critical thinking, processes, and knowledge of conventions prior to FYC. Although the WPA statement provides outcomes for writing instruction and does not specifically mention grammar, introducing rhetorical grammar in high school can serve as an entry point into the writing objectives discussed by the WPA statement. In addition, the outcomes already align with much of the existing scholarship on rhetorical grammar and writing instruction—a match-up that allows me to focus on how and when

to teach grammar in the context of writing rather that attempting to align the benefits of rhetorical grammar with the objectives for first-year writing courses.

Even with the emphasis on college preparation, it remains important to highlight the necessity of grammar, writing, and communication as tools for everyday use. Ultimately, one important goal of high school English classes should be to produce strong writers who are prepared for the various writing environments they will encounter upon completion of secondary education. All students—those who are college-bound and work-bound—should be given the opportunity to learn to think, communicate, and persuade through rhetorical grammar and writing instruction. While this approach does keep the WPA Outcomes in mind and hopes to ease the transition to college, it should still benefit those students who do not plan to attend college by equipping them with the tools to write in other contexts including cover letters and professional communication. To do this, the proposed system of rhetorical grammar moves grammar from an isolated classroom activity to a way of thinking about and investigating language and knowledge. Through rhetorical grammar, students learn critical thinking skills that will assist them with grammar, writing, and reading as they progress through high school and move on to college.

2.6 The Vision

I hope I have clearly established that rhetorical grammar is not (and does not intend to be) formal, decontextualized grammar instruction. Thus, introducing rhetorical grammar into the secondary writing curriculum does not mean incorporating isolated exercises in parts of speech or worksheets on subject-verb agreement. Even the activities that explicitly pertain to rhetorical grammar are not meant to be taught as stand-alone activities. Rhetorical grammar works alongside writing instruction to

encourage students to explore grammatical concepts in their writing and to illuminate the ways in which grammar can shape a piece of writing to fit a specific audience, purpose, or context. When assigning rhetorical grammar activities and assignments, it is important to highlight the connections to writing and to always ask students to implement the tools and techniques in their own writing. This approach leaves room for class and small-group discussion as a way of integrating grammar with writing and removing the stigma that writing is a solitary activity. The hope is that using discussion in addition to the individual writing activities can help students work through questions and become more comfortable with the role of grammar in all forms of communication.

With the macroscopic view of the vision in mind, I can now address some specific considerations, beginning with error and how to address it rhetorically in the secondary classroom. Under this system, error is addressed following the suggestions of Mina Shaughnessy: It becomes a catalyst for language exploration. Although students should learn correctness according to Standard English—to be used in academic and workplace writing—they should also be encouraged to explore alternate speech patterns and grammatical choices that break away from convention to expose the use and purpose of dialects and vernacular. One way to distinguish between levels of formality and style is through genre and genre conventions. For example, students will be expected to use Standard English for test preparation and academic essays, but when writing in other genres (including short stories, letters, etc.), students will be encouraged to play with language and grammar to investigate whether non-standard English is more appropriate for some rhetorical situations. Using a genre approach not only helps illuminate and establish conventions but also works to engage students in the dynamic nature of expression and language. Students can experiment with rap or poetry to

understand the use and importance of slang and to learn that the levels of communication work on a sliding scale. For example, students might be asked to translate a passage from Shakespeare into a contemporary rap or poem or to rewrite a popular song using the conventions of Standard English. Through language play with genre and translation, students begin to establish their own rules for speech and develop a better understanding of why grammar matters, furthering the idea that all grammatical choices are rhetorical—even those that seemingly break the rules. This approach allows teachers to discuss error through a rhetorical lens that encourages students to continue exploring language rather than upsetting students when they feel excluded from dominant language practices. Imposing the rules of Standard English on a group of diverse students can easily come across as favoritism, as some dialects are privileged over others. Rhetorical grammar works to avoid this problem by teaching that dialects, slang, and non-standard forms of English are perfectly acceptable when used in the appropriate context.

Rhetorical grammar fits within a broader scheme of writing instruction because each lesson and activity works to prepare students for an upcoming writing assignment and/or builds on previous composing experiences. Students are asked to apply the knowledge gained from rhetorical grammar to actual writing assignments to put the newly acquired knowledge in use. Therefore, this system differs drastically from formal, decontextualized grammar instruction in which grammar is isolated from all other writing activities and assignments. Importantly, the teacher must facilitate the transfer of grammar to writing through discussion, lecture, and assignments. Teachers cannot assume that rhetorical grammar will automatically transfer to student writing *even if* grammar is taught in the context of writing. Rather, teachers must take an active role in

identifying and highlighting the connections between rhetorical grammar lessons and writing assignments to promote the continued importance of both grammar and writing.

2.7 Scope and Sequence

The proposed system of rhetorical grammar is intended to prepare students for college-level writing by aligning the standards and expectations with the WPA Outcomes for FYC. Although that goal sounds simple enough, it easily becomes overwhelming when we consider that teachers only have four years to prepare students for college writing and that, during those four years, teachers are expected to accomplish additional English-related tasks. Again, I do not intend to provide an entire writing or English curriculum, but I hope that illustrating the scope and sequence of rhetorical grammar will give teachers an idea of where to place rhetorical grammar instruction within the larger curriculum. Ideally, the goals and outcomes set forth in this section will highlight areas of overlap within existing curricula. As Jeff Anderson, Eileen Simmons, Rebecca Sipe, and others discuss,[11] grammar enhances instruction in reading, writing, speaking, and listening. When applied through each literacy act, this scope and sequence can fit into secondary curricula without having to remove or change much of what already exists. Before outlining my scope and sequence, I must address what has already been suggested and, in some cases, implemented. The CCSS provides a sequence for writing instruction but not for grammar. Common Core asks students in ninth through twelfth grade to write arguments, informative/explanatory texts, and narratives at every grade level, with an increased emphasis on research in eleventh and twelfth grades. While this is technically a sequence, the CCSS does not give clear indication as to how or when

[11] See "Zooming in and Zooming out: Putting Grammar in Context into Context" by Jeff Anderson, "The Grammars of Reading" by Eileen Simmons, and "Grammar Matters" by Rebecca Sipe.

students move through these genres nor does it provide distinct goals and outcomes for each grade.

Unlike Common Core, which offers broad outcomes without much sequencing, Sams describes a sequence of instruction from sixth through twelfth grade. Sams's sequence is a useful starting place to see what another scholar says about sequencing grammar instruction, but Sams presents a very general treatment of grammar in her sequence. To summarize Sams's sequence very generally, students in sixth grade will learn parts of speech before working on sentence patterns in seventh grade and a range of noun phrases and compound-complex sentences in eighth grade. In high school, ninth grade students spend time reviewing and reinforcing previous concepts before learning cohesion and arrangement in tenth grade and style in eleventh grade. Students finish high school with another year of review and reinforcement to prepare students for argument and style in college (Sams 64). This sequence is more comprehensive than the one I propose because it reaches back to sixth grade. However, it is more general in its description and leaves readers with questions about the connection between the concept at each stage and whether transfer will be encouraged on a long-term scale—not just from one grade to the next. For example, will students return to concepts learned in sixth grade when they are reviewing in twelfth grade, and how might that prepare them for college? Despite these questions, Sams's sequence aligns with mine on the issues of college preparation, argumentation, style, and the general need for a system of grammar. In the sequence that follows, I provide an overview of goals for ninth through twelfth grade to offer a more detailed account of what occurs at each grade than that provided by Sams. While I completely agree that this work should begin long before

high school, I focus on high school in order to look more deeply at each grade and to focus the conversation on college preparation.

The scope of this system of rhetorical grammar is such that it fits within the context of a broader system of writing, allowing me to consider breadth and depth of instruction. The four-year sequence provides breadth as it works to transition students through high school and ease the transition to college while the emphasis on only rhetorical grammar allows me to look deeply at one aspect of writing instruction that could offer improvement to writing curricula as a whole. Although a broader scope would provide a more complete view of grammar and writing in secondary education, this somewhat more limited scope allows me to further explore rhetorical grammar and its place in writing instruction while offering suggestions for how to implement rhetorical grammar in the classroom and providing class assignments and activities.

The sequence begins with ninth grade. Based on my analysis of the CCSS and TEKS, I assume that students come into high school with minimal knowledge of grammar and writing. To transition students from middle school to high school and to begin the scaled instruction in rhetorical grammar, ninth grade students will be introduced to rhetorical grammar through an apprenticeship model that is similar to the one described by Cornelia Paraskevas.[12] Apprenticeship allows students to explore published texts—both fiction and nonfiction—to investigate rhetorical choices in writing. Because this is the beginning of students' rhetorical grammar education, much of the investigation and exploration should take place through class discussion so students can practice observing and discussing rhetorical choices in example texts. In these discussions, students will be asked to identify the audience, purpose, and context of

[12] See Cornelia Paraskevas's "Grammar Apprenticeship" page 65.

various kinds of writing—such as novels, short stories, and poems—and will look holistically at the rhetorical choices. By analyzing rhetorical choices and discussing the effective use of rhetorical grammar in authentic texts, students learn about the power of language through the writing of others.

To open discussion and exploration of rhetorical grammar, students will learn the foundations of rhetorical grammar, beginning with the verb phrase. Several scholars suggest beginning with the verb phrase because it is the foundation of our language.[13] The verb and verb phrase set the basis for sentence patterns, which can be as simple as noun phrase plus verb phrase. To effectively teach sentence patterns, students at this stage also need to be introduced to nouns and noun phrases. Being able to easily identify the characteristics of nouns and verbs leads to instruction in not only more complex sentence patters and verb use but also adjectivals and adverbials. Using an apprenticeship model, students can identify noun and verb use, sentence patterns, and more in the authentic texts they read for class. Some activities and assignments might discuss the ability of the writer to make choices—specifically looking at grammar and punctuation to discuss rhetorical choices at the sentence level—and how those choices affect the writer's tone and style. Students might also use sentence diagramming to visually represent the grammatical choices and to understand those choices in a deeper way.[14] As students progress through ninth grade, they should become more adept at

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[13] See Sarah D'Eloia's "The Uses—and Limits—of Grammar" pages 20-35, Jeff Anderson's "Zooming In and Zooming Out" page 31, Lynn Sams page 58, Anthony Hunter's "A New Grammar that Has Clearly Improved Writing" pages 104-105, Rhoda Byler Yoder's "Of Fake Verbs and Kid Words" pages 84-86, and Mina Shaughnessy's *Errors and Expectations* chapter 4.

[14] Sentence diagramming should not be taught as a content area or be used separate from writing instruction. Rather, diagrams help students break down sentences using a visual aid to understand the sentence structure or to break down complex sentences to understand the meaning. Lynn Sams states, "A sentence diagram visually and readily depicts how all parts of a simple or complex sentence relate to its core subject and verb; displays how each unit in the sentence is related to others; shows where slots exist for expanding the sentence; and highlights the links that connect ideas within and between clauses" (59).

identifying specific choices in the texts they read in order to start thinking about the role of rhetorical grammar in their own writing.

As an example, students might be asked to read Harper Lee's *To Kill A Mockingbird* as part of the ninth grade curriculum. While reading this text, students might look at the ways in which Lee uses grammar rhetorically to create specific voices for each character, looking specifically at her use of noun and verb phrases. Lee constructs Scout's voice as childish by using simple nouns, verbs, and sentence construction. Toward the beginning of the novel, Lee writes "Boo wasn't crazy, he was high-strung at times … Boo was not to be charged with anything: he was not a criminal" (11). While Scout is retelling something she heard from an adult, we hear the child's voice through the word choice and sentence construction. Students might also discuss the audience, purpose, and context of the novel to consider the rhetorical situation Lee faced while writing. This helps students become readers, audience members, and writers by asking them to engage with the text in several different ways.

After an introduction to rhetorical grammar during freshman year, students should be comfortable identifying sentence patterns and be able to identify some rhetorical choices that authors make. Students should also come into sophomore year with a basic understanding of audience, purpose, and context, and why those elements matter for writers. At the next stage, sophomores will be asked to consider elements of rhetoric at the sentence level at which point classroom instruction shifts toward direct lessons in rhetorical grammar. Students will use imitation activities as a way of implementing some tools of rhetorical grammar in their own writing. As scholars have suggested for many years, imitation helps students understand and engage with

effective writing by using examples from published texts as a guide.[15] Paraskevas argues, "Pattern imitation helps writers create sentences—under careful guidance—that they would not necessarily create on their own" (66). Importantly, she points out that "imitation is not simply copying; rather … it reunites grammar with rhetorical effect" (66).

By first asking students to identify the rhetorical choices and effects in a piece of writing and then asking them to imitate those choices in their own writing, teachers help students begin to see that intentionality is necessary to construct rhetorically effective sentences. Students can be asked to imitate sentences for structure, cohesion, subordination and coordination, and rhythm. Requiring students to look only at the sentence-level and to consider the options that they have available to them as writers leads students to see writing as a generative process. Through imitation activities, students continue to work closely with authentic texts while beginning to navigate rhetorical grammar in their own writing. For example, students might find a sentence they particularly admire from the assigned reading—perhaps Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*. Students will then analyze the sentence for coordination and subordination, looking specifically at why it works for the audience, purpose, and context and discussing the admirable grammatical and stylistic qualities. Finally, students will imitate the sentence in a piece of their own writing—ideally, something they are already working on for class. This activity not only raises students' awareness of effective writing but also asks them to analyze and implement the grammatical tools in their own writing.

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[15] See Joan Berger's "Teaching Writers through Grammar Study" page 58, Paul Butler's "Reconsidering the Teaching of Style" pages 77-81, Robert Connors's "The Erasure of the Sentence" pages 100-102, Deborah Dean's "Shifting Perspectives about Grammar" page 22, Mary Ehrenworth's "Grammar—Comma—a New Beginning" pages 92-93, Myhill et al. page 107, Paraskevas page 66-67, and Eileen Simmons's "The Grammars of Reading" pages 51-52.

As grammatical concepts become more complex, rhetorical grammar instruction does not have to move away entirely from imitation. During junior year, students can revisit imitation when learning new concepts of rhetorical grammar. Students can begin thinking about how to control their message through grammar and how to target particular audiences and contexts. To do so, students might revisit parts of speech to consider intentionality when choosing adverbials, adjectivals, and nominals that have the most powerful impact on their message. Another way to control the message is through stylistic considerations that build on or change elements of grammar learned previously, such as the use of polysyndeton and asyndeton for coordination or the deliberate use of a fragment.

It might be more common at this stage to see students intentionally breaking common grammar "rules" as they explore and play with rhetorical concepts. For this reason, students should be asked to provide brief explanations alongside these nontraditional choices as proof of learning. In other words, students should acknowledge the intentionality of their language use to prove that they are making rhetorical choices and that they understand the effects of those choices. Students will also continue to work with invention as they move beyond sentence-based imitation and use rhetorical grammar to tailor their writing to a variety of genres (including narrative and argumentation), looking closely at both sentence structure and rhetorical situations. Juniors are introduced to the idea that rhetoric begins at the sentence level, yet it transcends the sentence to affect the entire piece of writing.

Students in eleventh grade will explore rhetorical grammar through sentence structure and through organization of longer texts to begin to understand the role of grammar in argumentation. During this time, students will begin reading examples of

argumentation and discussing the rhetorical choices in example texts. For example, students might read Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech and discuss (verbally or in writing) the choices King made that were persuasive for his audience and purpose. Several rhetorical grammar elements in the speech might include parallel structure, repetition, and asyndeton. For example, King proclaims, "Go back to Mississippi, go back to Alabama, go back to South Carolina, go back to Georgia, go back to Louisiana, go back to the slums and ghettos of our northern cities, knowing that somehow this situation can and will be changed." Here, we see the repetition of "go back to" at the beginning of the sentence, which sets a melodic tone and emphasizes King's message. As students identify these and other choices, they should also consider the rhetorical effect on the audience and purpose of the speech. Additionally, juniors will write for a variety of genres—including narrative, argumentation, and standardized tests—to learn the ways in which grammar can shape and convey meaning for specific purposes.

During the final year of this four-year system, students will be expected to revisit and apply knowledge from previous years through grammar and writing assignments that work toward the WPA Outcomes. Seniors will use rhetorical grammar activities to explore argumentation and analysis. By senior year, students will primarily use rhetorical grammar in their own writing but will continue to look at grammatical choices in published texts that serve as models of effective argumentation. By analyzing example texts for effective rhetorical choices, students practice new ways of discussing rhetoric and discovering the role of the author. For example, students might be asked to read common examples of argumentation such as presidential speeches or scholarly articles. While reading, teachers should encourage students to reflect on and bring up elements

of rhetorical grammar from previous years to transfer knowledge about genre, sentence structure, and style to conversations about rhetorical devices, an author's ethos, and the strength of an argument. Following these discussions, this information should be applied to a similar writing situation. Students might be asked to write their own campaign speeches or write a short academic essay. Before writing these types of assignments, students must first identify the rhetorical situation, discuss effective grammatical and rhetorical choices, and consider the appropriate style for their piece. By the end of senior year, students should feel comfortable discussing argumentation, analyzing texts, and constructing an argument through writing.

2.8 Conclusion

My analysis of the CCSS and TEKS reveals that although scholars have advocated the use of research-based grammar initiatives, the national and state guidelines have not taken the scholarship into consideration to design grammar and writing instruction for the secondary English curriculum. While the secondary outcomes do not support the teaching of rhetorical grammar, the WPA Outcomes for First-Year Composition do align with the principles and pedagogy of rhetorical grammar. As addressed in Chapter One, much of the scholarship on new grammar approaches is currently geared toward college-level instruction. Therefore, the connection between WPA Outcomes and rhetorical grammar should not be surprising. However, as rhetorical grammar moves down to secondary education, the contradictions between grammar pedagogy and the national and state guidelines need to be addressed. (I begin the work of this discussion in Chapters Three and Four, as I identify the specific constraints teachers and schools face and propose rhetorical grammar activities that align with the TEKS).

Although I am neither the first nor the only person to encourage the use of tools for writing, I hope this sequence provides an example of how tools such as rhetorical grammar, including imitation and sentence patterns, can be implemented in a four-year secondary curriculum. This sequence not only offers a possible approach but also provides a spiraling curriculum that continually builds on and expands the tools and content from previous years. Using a spiraling sequence, students progress through a curriculum that uses prior knowledge to develop new knowledge, which can be applied to new writing assignments and contexts. By aligning rhetorical grammar with expectations for college writing and creating a sequence aimed at argumentation, this system not only seeks to prepare students for college writing but also for critical thinking and writing beyond academic contexts. Further, the focus on rhetorical grammar, on its place in the writing curriculum, and on the cyclical nature of the sequence allows us to see the opportunities afforded to teachers and students through rhetorical grammar instruction and the ways in which the concepts allow for continual growth in language and writing development. In Chapter Three, I identify five potential roadblocks standing in the way of curricular change, including an in-depth look at the CCSS and the TEKS. The analysis of the national and state guidelines further illuminates the lack of grammar emphasis in the secondary English curriculum. In addition, I examine the STAAR test—Texas' standardized achievement test—to bring to light the pedagogical difference between the STAAR test and the recommendations for rhetorical grammar. Further, Chapter Three reveals under-preparation of students and teachers' negative attitudes toward grammar instruction. Chapter Three responds to this chapter by providing a practical look at the suggestions for a rhetorical grammar sequence before designing rhetorical grammar activities in Chapter Four.

Chapter 3

Challenges to the Implementation of Rhetorical Grammar

3.1 Introduction

In Chapter Two, I discussed a sequence of rhetorical grammar instruction for secondary education that works toward the WPA Outcomes for FYC as a way of preparing students for college writing. Looking at what is currently taught in high schools by reviewing the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS), I found that the existing English Language Arts (ELA) requirements do not promote the teaching of grammar. I addressed this oversight through a sequence that is targeted toward the WPA Outcomes to show that the Outcomes already align with the principles of rhetorical grammar. While rhetorical grammar and the Outcomes are compatible and the proposed sequence addresses a gap in secondary instruction, the argument made in Chapter Two must also take into account a wide range of contingencies and requirements for secondary education. Essentially, the sequence provided in Chapter Two exists in an ideal world. Unfortunately, the world we live in has several constraints standing in the way of my vision that I must now address. However, this chapter pushes beyond the simple exposition of curricular problems to highlight the ways in which a system of rhetorical grammar could address those problems to begin the work of curricular change. While the proposals set forth in this thesis will not immediately solve the problems addressed, I hope to bring to light some challenges faced by teachers that inhibit the success of

writing instruction in secondary schools and to provide one path to curricular and pedagogical change.[16]

In Chapter Two, I briefly examined the CCSS and TEKS to consider what teachers are currently required to address in secondary English classes. While I found that the national and state guidelines give only a cursory treatment to grammar, I did not discuss the ways in which these curricula might prevent the teaching of grammar in secondary education. To move toward a more realistic view of the possibility of including rhetorical grammar in high school, I must look at the strict mandates teachers operate under to consider why grammar is not currently being taught and how the conflicting aims might be addressed. Some of the roadblocks standing in the way of more substantive secondary grammar instruction are the CCSS, the TEKS, the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) test, student preparation, and teacher preparation. Alone, each of these entities would make curricular change difficult, but when taken together, we see that secondary teachers are given very little room to adapt grammar and writing instruction for their students' needs or beyond what the tests and guidelines require.

3.2 Common Core State Standards (CCSS)

Although Texas has not adopted Common Core at the time of this writing, I think it is worth discussing for two reasons: 1) the majority of the nation (43 states so far) has implemented Common Core, so it is important to consider a system that many teachers operate under; and 2) Texas could choose to adopt the CCSS at any time, so we should have an understanding of Common Core's implications on grammar and writing

[16] The work required to solve the following problems extends far beyond the scope of rhetorical grammar, but I still felt it was necessary to address these large scale problems to provide a realistic view of what secondary teachers face in regards to ELA instruction.

curricula to be prepared for potential changes. The Common Core[17] guidelines were written in 2009 and were formally adopted beginning in June 2010. The CCSS claim to "establish clear, consistent guidelines for what every student should know and be able to do in math and English language arts from kindergarten through 12th grade" ("What Parents Should Know"). Further, the Standards contend that they are preparing students for college and careers by "developing the critical-thinking, problem-solving, and analytical skills students will need to be successful" ("What Parents Should Know"). The CCSS website discusses how their ELA standards diverge from other standards with three points of difference: 1) regular practice with difficult texts and academic language; 2) reading, writing, and speaking using evidence from literature and informative texts; and 3) "building knowledge through content rich nonfiction" ("Key Shifts"). These components indicate that the Standards intend to prepare students for college by helping them think, read, and write in a more critical and analytic way. This concept aligns well with my proposal for rhetorical grammar; however, the actual standards for secondary ELA do not give any indication as to how or when students will learn to think and write in new ways.

Despite Common Core's stated goal of preparing students for college, the guidelines contradict one another, making it difficult to know what the Standards aim to do. For example, the Standards claim, "These learning goals outline what a student should know and be able to do at the end of each grade," yet the outcomes for secondary education are grouped into two sections—one for grades 9-10 and a second for grades

[17] It is worth noting that the CCSS guidelines stand in opposition to NCTE recommendations. Tyler Branson discusses the interaction between CCSS and NCTE at great length, arguing, "In other words, while the NCTE crafted detailed objections to the CCSSI in their report, it was clear to Hesse that their role was merely to rubber stamp a set of standards that had already been tied to Race to the Top (RTTT) funding and had already been 'backmapped' from collegereadiness to learning outcomes at the Kindergarten level. As far as Hesse was concerned, the NCTE's suggestions were either a) unheeded, b) unpersuasive, or c) unimportant to the CCSSI" (5).

11-12 (“About the Standards”). Although the website claims to provide learning outcomes for each grade level, the grouped approach suggests that secondary students have the same goals for two years in a row. This breakdown leads me to believe that students will not achieve the goals set for them by the end of ninth and eleventh grades because the same expectations are set for them in tenth and twelfth grades, respectively.

Further, the 9-10 and 11-12 outcomes do not differ drastically from one another. An example of this ambiguity can be seen in the writing outcomes for 9-10 that ask students to “develop claim(s) and counterclaims fairly, supplying evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both in a manner that anticipates the audience's knowledge level and concerns” (“Writing > Grade 9-10”) while the 11-12 outcomes expect students to “develop claim(s) and counterclaims fairly and thoroughly, supplying the most relevant evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both in a manner that anticipates the audience's knowledge level, concerns, values, and possible biases” (“Writing > Grade 11-12”). Based on these outcomes, students in ninth and tenth grade are expected to develop claims fairly and to supply evidence that is only loosely related while students in eleventh and twelfth grade must develop claims “fairly and thoroughly” and use the “most relevant evidence.” Additionally, eleventh and twelfth grade students should have more audience awareness and pay more attention to what readers bring to a text. While I agree that expectations for student writing should grow as students progress through high school, I feel that the standards should change in more concrete ways. The ambiguous outcomes might be an obstacle for secondary teachers because it seems that all of the secondary grades run together under the provided sequence, making it difficult to sequence grammar and writing instruction in a productive, fluid manner. While curricular flexibility is

important, I stress the importance of discrete learning outcomes for each grade because clear learning objectives can help provide a sequence for ELA instruction that minimizes the possibility of gaps and overlaps of instruction between grade levels. With a loose sequence, it not only becomes easier to track the progress of students but also allows teachers to ensure that students are meeting the objectives required for each stage. Importantly, the proposed system does not remove flexibility; rather, it provides a conceptual map for grammar instruction to help prepare students for future writing tasks. As it stands, teachers operating under Common Core likely have the added difficulty of figuring out what their students are expected to know at each level because the Standards are highly generalized and unstructured. Without a separate curriculum at each stage, how will ninth grade teachers know if students are meeting all of the objectives to be adequately prepared for tenth grade? Although a writing curriculum does not need to be rigidly structured to be effective, it does need some level of organization and development to give students and teachers an idea of what is expected of them at each stage and to avoid re-teaching or missing content areas.[18]

Another aspect of Common Core that could be problematic for teachers is the separation of language outcomes from writing outcomes. Although the outcomes indicate some overlap between language and writing—"Demonstrate command of the conventions of Standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing" ("Language > Grade 9-10")—teachers are not given the idea that language and writing continually inform one another or that students should be encouraged to explore language use *through* writing. The unnatural separation of language from writing presents a challenge for teachers because the Standards do not provide the space for

[18] Lynn Sams promotes the use of a flexible structure on page64 of her article "How to Teach Grammar, Analytical Thinking, and Writing: A Method That Works."

several key principles of rhetorical grammar—exploration, invention, and inquiry of language in writing. While it seems as though teachers should know to connect language to writing, the Standards do not illuminate explicit connections between literacy acts, and we cannot assume that teachers will know to unite language and writing in the classroom or that they will develop a pedagogy that situates all literacy acts as intimately connected. In essence, CCSS presents language as an exterior consideration to writing, emphasizing grammar as only an editing tool for error correction. This product-oriented approach to language and writing emphasizes both categories as a means to an end rather than as tools that continually inform one another.[19] Under a product-based pedagogy, language and writing can be discussed as separate entities that serve different purposes. The Standards suggest that language informs writing through proper grammar and usage, but CCSS does not convey that students have control over their language or that it can be manipulated for a specific audience and purpose—even using non-standard English when appropriate. Although a pedagogy can be adopted that unites the separate sections of Common Core, nothing in the Standards suggests that teachers are encouraged to do so or that control of language contributes to effective writing.

Common Core also constrains teachers in their ability to use rhetorical grammar to reveal the wide-reaching use of grammar and writing because the Standards encourage students to use language in narrow ways and to view writing as a primarily academic task. While my sequence does aim to prepare students for college, it does so through an approach that encourages students to explore language use, define their own

[19] The product approach goes against over thirty years of research on the writing process, which emphasizes the use of a recursive method of writing in which students prewrite, draft, revise, and edit. Janet Emig's 1977 article "Writing as a Mode of Learning" introduced the idea that focusing on process over product allows students to use writing to learn and explore a wide variety of topics.

rules, and understand the inventive power of grammar and language. Therefore, students are prepared for academic writing tasks but are also exposed to the multiplicity of choices in grammar and writing that allow them to write for non-academic genres. The outcomes provided by CCSS seem to focus only on college writing—an approach that excludes students who do not intend to go to college or those who feel that academic writing does not apply to them. Further, the narrow focus on academic writing misses an opportunity to prepare students for careers and informal writing environments that all students—those who are college-bound and those who are not—will encounter at some point in their lives.

Although a sequence for grammar and writing is lacking in the secondary outcomes, the Standards provide a comprehensive treatment of grammar for Kindergarten through eighth grade ("English Language Arts Standards > Writing"). Unfortunately, it appears that students are expected to remember and apply all of the information they learned about grammar in primary school to new writing contexts in secondary school. As scholars in the 1960s established, grammar learned in isolated environments does not transfer to new writing contexts.[20] Therefore, the CCSS assumption that grammar instruction from K-8 education will transfer to high school writing is unfounded. An additional obstacle for teachers stems from the idea that students in ninth through twelfth grade should only have to apply grammatical concepts to their writing rather than to use grammar as a tool for language analysis and investigation. Under the proposed system, grammar in secondary school moves beyond the foundational elements learned in primary school to include language control, style,

[20] See Elley et al.'s "The Role of Grammar in Secondary School English Curriculum" in which they assert, "The results presented show that the effects of such grammar study are negligible" (17), Braddock et al.'s *Research in Written Composition*, and Langer et al.'s *Research on Written Composition: A Response to Hillocks' Report* pages 89-90.

and nonconventional uses. In other words, grammar instruction in high school builds on and repurposes the grammatical knowledge learned in primary school to enhance students' grammatical ability as writers and designers of language. I do not intend to argue that the CCSS K-8 sequence for grammar is inadequate; it seems to address not only common problem areas for grammar but also teaches students the function of various parts of speech. What I find problematic for secondary teachers is that the Standards do not leave room for additional or advanced study of grammar in high school.

Although CCSS provides a general sequence for writing instruction, grammar is detached from writing and thinking and is not promoted as a means of invention. This means that my rhetorical grammar system does not neatly align with the requirements set in place by the CCSS for secondary ELA. While I think the K-8 sequence makes progress toward stronger grammar curriculum at the primary level, I still find the secondary grammar curriculum and the overall approach to writing concerning. The CCSS asks teachers to teach grammar separately from writing (as only a language skill), obscuring the opportunity to teach grammar for invention, inquiry, and critical thinking, as discussed in Chapter Two. Without teaching grammar and language in this way, it is unclear how teachers will be able to teach writing as critical thinking, which the CCSS includes as one of its main objectives for students.[21]

3.3 Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS)

In the state of Texas, teachers do not follow the CCSS guidelines because Texas has yet to adopt Common Core. However, Texas has its own standards that teachers

[21] "The skills and knowledge captured in the ELA/literacy standards are designed to prepare students for life outside the classroom. They include critical-thinking skills and the ability to closely and attentively read texts in a way that will help them understand and enjoy complex works of literature" ("English Language Arts Standards").

must follow. The TEKS present several challenges for teachers, including lack of structure and guidance and lack of tools to prepare students for the tasks being asked of them. The TEKS for English I-IV (grades nine through twelve) include seven sections on various writing skills: 1) writing process; 2) literary texts; 3) expository texts; 4) persuasive texts; 5) conventions; 6) handwriting, capitalization, and punctuation; and 7) spelling (TEKS). These same seven headings appear for each grade level, and the sub-points beneath each heading differ only slightly as students move from ninth through twelfth grade. In addition to the writing sections, the TEKS also provide guidelines for research, reading and comprehension, and listening. The research sub-section titled "Organizing and Presenting Ideas" seems loosely related to writing when it states that students will present written or oral reports that "use a variety of formats and rhetorical strategies to argue for the thesis" and "develop an argument" (TEKS). However, grammar and writing do not appear to be linked to the other sections. The TEKS reveal that secondary students are being asked to perform a wide range of writing tasks, yet the guidelines do not suggest how or when teachers will prepare students to meet the outcomes expected of them.

Like the CCSS, the TEKS expect students in all four years of high school to employ "conventions of academic language when speaking or writing" and to "edit drafts for grammar, mechanics, and spelling," yet the TEKS leave no room for any kind of grammar instruction let alone rhetorical grammar (TEKS). Importantly, the TEKS do not suggest that conventions can be used for anything other than editing, removing any opportunity for grammar to be used rhetorically for inquiry or invention.[22] While

[22] See Error and Correctness section in Chapter One, which discusses the negative connotations of grammar as correctness, the lack of improvement in student writing when grammar is taught this way, and this missed opportunities to teach situated grammar that is fit or unfit for a particular context rather than wholly right or wrong.

students are expected to use "a variety of sentence structures," the TEKS seem to suggest that language control, such as sentence variety, comes from practice with different genres and writing processes not from instruction in grammar and rhetoric. Therefore, students are not given the tools to achieve the outcomes set in place for them. Further, the TEKS do not provide teachers with the means of equipping students with grammatical and rhetorical tools in the context of writing. In terms of grammar instruction, this approach contradicts the scholarly denunciation of formal grammar—grammar taught in isolation—because it does not promote transfer to writing. More importantly, the segregated approach to writing instruction in the TEKS reveals a lack of transfer among all of the literacy acts. If students are not taught that grammar, writing, and rhetoric cannot be separated from one another *and* from other communicative acts, then teachers cannot assume that students will know how to unite these concepts in their writing. The vague requirements and lack of tools provide constraints to grammar instruction for both students and teachers in Texas. Without a clear sequence or means of teaching grammar, it is easy to see why teachers have chosen not to make grammar instruction an important facet of English curriculum.

3.4 STAAR Test Requirements

In addition to the TEKS, Texas also requires the State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) test for which teachers must prepare their students. Under the current guidelines, students only take STAAR for English I and II—grades nine and ten, respectively. Students must pass both sections of the STAAR test in order to graduate, so some students might have to prepare and sit for the exams beyond tenth grade. The ELA STAAR tests for high school include a writing section along with a reading comprehension section. For writing, students are asked to prepare and write an

expository essay in English I and a persuasive essay in English II. At each level, students must execute their essay on one sheet of paper with only twenty-six lines. For the reading comprehension sections, students are given a single reading in the first section and two readings in the second section. In the first section, students read and respond to the passage with multiple-choice questions and a short answer question. In the second section, students read both passages and respond to one short answer question in which they are asked to connect the two passages in their response. The reading comprehension portions follow the same format for English I and II, but the passages and questions differ.

While rhetorical grammar can assist students with both the reading comprehension and the essay portions of the test, the strict testing requirements and the associated test preparation pose an obstacle for teachers interested in implementing a system of rhetorical grammar. Knowing grammar and its rhetorical purpose helps students construct sentences and paragraphs that develop a cohesive essay. In my system, students are asked to use the grammatical and rhetorical knowledge they have developed in previous years to write for new genres (including persuasion and exposition) and to explore the use of grammar and rhetoric in argumentation. Through a rhetorical grammar sequence, students learn that argument begins at the sentence level and that controlling a sentence through grammar affords writers greater control over the paragraph and essay. Additionally, students learn that writing extends beyond academic contexts and provides writers with tools to write for other media and genres. Unfortunately, the requirements for STAAR go against these powerful suggestions for language use and do not allow for a comprehensive approach to rhetorical grammar. STAAR presents four primary challenges for my rhetorical grammar scheme, including

1) when to introduce argumentation; 2) lack of instruction in rhetoric and writing; 3) test constraints; and 4) differing pedagogical approaches.

The first contradiction between my system and STAAR is when to introduce students to argumentation. Under the rhetorical grammar system that I propose, students work their way up to argumentation as they progress through high school so that they end senior year with an introduction to argumentation, which will be built upon in their first-year composition (FYC) classes in college, according to the WPA Outcomes. My system reserves persuasion and argumentation for the end of high school not because students in earlier grades are not capable of this work but because students can more easily understand the tasks of argumentation if they have a secure foundation for and understanding of rhetorical grammar and its tools. Unlike traditional grammar, rhetorical grammar asks students to think about the function of words and phrases, helping students target each word, phrase, and sentence toward a particular purpose. Moving through a rhetorical grammar sequence, students look at effective grammatical and rhetorical choices in example texts, imitate those choices in their own writing, and learn to control meaning through grammar *before* being asked to construct an original argument. This approach equips students with the tools they will need to effectively engage with argumentation. Without the tools of rhetorical grammar, teachers can assign persuasive essays, but students will likely have more difficulty understanding the task being asked of them.

On the other hand, STAAR asks tenth grade students to write persuasive essays for the test. Again, persuasion is an important genre for secondary students, but STAAR introduces it prematurely according not only to my sequence but also to the TEKS. The TEKS reveal that tenth graders have not had an adequate introduction to writing

processes, grammar, or rhetoric to effectively write persuasively at this stage. Essentially, the test asks students to demonstrate proficiency in concepts they have not had the time to learn (with or without rhetorical grammar instruction). Because students spend all of ninth grade preparing for the expository writing on the English I test, students in tenth grade have only seven months (September-March) to learn the conventions and tools for persuasive writing before the English II test in April. It is problematic that we expect students to learn to write well for any genre with only seven months of instruction, especially when the preparation time is focused more on test taking skills and test requirements than on tools for effective writing. For persuasive writing, this lack of preparation raises more significant concerns because the scholarship discussed in Chapter Two established that persuasion and argumentation are central aims of college writing.[23] Without adequate preparation and instruction in argumentation in high school, students will not enter college with a solid foundation for the writing they will be asked to do in FYC and beyond.

While the lack of time to prepare for STAAR writing is a problem, the lack of tools might be more concerning. The second obstacle—lack of instruction in rhetoric and writing—raises concerns for students' success beyond the STAAR tests in ninth and tenth grades. Although rhetorical grammar instruction could prepare students for STAAR testing—by illuminating genre conventions of the writing portion, providing tools for understanding the reading selections, and strengthening students' understanding of language—the test does not ask teachers to provide instruction in these areas. Rather, the STAAR tests require preparation in test conventions over writing processes and tools. In other words, students learn to write persuasive essays

[23] See section 3 in *Teaching Writing in High School and College: Conversations and Collaborations* edited by Thomas C. Thompson.

without understanding audience, purpose, and context and without learning the persuasive effect of sentence construction, grammatical choices, and overall organization. Without an introduction to rhetoric, students do not know that their choices affect the reader, leaving students unequipped with the skills to strengthen their writing through the choices they make. Further, the concepts of audience, purpose, and context are obscured in a standardized testing environment in which students must write for the test to an unknown audience. Because students have learned the conventions of the test, they might do well on STAAR without fully understanding persuasive writing or rhetoric. Emphasizing test conventions undermines my position for secondary education as something that should prepare students for college because even those students who succeed by STAAR standards might still enter college without knowledge of conventions, rhetorical knowledge, practice with writing processes, and critical thinking skills.[24]

The third constraint that causes tension between the STAAR test and rhetorical grammar stems from the constraints of the test itself. One problem that arises from the test is the actual test requirements: students are expected to write an essay on one sheet of paper that has only twenty-six lines. This seems like a difficult task for even the most prepared writers let alone for students who might struggle with writing and/or language use. Essentially, STAAR tests students on their ability to say something useful as quickly as possible. For the expository essay, students must clearly explain their thinking on a given topic in only one page, and for the persuasive essay, students must persuade readers on a given topic in the same amount of space. While the test asks for development and organization ("English I Expository Scoring Guide"), students are

[24] All of which are included on the "WPA Outcomes for FYC."

severely limited in the amount of development they can provide in only twenty-six lines. This limitation prevents teachers from encouraging students to explore, invent, and inquire—three key goals of rhetorical grammar. Instead of asking students to use writing to explore a topic or as an act of invention, STAAR asks students to give a concrete (often pre-determined) answer to a topic. This product-based method leaves little room for audience awareness and rhetorical knowledge, as students often do not have room for a well thought out introduction or a conclusion that offers an insightful claim to unite the argument with the audience. More importantly, the nature of a standardized test removes the concept of audience altogether. Students do not know toward whom they should target their exposition or persuasion, and even if they did, it seems unlikely that beginning writers could do so in one page.

A second test constraint is the time limit. In four hours (the amount of time given for the STAAR test), students must 1) prepare for and write either an expository or a persuasive essay; 2) read the first selection, answer multiple choice questions, and write a short answer response; and 3) read the two connecting selections and answer a short answer question about the two passages. While all of this can be achieved in four hours, it is done at the expense of writing processes. With a time limit and the expectation that students will finish the test in one sitting, students are encouraged to focus on what the final product says rather than to pay attention to the process that leads to the product. Additionally, students are given only two blank pages (one piece of paper front and back) to plan their essay before writing the final version on the lined page. This restriction means that students have to choose between brainstorming, outlining, and drafting, as they do not have the space to do all three on the paper provided. Further, if students choose to draft, it is assumed that one draft is sufficient to create a product that

will pass as adequate exposition or argumentation. Finally, students are not encouraged to revise what is written on the lined page. While students are graded on conventions and can edit the final draft for grammar and mechanics, there is no room for substantial revision. If students read over the final draft and realize they want to reorganize the paragraphs for a stronger argument, they would have to erase the entire draft and start over at which point the product might become difficult to read (possibly affecting their overall score). When classroom instruction gears toward this four-hour test, it would be difficult for teachers to place heavy emphasis on writing processes or invention. The test constraints limit teachers' ability to consider alternate pedagogies that embrace writing processes, rhetorical grammar, or college-focused writing because the teachers' main objective is to teach the conventions of the test so their students pass. More generally, all of the constraints of the test pose a problem for college preparation: Writing an essay on one sheet of paper within four hours prevents the opportunity for students to learn to write longer essays over the span of several weeks in which they can really engage with the material. The lack of attention to processes and college readiness raises questions about STAAR's alignment with the TEKS, which place an emphasis on both of these goals.[25]

The fourth, and closely related, obstacle for secondary teachers preparing students for the STAAR test is the blatantly different pedagogical approaches required in teaching for the test versus teaching rhetorical grammar as a tool for effective communication. As established, the STAAR test differs from rhetorical grammar in its emphasis of product over process. Scholarship on writing now tells us that writing is a

[25] While the lack of connection between STAAR and the TEKS raises concerns for rhetorical grammar and for writing instruction, the full extent of this problem is beyond the scope of this study. However, additional conversations about and investigations into the compatibility of the STAAR test and the state standards is essential for understanding and improving education in Texas.

process and should be taught as a continually evolving entity.[26] My rhetorical grammar system emphasizes process over product for three reasons. First, it views writing as a mode of thinking in which students engage with their thoughts and learn to think critically through the process of writing. However, STAAR asks students to know what they will say and argue before they begin writing so that they can *produce* a complete essay that answers the prompt in one page. Thus, students are not encouraged to use writing as a mode of invention or as a way to figure out what they believe about a topic or question. Under STAAR's product-oriented approach, it might be difficult for teachers to encourage students to use writing for exploration and invention while still preparing them to do well on the test. Second, I emphasize writing processes because the WPA Outcomes for FYC require first-year college students to have knowledge of and experience with writing processes. My system helps prepare students for college by giving high school students experience with outlining, drafting, and revising. Teachers interested in implementing rhetorical grammar and/or writing processes might find that STAAR is not compatible with this approach. Finally, process is privileged over product in rhetorical grammar because a product approach limits writing to the classroom or test environment. Under a product approach, students learn that they must write to pass the class or the test and that is all. While producing a passable piece of writing might not be the explicit aim of STAAR tests or the associated pedagogy, the constraints and requirements of the test limit teachers' ability to convey the use and purpose of the prescribed writing style beyond STAAR tests. STAAR encourages students to produce and then move on immediately from the writing task rather than continuing to think about and improve upon their writing. On the other hand, processes

[26] See "Writing as a Mode of Learning" by Janet Emig pages 122-124 and "A Cognitive Process Theory of Writing" by Linda Flower and John R. Hayes.

teach students that writing is ongoing and that writing leads to continued learning. Additionally, processes illuminate the use of writing beyond academic contexts by drawing students' attention to the use of writing processes in composing email, writing letters, and applying for jobs. Pedagogically, these two approaches require drastically different tools, lessons, and methods of instruction. Ultimately, STAAR is not asking students to think or explore; it is asking them to provide a correct answer. Rhetorical grammar and process approaches suggest that there are often multiple answers or multiple approaches to the answer, and most importantly, that the answer is far less important than the journey to the answer, as students are continually encouraged to discover how language works and to explore the choices available to them. Unfortunately, teachers who must teach for the STAAR test do not have much liberty to encourage students to use writing as a mode of thinking and learning.

Another pedagogical difference between STAAR and rhetorical grammar arises from the individual nature of test taking. Rhetorical grammar pedagogies encourage teachers to promote exploration through class discussion, allowing students to determine the effect of various grammatical choices and to interact with real audiences. STAAR, unfortunately, is a standardized test, requiring students to take the test individually. The nature of the test dissuades teachers from promoting group exercises, class discussion, and conversations about language because, when the students take the test, they must do so alone and cannot discuss with their peers. This individualistic environment limits teachers' abilities to promote grammar, writing, and language as inherently communal acts. Further, STAAR limits the pedagogical tools to worksheets, essays, and quizzes—tools that are completed individually and are easily evaluated. While similar activities can be used in a system of rhetorical grammar, the new

pedagogy focuses more on class discussion, imitation, use of example texts, language exploration, and authentic writing environments than on quizzes and worksheets.[27]

3.5 Student Preparation

As mentioned in each section so far, the CCSS, TEKS, and STAAR test lack clear structure, allowing for overlaps and gaps in instruction between grade levels. The ambiguity in each curricular guide runs the risk of under preparing students for future study and raises concerns about the ability of teachers to prepare students for college-level writing. Again, the proposed sequence in Chapter Two is not suggested as a formula for writing instruction nor is it *the* solution to the problems in this chapter. Rather, a sequence provides a general structure to move students through the study of grammar and language. Flexibility is not only useful but also encouraged in ELA because it allows grammar and writing instruction to adapt to the continual changes in our language and communication. Although I discuss generality and ambiguity as areas of improvement in the CCSS and TEKS, I do so without encouraging rigid curricula. Instead, the goal is to avoid under preparation of students and gaps in instruction while maintaining the flexibility necessary for effective language study.

As highlighted, the CCSS is at risk for under preparing students by grouping grade levels together and not providing clear outcomes for success at each stage. Further, the CCSS does not sequence instruction in a way that enhances students' understanding as they move through grades nine through twelve. The TEKS raise similar concerns. For example, the writing processes heading of the TEKS includes the same outcomes for ninth and tenth grades with only slight variations in point C for grades eleven and twelve. Although the TEKS provide separate sections for each grade,

[27] See Myhill et al.'s "Playful explicitness with grammar: a pedagogy for writing" pages 105-107.

the ninth and tenth grade writing processes heading C both state, “revise drafts to improve style, word choice, figurative language, sentence variety, and subtlety of meaning after rethinking how well questions of purpose, audience, and genre have been addressed” while the same subheading for grades eleven and twelve expands to include “tropes (e.g., metaphors, similes, analogies, hyperbole, understatement, rhetorical questions, irony), and schemes (e.g., parallelism, antithesis, inverted word order, repetition, reversed structures)” (TEKS). Writing processes subheadings A, B, D, and E are the same for grades nine through twelve. This un-sequenced approach is problematic because it allows for the under-preparation of students by not providing teachers with a clear idea of the curricular objectives for each grade level. As with the CCSS, the TEKS maintain the same writing objectives in two-year groups (9-10 and 11-12), opening the possibility for repetitive instruction or a lack of instruction. While the use of rhetorical devices in eleventh and twelfth grades works to prepare students for college-level writing and includes similar tenets to that of my rhetorical grammar system, the unclear sequence of instruction does not clearly indicate how or when students will learn to apply rhetorical tools in writing.

The STAAR test risks student under-preparation in different ways than the CCSS or TEKS. While the national and state guidelines are vague and un-sequenced, the state test promotes the wrong pedagogy and promotes writing in artificial environments over providing authentic experience with writing processes and genres, including argumentation. With this test, students will be under-prepared for college-level writing because they will lack practice in sustained writing projects, research projects, and lengthy essays. Based on the review of each curricular guide, it seems clear that students are not being prepared for the main objectives for FYC set forth by the WPA: rhetorical

knowledge; critical thinking, reading, and composing; processes; and knowledge of conventions.[28]

3.6 Teacher Preparation and Constraints

A final obstacle to rhetorical grammar comes from the constraints of the schools and teachers interested in applying this new method. The opposition discussed thus far has stemmed largely from tensions between secondary school expectations, college expectations, and testing requirements and the added tension caused by those obstacles not aligning with my proposed system. However, even if we fix the problems addressed in this chapter, we are left with practical considerations within the secondary schools themselves. Some of the school-based constraints include inadequate teacher preparation in grammar and writing pedagogy, teacher reluctance, and the already over-filled English curriculum.

Because I am not an expert on teacher training, I have turned to scholarship from current and former secondary teachers on teacher training and reasons for/against the teaching of grammar to investigate whether teachers themselves might pose a threat to the teaching of rhetorical grammar. While investigating the role of grammar in writing curricula, Myhill and Watson concluded that teachers lack confidence in defining and teaching grammar (49). In their international study, Myhill and Watson also discovered that teachers in English-speaking countries often have an insufficient knowledge of grammar, which does not appear to be a concern in non-English countries (50). They found that this lack of grammatical knowledge arises from the fact that "many current English teachers were not taught grammar at school or university," leading Myhill and Watson to claim, "Teachers' grammatical knowledge needs to be richer and more

[28] My research does not indicate use of the WPA Outcomes at the secondary level. In future projects, it would be interesting to investigate the dissemination of the Outcomes in secondary schools and whether those outcomes inform the curriculum at the local, state, and national levels.

substantive than the grammar they may need to teach their students" (51). Essentially, many current teachers will likely need additional instruction and training before they are properly prepared to teach rhetorical grammar. Myhill and Watson suggest that teachers need "pedagogical content knowledge" that illuminates "the role that grammatical knowledge can play in the classroom" (52). Similarly, Janice Neuleib and Irene Brosnahan argue that teachers need to understand grammar in order to teach it. Neuleib and Brosnahan assert, the "dismissal of grammar teaching [by teachers] is unfortunate not only because practice has shown that teachers must know grammar to analyze student errors but also because many questions regarding grammar instruction are worth studying" (31). The same teachers who dismissed the teaching of grammar were also the ones who failed the grammar test given to participants in Neuleib and Brosnahan's study. The researchers discuss a grammar test given to prospective teachers that revealed "little retention of formal grammatical knowledge and an inability to apply grammar to editing problems" (32). Some surprising results from this test include: 1) "No one could accurately count the number of clauses in the paragraph," and 2) "only seven participants, less than a third of the group, could punctuate the [provided] sentence correctly" (32). The astonishing lack of grammatical knowledge of prospective teachers led Neuleib and Brosnahan to assert, "We strongly feel that writing teachers need to study the historical background of grammar, be well-acquainted with better descriptions of language, and appreciate relations among different grammars" (33). They go on to argue, "[W]hen teachers understand how language works, they can make the description of the language accessible to students" (Neuleib and Brosnahan 33). From this scholarship, we see that several studies have found that writing teachers currently lack the necessary grammatical knowledge to teach grammar to their students.

Additionally, Myhill and Watson and Neuleib and Brosnahan revealed that grammatical knowledge and ability are essential for the effective teaching of grammar and writing.

While the previous studies show a lack of attention to grammar in some teacher preparation programs, the following research indicates why it is important for teachers to study and teach grammar. Brenda Arnett Petruzzella investigates the difference between teacher preparation and the actual practices of classroom teachers in her article "Grammar Instruction: What Teachers Say." Petruzzella indicates that as a new teacher she "had received little practical instruction" about how to teach grammar (68). Importantly, Petruzzella highlights a gap between university attitudes toward the teaching of grammar and actual expectations in secondary schools, and unfortunately, this gap leaves teachers unprepared to teach grammar. Further, she claims that colleges had not made it clear that formal grammar was discouraged but that grammar instruction was still important. This distinction is key to my rhetorical grammar scheme because it asks teachers and students to value grammar in a new way, yet many teachers have not had practice with nontraditional grammar instruction or pedagogy. Petruzzella found grammar necessary in her instructional methods as a new teacher despite her teacher preparation courses that devalued the teaching of grammar. Similarly, in his article, "What English Teachers Need to Know about Grammar," William Murdick acknowledges that grammar is a difficult subject. However, he uses this admission to assert that teachers need to have a strong grasp on the subject and its intricacies. He argues, "English teachers need to look into generative grammar enough to acquire some sense of the vastness and complexity of the unconscious knowledge behind their students' everyday language use" (Murdick 40). Murdick reveals that knowing and

teaching grammar assists not only with writing instruction but also with understanding students' language use.

In addition to preparation, another challenge to rhetorical grammar is teacher willingness and effort. Unfortunately, teachers do not always value the teaching of grammar and writing and are not open to new teaching practices pertaining to this field. In "The Knowing-Doing Gap: Challenges of Effective Writing Instruction in High School," Sylvia Read and Melanie M. Landon-Hays contend that "high school writing is still in need of improvement," but they argue that this failure is not solely the fault of the students or the curriculum (6). Instead, they found, "Secondary teachers across content areas often feel that they are poorly prepared to teach and assess writing" (Read and Landon-Hays 6). Additionally, the teachers surveyed agreed that writing is a process but believed that teaching it as such would take too much time (Read and Landon-Hays 10). The teachers felt that "the more writing [they] assign, the more [they have] to grade, and they don't feel they have time to grade a lot of writing" (Read and Landon-Hays 11). This negative view of grading writing suggests that teachers do not value the learning that comes from students' growth as writers, making it difficult to encourage teachers to include rhetorical grammar without first changing their values.

Further, negative opinions about grammar and writing can stand in the way of effective teaching. Although it seems that many teachers would accept grammar and writing instruction (and grading) as part of the job of an English teacher, Micciche claims, many teachers "recoil at the idea of teaching grammar" (716). In "Getting a Grip on Grammar Instruction," Colleen A. Ruggeri argues that most teachers "did not go into the field because [they] were crazy in love with grammar"; in fact, she believes that most English teachers do not like grammar and have a hard time teaching it (102). As an

example, John Skretta published his article "Why Debates about Teaching Grammar and Usage 'Tweak' Me Out" in which he asks, "What the hell does [grammar] have to do with me and the kids I teach?" (65). He goes on to argue, "My kids don't need lessons in grammatical minutiae …. [They] need to know that language arts classrooms empower them to reflect on and reinvent their lives through language" (Skretta 65). This negative commentary reflects conflicting opinions on the use of grammar. On the one hand, he does not think he should have to teach grammar to his students, but at the same time, he wants his students to be empowered by language. How better to achieve this goal than by revealing the rhetorical use of language and grammar in everyday life? Unfortunately, Skretta's negative opinion clouds his ability to be open to new grammar pedagogies.

In addition to teacher-based obstacles, we also must consider that teachers already juggle several content areas due to the existing curriculum. As addressed in previous sections, English teachers are expected to teach reading, writing, and speaking skills while preparing the students for state standardized tests, Advanced Placement (AP) tests, the SAT and ACT, and college admissions. This is a large load for any teacher, so it is understandable that the thought of including another component to the curriculum might be overwhelming. I would imagine that many teachers would push back against the inclusion of rhetorical grammar because the curriculum they have been asked to teach is already too full. However, I must point out that, even if the entire proposed rhetorical grammar system does not fit within existing secondary curriculum and requirements, it can still be included in pieces to enhance grammar study and convey the connections between reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

3.7 Conclusion

Teachers face massive obstacles in the teaching of writing. The mandates and testing requirements narrow the opportunities for teachers to change their writing pedagogy or instruction. While this chapter raises many concerns not only about grammar instruction but also about curricular guidelines, it also highlights opportunities for improved instruction. The goal is not simply to show the problems teachers face but to offer opportunities for improvement (discussed more in the following chapter). Although Common Core, TEKS, and STAAR present important objectives—such as the use of argumentation and preparation for college writing—it is hard to imagine *how* students can meet any of the objectives without sustained practice with a variety of tools.

In addition to the individual problems addressed, the outcomes and objectives do not align within the state of Texas. With the TEKS and STAAR test mandating contradictory outcomes, we can assume that teachers, schools, and districts hold diverse priorities and therefore prepare students differently, following the path that aligns most with their values and goals for students. One key inconsistency stems from the use of writing processes versus a product-oriented approach. The TEKS continually encourage the use of processes in student writing from grades nine through twelve while the STAAR test requires students to focus only on product. This contradiction makes it difficult for teachers to adequately prepare students for both outcomes simultaneously.

Each consideration discussed in this chapter would present a challenge for the implementation of rhetorical grammar, and when taken together, we see that teachers have very little room to maneuver within the various mandates they are required to live up to. Teachers could easily become gridlocked by conflicting expectations and choose

the path of least resistance, which would likely not include a change to writing instruction. Further, student test scores are of the highest concern in schools and districts, meaning teachers are most inclined to teach only what will appear on the STAAR test instead of what is needed for student success in college and the workplace. In addition to highlighting constraints for rhetorical grammar in high school, this chapter also reveals a tension between effective, research-based instruction and curricular guidelines: The state and national objectives do not invite productive pedagogies that align with scholarship and the WPA Outcomes. While this tension is beyond the scope of this chapter and this thesis, the systemic problems in state and national objectives are worth noting and will be discussed further in the conclusion.

Despite all of these concerns and the seeming lack of room for grammar, rhetorical grammar *can* fit alongside existing outcomes and does not have to disrupt the current approach to writing instruction. Of course, it would be ideal to completely revamp the teaching of grammar and writing to focus on process approaches and to prepare students for college-level writing according to the suggestions in Chapter Two, but that kind of change will take time. For now, it is necessary to discuss how to find room for grammar within the requirements set forth by the TEKS to begin the slow process of curricular change. In the final chapter, I create and discuss rhetorical grammar activities using the existing requirements, specifically the TEKS, to illuminate some opportunities for teachers to increase grammar instruction without moving entirely away from the current expectations. In addition, I highlight the WPA Outcomes that are introduced through each activity, as I work to prepare students for college while addressing the TEKS for secondary ELA.

Chapter 4

Implementing Rhetorical Grammar in the High School Classroom

4.1 Introduction

In Chapter Three, I addressed English Language Arts (ELA) standards at the national, state, and school levels that act as roadblocks to curricular change. I revealed that the various requirements often contradict one another and provide unclear expectations for how teachers should prepare students for success in high school and college. It might seem as though Chapter Three negates my suggestions for rhetorical grammar in Chapter Two; however, I choose to view the standards as a strict system that we must work within to achieve the desired goals (despite its difficulties) rather than as a dead-end for improved instruction. After all, the state of Texas can only do so much in its quest to provide general objectives that can be met by all students while also meeting the diverse needs of the students in the Texas public education system. In the end, it is up to the individual schools and teachers to use the objectives as a base-line suggestion and strive to do more than the minimum to meet the needs of their students. With the many constraints in mind, I now turn to potential solutions—ways of enhancing grammar instruction on a class-by-class basis and empowering teachers to challenge and prepare their students for college. This chapter will not discount the restrictions and limitations discussed in Chapter Three; rather, I will work within the TEKS to offer activities and assignments for high school English classes that also aim toward specific WPA Outcomes to ensure that high school instruction works to prepare students for college.

Before I offer six classroom activities, I must acknowledge an additional constraint that complicates the introduction of rhetorical grammar into district-wide curricula. While researching for this project, I discovered that some districts in Texas lack a clear, standardized curriculum. While I would like to adapt the following activities to a particular district's curriculum, the Texas school districts with which I have spoken revealed that they use a "loose curriculum," which, in essence, is the adoption of the TEKS as the district's curriculum with minor changes to suit the needs of the schools, students, and teachers. To put it simply, the TEKS are being used as curricula despite the state's positioning of the TEKS as learning objectives and state standards. The use of a loose curriculum leaves a significant amount of choice up to the district's teachers and allows for discrepancy in what is being taught between teachers not only in different grade levels but also across the same grade level. While empowering teachers to design courses that meet the needs of their students can be useful in creating a strong learning environment, the lack of consistency might complicate the school's and district's ability to adequately and equally prepare all of their students. Further, the TEKS and STAAR present the challenge of inconsistent preparation, so if districts are not equipping their teachers with a unifying curriculum, it can be argued that schools and districts in Texas are at great risk of providing education that overlaps and/or misses content areas as students progress through high school. Therefore, one positive step toward educational change in the areas of grammar and writing instruction would be the creation of a uniform curriculum by each school district that attempts to improve some of the confusion in the state guidelines and testing requirements.

I have not set out to provide a thorough, sequenced curriculum in this chapter; instead, I have chosen to take the standpoint of a classroom teacher to offer rhetorical

grammar activities for high school English classes that address some of the concerns discussed in previous chapters. In the sections that follow, I illuminate how each of the provided activities works in relation to the state expectations and identify which WPA Outcomes for FYC it introduces. The six activities include: 1) Introducing Grammar Rhetorically; 2) Becoming a Grammar Apprentice; 3) Sentence Patterns; 4) Sentence Imitation; 5) Breaking Rules and Rhetorical Devices; and 6) Introduction to Argumentation.

The activities follow the sequence I outlined in the Scope and Sequence section of Chapter Two. Accordingly, activities one and two are suggested for ninth grade, activities three and four should be used in tenth grade, activity five is best suited for eleventh grade, and activity six provides a suggestion for the concluding activity taught in twelfth grade. Under this design, students progress from introductory discussions and assignments about grammar's use and purpose to guided implementation of rhetorical grammar in their own writing before finishing high school with an introduction to argumentation. While the activities work well in this sequence, they do not have to be used in this manner. Most of the activities can be adapted for use at any grade level; however, I would caution against the teaching of argumentation before students have a solid understanding of some of the previous concepts, including analysis and rhetorical devices. All of the provided activities could feasibly be used within the span of a year or two. Alternately, some schools and classes might not need the introductory material and could jump in to some of the more advanced lessons. In whatever manner the activities are used, the most important point is that the activities meet the needs of the students and continually work to prepare students for future

writing instruction in high school and college, focusing on strengthening student writing in a variety of genres.

4.2 Classroom Activity 1: Introducing Grammar Rhetorically

Whether this activity is used in ninth grade or later in high school, students have likely had some amount of grammar instruction—likely formal grammar—prior to this activity. It is important to use this introduction as a way of re-envisioning grammar and its place in language and culture. I view this activity being used in ninth grade to fulfill the stated purpose from my sequence of transitioning students from middle school to high school grammar instruction and introducing them to rhetorical grammar.

The goal of this activity is to open the conversation about grammar's importance not only in schoolwork but also in our society and our daily communication. Students should be encouraged to contribute to the discussion and to explore their opinions on and knowledge about grammar's importance. Further, students will be asked to think about why we might study grammar rhetorically, introducing them to rhetorical concepts of audience, purpose, and context. Students are asked to consider why it is important to use "correct" grammar in certain situations and what effects grammar mistakes can have on communication beyond the context of the classroom. Depending on the size of the class and the students' comfort level with grammar, this activity can be done as either a small-group or full-class discussion.

TEKS for English 1:

> TEKS 110.31.b.13.C-D "revise drafts to improve style, word choice, figurative language, sentence variety, and subtlety of meaning after rethinking how well questions of purpose, audience, and genre have been addressed" and "edit for grammar, mechanics, and spelling."

TEKS 110.31.b.17.C “use of a variety of correctly structured sentences.”

WPA Outcomes for FYC: Rhetorical Knowledge and Knowledge of Conventions

Discussion Point 1: Driving Rules

- What is the purpose of driving laws or road rules?
- What rules only apply in Texas that might be different in another US State? What about in other countries?
    - Examples might include no seatbelt laws in New Hampshire, the driving age in Massachusetts, driving on the left side of the road in England and Australia, etc.
- How do these rules function?
    - Examples might include keeping people safe and keeping society running smoothly by not arguing over whether certain driving choices are acceptable.
- After establishing some rules, the instructor should put forth the idea that the authorities in each location decide on the rules to keep people safe.

Discussion Point 2: Language and Grammar Rules

- What other aspects of culture differ among various societies or specific contexts?
    - Examples might include appropriate dress for certain occasions and different language use (levels of formality) depending on the group of people or context.
- Are different kinds of language appropriate at different times?
    - Lead discussion about vocabulary, slang, and textual differences.
    - Examples include poor grammar and punctuation in text messages.

        - Point out that "incorrect" grammar can have negative consequences in business or professional communications.
            - For example, lack of attention to grammar conventions according to Standard English in a job or college application might jeopardize your acceptance. However, similar choices in an email to a friend would likely have no negative ramifications.
    - Link back to driving rules to illuminate culturally bound language.
        - If helpful, repeat language/word use discussion using group, state, and country contexts.
- How do grammar rules function to keep society running smoothly?
    - Examples might include ability to read emails, essays, books, etc. more easily when they follow conventions.

Homework Assignment for Activity 1: Finding Grammatical Missteps

- Provide students with examples of published grammatical issues that prohibit effective communication.
    - These can be found in newspapers, legal documents, flyers, books, etc.
- Ask students to write a response to one of the example documents and discuss how the grammar choices—or lack of attention to grammar—affected the success of the document and why it would have been more successful if grammar and usage had been taken into consideration.
    - Pay specific attention to the intended audience, purpose, and context of the document. Would the grammatical choices have been acceptable in a different situation?

- Bonus: Bring in an example of poor grammatical choices that affected communication and be ready to share the example with the class.
    - These examples should be more than a spelling or punctuation error and should exhibit the need for writers to pay attention to audience, purpose, and context.
    - Include a short (1/2-page) reflection discussing the grammatical missteps and how the document could be improved.

4.3 Classroom Activity 2: Becoming a Grammar Apprentice

Cornelia Paraskevas, a linguistics scholar, introduces the idea of apprenticeship in her 2006 article, "Grammar Apprenticeship." According to Paraskevas, apprenticeship involves using published writing to help students learn to identify grammatical choices and rhetorical effects and begin to analyze these choices. Once students are aware of grammar's use and can analyze grammar for its rhetorical effect, they can begin to implement similar choices in their own writing. Students should be asked to pay attention to both grammatical and rhetorical considerations and how they interact with one another in writing. Class discussions, activities, and assignments should ask students to identify the audience, purpose, and context of the example texts *before* discussing the grammatical choices. Thus, students learn that the grammatical choices must reflect and aim toward the intended rhetorical situation in order to be successful. During apprenticeship, students can consider various grammatical concepts including verb phrases, noun phrases, subordination and coordination, sentence length and variation, and more. In the following activity, I specifically describe the use of verbs and verb phrases, but teachers can substitute verbs for other elements of rhetorical grammar as students move through the apprenticeship model. Apprenticeship can be

used throughout the entirety of ninth grade to acclimate students to rhetorical grammar and its use in writing.

TEKS for English 1:

> TEKS 110.31.b.13.C-D "revise drafts to improve style, word choice, figurative language, sentence variety, and subtlety of meaning after rethinking how well questions of purpose, audience, and genre have been addressed" and "edit for grammar, mechanics, and spelling."
>
> TEKS 110.31.b.17.A "use and understand the function of the following parts of speech in the context of reading, writing, and speaking: more complex active and passive tenses and verbals, restrictive and nonrestrictive relative clauses, and reciprocal pronouns."
>
> TEKS 110.31.b.17.C "use of a variety of correctly structured sentences."

WPA Outcomes for FYC: knowledge of conventions and rhetorical knowledge

<u>Discussion Point 1:</u>

- Begin with a full-class discussion of the rhetorical grammar element students are being asked to identify in the example text.
    - Teacher will lead a discussion about verbs and verb phrases.
        - According to Martha Kolln, "a verb is a word that denotes present and past tenses; it has both an *–s* and an *–ing* form" (11).
        - Why do you think scholars consider the verb the most essential part of the sentence?
        - What do verbs achieve?
        - What is the difference between a verb and a verb phrase? Do we need both? Why? How are each used rhetorically?

    - What affect do the verb and verb phrase have on the audience, purpose, and context of a piece of writing?
        - Examples might include creating a character's voice, shifting from active to passive voice, altering the tone through verb choice, changing tense etc.

- Using a common reading text, for example Harper Lee's *To Kill A Mockingbird*, ask students to find and share verbs and verb phrases with the class.
    - Have the class work together to determine how the verbs are working rhetorically in the shared examples.

In-Class Activity:

- Have students work individually or in pairs to find interesting examples of verbs in the common text.
    - Assign students certain rhetorical effects to look for including how Lee creates a childish voice for Scout, the use of verbs to distinguish different character's voices during dialogue, and verb use in constructing the tone of the novel.
    - In their journals, ask students to write a short response to their findings, commenting on how the verbs/examples found reveal or affect the audience, purpose, and context.
- Provide an opportunity for students to share and discuss their findings in class or turn in their response for a grade.

Homework Assignment for Activity 2: Verbs in Action

- Identify verbs and verb phrases that achieve three different rhetorical effects.

    - Copy each sentence separately, identify the rhetorical effect, explain how you know the author achieves this effect, and respond to the verb use discussed.

- Bonus: Repeat this activity with a different element of grammar: nouns and noun phrases, adjectivals, coordination and/or subordination, or sentence variation.

4.4 Classroom Activity 3: Sentence Patterns

Teaching students to identify and analyze sentence patterns in their writing and the writing of others allows them to unite grammar with reading. Sentence patterns help us break down complex sentences and ideas to understand what the author is saying. Additionally, knowledge of sentence patterns improves writing by helping students see in a concrete way—perhaps by numbering each sentence of a paragraph with the pattern number—whether they use variety in their writing. After all, effective writing tends to be varied, and experienced writers know how to use a range of sentence patterns for effect, such as short sentences to establish a quick, staccato pace. This activity comes between apprenticeship and imitation because it builds on the knowledge gained from apprenticeship, specifically sentence-level analysis of published writing, and sets the stage for imitation activities that will require students to identify sentence patterns, coordination and subordination, etc. This activity is designed for tenth grade students as a transitional activity between apprenticeship and imitation.

TEKS for English 2:

> TEKS 110.32.b.6 “students are expected to evaluate the role of syntax and diction and the effect of voice, tone, and imagery on a speech, literary essay, or other forms of literary nonfiction.”

TEKS 110.32.b.13.C "revise drafts to improve style, word choice, figurative language, sentence variety, and subtlety of meaning after rethinking how well questions of purpose, audience, and genre have been addressed."

TEKS 110.32.b.13.D "edit drafts for grammar, mechanics, and spelling."

TEKS 110.32.b.13.E "revise final draft in response to feedback from peers and teacher and publish written work for appropriate audiences."

WPA Outcomes for FYC: rhetorical knowledge, writing processes, and knowledge of conventions.

Discussion Point 1:

- Review the 10 sentence patterns identified by Martha Kolln and Robert Funk from Chapter 3 of *Understanding English Grammar*.
    - Go around the room asking students for an example of each pattern.
- What do the sentence patterns tell us?
    - Answers might include what kind of verb the author is using, the modifiers in the sentence, the noun or subject, and the noun/subject's relationship to the verb.
- Remind students that a useful trick for identifying the sentence pattern when they get stuck is to diagram the sentence.
    - Sentence diagramming should not be used as an independent activity to teach grammar; rather, it offers a tool for breaking down complex sentences and understanding the meaning in a difficult text.

In-Class Activity:

- Assign small groups of students to look at the rhetorical nature of sentences using sentence patterns.

- Provide a passage from a common text.
- Individually or as a group, identify the pattern of each sentence.
- Answer the following questions as a group, recording the answers to share with the class:
    - Identify the audience, purpose, and context of this passage.
    - What do short versus long sentences do for the flow of passage? What does sentence length achieve in terms of tone?
    - Why is it important for writers to consider sentence patterns when writing?
        - Make sure students do not get caught up thinking that they have to plan the patterns they will use while writing; rather, this invites reflection on variety, effect, style, etc.
- Share answers aloud with the class.
    - Discuss and work through (diagram) any sentences for which students disagree on the pattern.

Homework Assignment for Activity 3: Improving Style with Variety

- Using the draft of your current writing assignment, identify the sentence patterns of all of the sentences in one paragraph of your essay.
    - Choose either the introduction or conclusion to work with and revise.
- Write a short reflection based on your findings, analyzing your use of sentence patterns.
    - Do you vary your sentences?
    - Have you used the sentences rhetorically to capture your reader's attention or to provide an interesting "so-what?"

    - How might sentence patterns help you make different choices to strengthen the paragraph?
- Revise the paragraph based on your analysis in the reflection.
- Don't forget to check your commas!
    - Sentence patterns help us check our comma use.
    - Do you separate essential parts of the sentence? If so, mark the errors and change them as needed.
    - Reminder: essential sentence elements cannot be removed from the sentence; these elements include the subject and predicate.

4.5 Classroom Activity 4: Sentence Imitation

Imitation is similar to apprenticeship in that both activities require students to work closely with example texts, learning from published authors and gaining appreciation for the role of the audience in writing and rhetoric. Imitation offers an engaging way to situate rhetorical grammar in the context of writing and to show students the function of grammar beyond the traditional rules of correctness. Further, such activities help students analyze grammatical and rhetorical choices at the sentence and paragraph levels, allowing them to critically consider their own choices as writers. Intentionality of the writer comes into play as students grapple with rhetorical grammar through example texts and then translate similar choices into their own writing. It is important that imitation activities ask students to focus on one element of rhetorical grammar at a time until students become comfortable with the task at hand and are able to analyze rhetorical and grammatical choices effectively. Elements for imitation might include sentence structure (or pattern), cohesion, subordination and coordination, and sentence rhythm. Questions of correctness will likely come into play during imitation

activities as students begin to notice published authors breaking the "rules" of grammar. When this occurs, it is important to talk first about the rhetorical effect of that choice and about why the author might have chosen an alternative usage before asking students to imitate non-traditional grammar. This activity is designed for tenth grade students who have been introduced to rhetorical grammar and have experience with apprenticeship.

TEKS for English 2:

> TEKS 110.32.b.1.B "analyze textual content (within a sentence and in larger sections of text)."
>
> TEKS 110.32.b.9.C "make and defend subtle inferences and complex conclusions about the ideas in text and their organizational patterns."
>
> TEKS 110.32.b.17.C "use of a variety of correctly structured sentences."

WPA Outcomes for FYC: rhetorical knowledge, critical thinking, reading, and composing, writing processes, and knowledge of conventions

<u>Discussion Point 1:</u>

- Can anyone explain or define sentence pattern imitation?
    - Sentence imitation is similar to other kinds of imitation you know about in that you take an example sentence from the text and write your own sentence following the author's style/conventions. You are not copying the sentence, restating/rephrasing the message, or summarizing; you are using the rhetorical and grammatical choices as guidance for your own writing.

        - Cornelia Paraskevas explains, “Pattern imitation helps writers create sentences—under careful guidance—that they would not necessarily create on their own” (66).
        - Paraskevas also reminds us that “imitation is not simply copying; rather … it reunites grammar with rhetorical effect” (66).
        - Paul Butler tells us, “It’s possible to closely study the way a writer uses syntax, diction, punctuation, sentence structure, and variation in his or her prose while actively applying the model and making it one’s own” (81).
- Based on these definitions, why might imitation be useful to you as a writer?
    - Examples might include revealing new opportunities for language use, understanding a specific rhetorical or grammatical choice better, gaining control of language use through practice with sentence patterns and imitation, etc.
- Once you feel comfortable that students understand the goal and importance of imitation, you can end discussion point 1 with examples on the board
    - Provide an example sentence of high quality from either a common text or a well-known work
    - Identify a grammatical choice and model imitation on the board for students
        - Remind students that they are borrowing the structure but originating the content
    - Discuss imitation and where students see you imitating the example

In Class Activity:

- Leave the same example sentence on the board and ask students to write their own imitation of the sentence in their writing journals.
    - Repeat with a new sentence.
- Group students into small groups and have students read their sentence aloud.
    - Group members should try to guess what is being imitated and discuss the effects of imitation with one another.

In Class Activity 2:[29]

- Write three example sentences on the board and provide a topic such as an athletic or academic victory, an embarrassing moment, the worst gift you ever received, etc.
- Ask students to write a paragraph on the topic in their journals imitating all three of the example sentences.
    - They should integrate the imitation sentences throughout their paragraphs and produce well-written sentences alongside the imitation to create a cohesive paragraph.
- Have students volunteer to read their paragraphs to the class.
- Try to guess which sentences were the imitation.
- Perhaps award bonus points or a prize to the student whose paragraph was hardest to guess because the entire paragraph was composed of high quality sentences.

[29] Adopted from Jon and Jenny Killgallon's "Grammar For High School: A Sentence-Composing Approach—The Teacher's Booklet" page 25.

Homework Assignment for Activity 4: Imitating and Revising

- Using the tools learned through imitation (such as rhythm, parallel structure, coordination, etc.), revise at least one paragraph from a draft of your current essay.
- Your revised paragraph does not necessarily have to imitate an admirable sentence but should include at least two sentences that show a new/different grammatical or rhetorical choice based on what you have learned from examples of strong writing.
- Bring in a copy of the previous paragraph(s) and the revised paragraph(s) along with a short memo about the changes, describing how the new sentences strengthen your paragraph/essay and contribute to the audience's reading of your writing.

4.6 Classroom Activity 5: Breaking Rules and Rhetorical Devices

Students at this point should have a basic understanding of a range of grammatical choices and the rhetorical effects of those choices on the audience, purpose, and context of a piece of writing. Using published texts for apprenticeship and imitation, students have likely noticed that authors do not always follow the rules of grammar. As students begin to implement the tools of rhetorical grammar in their own writing assignments and learn to use grammar to control their intended message for a desired effect, teachers should provide students with an understanding not only of when and how to break the rules effectively but also of the rhetorical devices employed by writers. When students break convention in their writing, it can be difficult to know whether the choice was intentional or whether the student does not know the convention or proper use. To facilitate intentionality, it is important to have students

submit reflections or explanations with writing assignments in which they make unconventional grammatical or rhetorical choices. Further, students should begin to use rhetorical devices as they write for a variety of genres. This activity follows apprenticeship and imitation and is designed for students in eleventh or twelfth grade.

TEKS for English 3:

> TEKS 110.33.b.13.C "revise drafts to clarify meaning and achieve specific rhetorical purposes, consistency of tone, and logical organization by rearranging words, sentences, and paragraphs to employ tropes [and] schemes."
>
> TEKS 110.33.b.13.E "revise final draft in response to feedback from peers and teacher and publish written work for appropriate audiences."
>
> TEKS 110.33.b.15.A "write an analytical essay of sufficient length that includes: i) effective introductory and concluding paragraphs and a variety of sentence structures [and] ii) rhetorical devices, and transitions between paragraphs."

WPA Outcomes for FYC: rhetorical knowledge, processes, knowledge of conventions

<u>Discussion Point 1:</u>

- What are some common grammar "rules" that published writers frequently break?
    - Examples might include splitting infinitives, beginning a sentence with a conjunction, using sentence fragments, etc.
- Can you find examples in a book or article you have on hand?
    - Discuss intentionality and why authors might make these choices based on their audience, purpose, and/or context.
    - What is the rhetorical effect of such choices?
    - Can the choice to break a widely accepted rule ever backfire? How? Why?

- Some broken rules are actually rhetorical devices chosen and employed for a specific effect.
    - Examples include polysyndeton and asyndeton.
    - Ask students to define and provide examples of each (using textbooks/the internet when necessary).
    - What is the desired effect of these rhetorical devices?
- Provide additional rhetorical devices that do not necessarily break grammar rules and discuss the effect/use of each device.

<u>In Class Activity:</u>

- Using a shared text, Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech for example, ask students to identify and highlight five (5) examples of rhetorical devices.
- In small groups or in their writing journals, have students name and discuss each device, propose the rhetorical effect, and comment on how this appealed to the intended audience or purpose.
- Discuss the use of rhetorical devices for a variety of genres, including narrative, exposition, and argumentation.

<u>Homework Assignment for Activity 5: Rhetorical Device Revision</u>

- Revise your current essay using the rhetorical devices discussed in class.
    - Focus on one paragraph that needs strengthening and consider your audience, purpose, and context to choose the most fitting device.
    - Integrate the device and changes into your prose to avoid separation from the rest of the paragraph and essay.

    - Turn in an explanation of your choices along with the previous and new drafts.
- If you have chosen to break "rules" in your essay, submit a short memo that discusses the unconventional choices you make.
    - Explain your grammatical and rhetorical choices and how these choices strengthen your intended purpose.

Writing Assignment for Activity 5: Rhetorical Devices in Action

- Conduct an analysis of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech, looking specifically at his use of rhetorical devices such as parallel structure, repetition, and asyndeton (or more as you see fit).
- In this essay you should
    - Identify and state the audience, purpose, and context of the speech.
    - Identify the three (3) rhetorical devices you will analyze.
    - Provide an explanation of the device and its use in the speech.
    - Analyze the effect of the device and how King employed it effectively for his audience, purpose, and context.
- Essay should be 3-5 pages, double-spaced with standard font size and margins.

4.7 Classroom Activity 6: Introduction to Argumentation

As established in Chapters One and Two, argumentation is the most useful type of writing to prepare students for college because the case building approach used in argumentation also appears in history essays, research papers, and other fields throughout the university. Students across disciplines will need to implement the tools of argumentation during their college careers. Because of the college-level emphasis on persuasion, high school seniors should be introduced to a basic form of argumentation

and should compose a full-length argument paper outside of class—beyond the expectations for persuasive STAAR essays or AP exams. Students will use rhetorical grammar to understand and analyze examples of effective argumentation. After analyzing the rhetoric of others, students will employ similar tactics, in some cases imitating the rhetorical and grammatical choices from the example texts, to write their own piece of analysis. Argumentation is the last step in the sequence and should be used with students in twelfth grade as they prepare to transition to writing for college.

TEKS for English 4:

> TEKS 110.34.b.10 "students analyze, make inferences and draw conclusions about persuasive text and provide evidence from text to support their analysis."
>
> TEKS 110.34.b.13.A "plan a first draft by selecting the correct genre for conveying the intended meaning to multiple audiences, determining appropriate topics through a range of strategies, and developing a thesis or controlling idea."
>
> TEKS 110.34.b.13.B "structure ideas in a sustained and persuasive way."
>
> TEKS 110.34.b.15.A "write an analytical essay of sufficient length that includes: relevant and substantial evidence and well-chosen details [and] an analysis of views and information that contradict the thesis statement and evidence presented for it."

WPA Outcomes for FYC: rhetorical knowledge, critical thinking, reading, and composing, processes, and knowledge of conventions

<u>Discussion Point 1:</u>

- Students should come to class having read two (2) example argumentation pieces.

    - Examples might include John F. Kennedy's Inaugural Address, Lyndon B. Johnson's "We Shall Overcome" speech, Hillary Clinton's "Women's Rights are Human Rights" speech, Maya Angelou's speech at Coretta Scott King's Funeral, etc.

- Begin with general thoughts and opinions from the students.
    - What made these pieces powerful/effective?
    - What did you notice about the argumentation, the rhetorical and grammatical choices, and/or the style?
- As a class, discuss/agree upon the audience, purpose, and context of each piece.
    - How do you know? What moves did the authors make that indicate these details?
    - Were the authors effective at reaching those rhetorical considerations? In what ways?

<u>In Class Activity:</u>

- Once students are comfortable with the basics of each example, split them into groups and assign each group one of the examples to analyze.
- As a group, students should remind themselves and their peers of logos, ethos, and pathos and why we study those in relation to rhetoric.[30]
    - Find examples of each appeal in your assigned example.
    - Remember, Aristotle tells us that the appeals must always work together for effective argumentation, so try not to separate the appeals too much or take them out of context.

[30] I do not envision this activity as the first introduction to the rhetorical appeals. Rather, student should have been introduced to the appeals prior to this activity, making this an opportunity to demonstrate rhetorical knowledge in twelfth grade.

- Find examples of rhetorical devices and of interesting/effective grammatical choices and discuss the effect of those choices on the argument.
    - What connections do you see between these rhetorical and grammatical choices and the appeals?
    - How does the author use each to strengthen his or her argument? Locate specific examples and record them in your journal.
- After group discussion, each student should take a few minutes to reflect on what they have learned through analyzing one of the examples.
    - What did you learn? What does this mean? How do these choices strengthen the author's speech?
    - This reflection helps students garner a "so-what?" from the analysis they conducted as a group and should be referred to when students write conclusions to their rhetorical analysis essays.

Writing Assignment for Activity 6: Rhetorical Analysis Essay

- Students will conduct a rhetorical analysis on a speech of their choosing from the list of Top 100 Speeches on the American Rhetoric website.[31]
- Be sure to identify and discuss the audience, purpose, and context, paying specific attention to the difficulties or constraints the author might have faced in meeting the needs of the rhetorical situation.
- Identify and analyze the rhetorical appeals made by the author, keeping in mind that all three appeals must be present for effective argumentation.

[31] www.americanrhetoric.com/top100speechesall.html

- Provide a so-what in your conclusion, contributing a new or interesting thought about the relevance and/or importance of this speech and why it is necessary to analyze it further.
- Use quotations as needed with MLA citation.
- Essay should be 4-6 pages, double-spaced with standard font size and margins.

Extra Credit for Activity 6:

- Write your own presidential speech or eulogy, using the examples as a guide.
- Implement rhetorical grammar strategies you have learned and/or those used in example texts.
- Write a short (1/2-page) reflection on what you learned by writing this kind of argumentation.

4.8 Conclusion

As noted, the activities in this chapter follow the sequence I outlined at the end of Chapter Two, which moves students through a program of rhetorical grammar from grades nine through twelve, ending with an emphasis on argumentation. The activities and sequence intend to prepare students for college by equipping them with tools for sentence and paragraph construction, analysis, argumentation, and more. Rhetorical grammar provides a foundation for instruction that allows teachers to incorporate this approach to grammar within a larger writing scheme or alongside existing grammar or writing instruction. Each activity includes accompanying TEKS that it fulfills and WPA Outcomes that it strives to address. Therefore, rhetorical grammar and the provided activities do not detract from or complicate the state's standards and should be reasonable to implement in schools and districts in Texas. Importantly, the activities offer *one* suggestion for implementing rhetorical grammar at a range of grade levels and

do not purport to supply the only answer for teaching rhetorical grammar. Instead, it is most important to fit the lessons, activities, and assignments to the needs of your particular students, paying attention to areas in which they are in need of help in order to address the students' struggles and fully prepare them for the next stage of instruction.

Based on my analysis of the TEKS, WPA Outcomes, and the classroom activities, rhetorical grammar seems to offer a useful approach that upholds the existing curriculum while preparing students for college. In addition to incorporating rhetorical grammar alongside current curricula, I would also suggest that teachers, scholars, and administrators begin talking about ways to ensure the place of rhetorical grammar in the high school curriculum. As discussed, this method not only enhances writing instruction but also aims toward college readiness, addressing both the TEKS and WPA Outcomes for FYC to make certain that students meet the requirements of high school while working toward the expectations of college. One way of cementing the place of rhetorical grammar in the secondary school English curriculum is by making it a component on the rubric for the STAAR test. Under this approach, students will be evaluated on their exit exams for their knowledge of rhetorical grammar and their ability to implement the tools in the writing portions of these tests. If rhetorical grammar were a requirement for the STAAR test, teachers might be more inclined to include it as an area of instruction. Further, requiring rhetorical grammar for success on these tests not only prepares students to take STAAR but also introduces them to the expectations of writing at the college level and beyond as they exercise control of their sentences, demonstrate awareness of audience, purpose, and context, and create cohesive paragraphs and essays that show evidence of invention and revision.

Conclusion

During my sophomore year of college, I walked into an undergraduate American Grammar course prepared for the worst. Prior to this dreaded class, my only real interaction with grammar instruction occurred in my eighth grade English Language Arts class with Mrs. Holder. She was a stickler for the rules, and I could not understand why, after years of being praised for my writing, she placed so much emphasis on grammar and usage while grading my essays. Although Mrs. Holder tried to make sentence diagramming fun, I never caught on to the importance of diagrams and thought the entire activity was a waste of time. Worse still, she made us diagram the Pledge of Allegiance at the end of the school year—an activity that resulted in only a handful of students identifying all of the parts of speech correctly. Needless to say, the required course in grammar for my English Writing and Rhetoric major was not high on my list of interests. On the first day of class, Professor DeMont promised that by the end of the semester everyone in the class would have a new appreciation for grammar but that one or two students would fall in love with the subject. I could not imagine it to be true that day, but after no more than three weeks of classes, I had an entirely new view of grammar. I surprised myself with how easily I acquired knowledge of the English language. I am now proud to say that I was the only student in Professor DeMont's class that semester to truly fall in love with the study of grammar. Alongside my newfound appreciation, I finished the semester wondering why grammar was not taught in a way that encourages all students to marvel at the power of language.

For this thesis, I set out to investigate whether rhetorical grammar has a place in the Secondary English curriculum, and, more specifically, to determine its potential to be used as a tool for improving student writing and preparing students for college.

Martha Kolln defines grammar as "understanding the grammatical choices available to you when you write and the rhetorical effects those choices will have on your reader" (*Rhetorical Grammar* 3). Using this definition, I explored rhetoric and composition as well as education scholarship on grammar instruction and pedagogy to gain an understanding of what scholars have said about grammar's use and importance in relation to writing. The research opened a vast array of scholarship, including the grammar debate of the 1960s, teacher opinions for/against the teaching of grammar, and modified, contextual approaches to grammar instruction. After providing background for the grammar debate and outlining opposition to direct instruction in grammar, I organized the research on contextual grammar instruction into four themes—1) errors and correctness; 2) the role of grammar in the writing curriculum; 3) a pedagogy of rhetorical grammar; 4) and delving into rhetorical grammar. The thematic approach helps to orient readers toward my position for rhetorical grammar as a tool for teaching students about the generative aspects of writing. The opening chapter grounds my argument in the research that advocates rhetorical, contextual grammar pedagogies. Using this background, I then highlight the possibilities that scholars have identified for rhetorical grammar's use in the classroom and beyond.

With the favorable positioning of rhetorical grammar as a method of invention and a path to critical thinking established in Chapter One, I was able to advance my vision for rhetorical grammar in Chapter Two. Looking at the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS), I determined that current national and state guidelines do not emphasize the teaching of grammar. In fact, the CCSS and TEKS provide only a cursory treatment of grammar for grades nine through twelve. Further, the guidelines often reserve grammar solely for editing tasks.

On the other hand, the suggestions for rhetorical grammar and its use as a tool for writing—as discussed in Chapter One—align well with the WPA Outcomes for First-Year Composition. After highlighting the gaps in the CCSS and TEKS, I analyzed the use of rhetorical grammar according to the WPA Outcomes to reveal that rhetorical grammar fulfills the four Outcomes—rhetorical knowledge; critical thinking, reading, and composing; processes; and knowledge of conventions. Thus, rhetorical grammar could be used to prepare students for the expectations of college-level writing. With the various outcomes and objectives in mind, I proposed a vision of rhetorical grammar for use in secondary English courses. In essence, rhetorical grammar should work alongside existing writing curricula to support the teaching of writing by asking students to pay attention to audience, purpose, and context at the sentence, paragraph, and essay levels. The goal of my rhetorical grammar system is to make students aware of grammatical choices—both in their own writing and the writing of others—and how those choices affect the reader. I support this vision with a sequence of rhetorical grammar instruction that presents a spiraling curriculum. The ninth through twelfth grade sequence builds upon foundational concepts to increase students' grammatical knowledge and ability to enhance their writing and audience awareness.

While the vision in Chapter Two appears to seamlessly integrate with the WPA Outcomes and to fill a gap left by the CCSS and TEKS, it leaves out many practical considerations that must be acknowledged. Chapter Three discusses several roadblocks to implementation, including Common Core, the TEKS, the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness, or STAAR, test, student preparation, and teacher constraints. These concerns reveal that teachers face a wide range of obstacles in their daily instructional tasks and would be hard-pressed to implement massive curricular change

without ignoring or overhauling the existing system(s). One of the major constraints that stood out from Chapter Three includes the contradictions between the TEKS and the STAAR test. While the TEKS emphasize writing *processes* and require students to draft and revise, the STAAR test requires that students focus heavily on the *product* of writing, perfecting a single-page composition during the four-hour test. This contradiction raises concerns for the implementation of rhetorical grammar. Specifically, the STAAR emphasis on product stands contrary to years of rhetoric and composition research that highlights the importance of a process-based approach to writing. Thus, STAAR does not support the TEKS objective of revising drafts nor does it align with the WPA Outcome that requires knowledge of processes. Other constraints identified in Chapter Three include lack of clear expectations in the CCSS and TEKS objectives, absence of sequence or progression of writing expectations between grade levels, and under-preparation of teachers in grammar and writing pedagogy.

Further, Chapter Three revealed systemic tensions between effective instructional methods and public education systems that do not invite research-based initiatives. These concerns are beyond the scope of this project but must be considered moving forward. This tension raises questions about the lack of research in decisions about public education. Based on the product versus process discussion in Chapter Three, it is clear that while scholars promote writing as a mode of learning, the state of Texas ignores the research in its use of STAAR as a method of assessing student writing. The lack of agreement between academia and educators highlights the continued strain between the university and public education. While both levels of education have different, but equally important, goals, the ongoing tension between these institutions prevents communication about best practices for grammar and writing instruction

across all levels of the K-16 spectrum. The problems raised in Chapter Three point toward larger academic issues that also need to be addressed in the movement toward greater communication about effective instructional methods for writing.

Despite the difficulties faced by teachers and the mandates imposed upon them, I was not willing to give up on the use of rhetorical grammar as a tool for preparing students for college. In Chapter Four, I designed activities and assignments to implement the sequence described in Chapter Two. The proposed lessons are situated within the TEKS to remain sensitive to the constraints addressed in Chapter Three. I wanted to show that there is room in the existing curriculum to introduce rhetorical grammar alongside writing and that it would not simply add another content area for which English teachers had to find time in their overcrowded agendas. Each of the six proposed activities includes an item for class discussion, an in-class activity, and a homework and/or writing assignment. In addition, the activities all indicate which of the TEKS they fulfill for a specified grade level and highlight the WPA Outcomes students are introduced to through the assignment. After situating the activities and assignments within the TEKS and WPA Outcomes, I conclude with a call to include rhetorical grammar as part of the STAAR requirements. While this suggestion might contradict some of my opinions on the need for grammar and writing instruction to be more central in secondary education, I believe that we have to start somewhere. Including rhetorical grammar in the current testing requirements provides incentive for teachers to include it as part of the writing curriculum as they work to prepare students for the tests. I see this small change as a foot in the door to larger changes in the future. As teachers, schools, and districts become aware of the value of rhetorical grammar, my

hope is that it will prompt administrators to initiate large-scale changes to writing curriculum that emphasize the tools available for writing, including grammar.

The call to include rhetorical grammar as a test requirement is only one suggestion for the augmentation of grammar instruction in secondary education. There remain numerous opportunities for inquiry into grammar's use in writing instruction in future study. I invite any additional research into rhetorical grammar and its use at every stage of education to continue the conversation about writing and grammar instruction. In addition, I would like to open dialogue among writing instructors across the K-16 continuum. Grammar and writing pedagogy can only improve with increased collaboration between educators at every level. Thus, we must work together to research and implement innovative approaches to writing instruction that enhance our knowledge of how to teach writing and how to help students improve as writers. In doing so, I first want to further the call I made in Chapter One to avoid rehashing the 1960s' grammar debate as the starting point for discussions of grammar instruction and pedagogy. It is time to stop circulating outdated research and to agree that we are no longer advocating formal grammar. Scholars on every side of the debate have agreed that formal grammar does not improve student writing, and continuing to discuss the 1960s' research only obscures the new scholarship that promotes rhetorical, functional, contextual grammar instruction.

Moving forward, we need to take elementary and middle school education into consideration in a large-scale plan for rhetorical grammar, creating a K-12 system that addresses the particular needs of students at each level of instruction. Such a system raises questions about whether formal grammar still has a place in writing instruction based on the needs of primary students. How can we teach grammar to young students

in a way that most effectively prepares them for rhetorical grammar and for writing in later years?

A second direction for future study arises from a K-12 system of grammar. We must continue to research long-term approaches to writing that take into account the learning at previous and future levels. As it stands, much of what college instructors (and some high school teachers) do involves the un-teaching of formulas and bad habits of writing taught at lower levels. At the same time, the standardized writing taught in elementary and middle school serves a necessary function: It provides students with a concrete idea of what writing looks like. While students are learning to write essays, it can be helpful to provide them with a form, a template, or an outline as a starting point. Perhaps there is a place for the five-paragraph essay if it is used as a tool. On the other hand, how do we contain formulaic instruction—arguably necessary for young writers—to elementary school? More importantly, how can those formulas be taught in a way that gears students toward the kinds of writing they will be asked to do in middle and high school? Thus, scholars should consider the place of writing across the K-16 spectrum as they research the place of grammar and writing instruction at each stage.

Finally, teaching rhetorical grammar in secondary education prepares students for advanced writing study at the college level. Thus, a rhetorical grammar system allows scholars to begin exploring writing seminars or writing about writing courses as a replacement for FYC. If students enter college prepared to write argumentation and accustomed to the WPA Outcomes for First-Year Composition, scholars and professors can enhance writing instruction at the college level to include critical and abstract thinking, primary and secondary research projects, etc. As rhetorical grammar points toward directions for future studies, it promises exciting changes for grammar and

writing instruction at every level that enhance not only our teaching of these subjects but also our understanding of the power inherent in the study of language, grammar, and writing.

As this thesis shows, rhetorical grammar explains how and why grammar works for a particular situation to help students discover and create meaning. More importantly, the rhetorical dimension of grammar is highlighted when grammar becomes a tool for problem solving. Through the tools of rhetorical grammar, students learn to use grammar to solve problems related to each literacy act. This thesis illuminates a paradigm shift in our approach to grammar. Essentially, I argue for an epistemic approach to grammar that moves away from both prescriptive and descriptive methods of grammar instruction to promote grammar as a way of knowing. As I reconceptualize grammar to illuminate its heuristic value, we are able to see that grammar helps students think *through* the writing process to create meaning for a specific situation. Thus, rhetorical grammar not only provides a way to analyze various forms of communication but also encourages a way of thinking about the writing process, about language use, and about the world around us.

As a beginning college student, I never would have predicted that the study of grammar would become such an integral part of my academic experience. Today, I am encouraged not only to continue my own scholarly research on the study of grammar and writing but also to promote and facilitate the use of rhetorical grammar in secondary English education as a way of improving student writing and preparing students for college. Because of the epistemic shift that rhetorical grammar provides, I believe it is time to reconceptualize the teaching of grammar and to lead students through a system of grammar that increases their critical thinking and writing skills.

The power of language is waiting to be discovered. As educators and scholars, it is our job to provide students with the tools to unleash that power for effective communication.

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Vita

Hannah Towns Davis was born June 18, 1991, in Redondo Beach, California. She is the daughter of Jeffrey Towns Davis and Nancylyn Hogarty. A 2009 graduate of Coppell High School, Coppell, she received a Bachelor of Arts degree with a major in English Writing and Rhetoric from St. Edward's University, Austin, in 2013. While completing her B.A., she worked as a Freshman Studies Intern in Fall 2011 and 2012. In August 2013, she enrolled in graduate study at Texas Christian University. While working on her Master of Arts in English, she was a Graduate Assistant for *descant* in 2013-14 and a Teaching Assistant in 2014-15.

Abstract

RHETORICAL GRAMMAR: A VISION FOR RESEARCH-BASED GRAMMAR INITIATIVES TO BRIDGE THE GAP BETWEEN SECONDARY AND COLLEGE WRITING INSTRUCTION

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This thesis argues that rhetorical grammar, when taught in the context of writing and with an emphasis on rhetorical considerations, can help ease the transition to college-level writing by preparing students for argumentation. To support this position, I synthesize grammar instruction scholarship published from the 1960s to the present, propose a vision of rhetorical grammar that includes a sequence of instruction for ninth through twelfth grade, place the vision in conversation with the national and state guidelines for English Language Arts (ELA), and provide activities for teaching rhetorical grammar within the current secondary English curriculum. This thesis promotes a paradigm shift in our approach to grammar. As I reconceptualize grammar to illuminate its heuristic value, we are able to see grammar as an essential part of the writing process. Thus, rhetorical grammar not only provides a way to analyze various forms of communication but also encourages a way of thinking about the writing process, about language use, and about the world around us.