An Analysis of the Citation Practices of Undergraduate Spanish Students

María José Luzón
University of Zaragoza, Spain

Abstract

One basic skill of academic writers is to be able to locate their claims within a disciplinary framework. However, undergraduate students find it difficult to integrate sources into their own writing successfully, which often results in inappropriate textual borrowing and poor referencing. The aim of the research reported here was to identify problematic or inappropriate use of sources in texts produced by undergraduate Spanish students and examine the reasons for these unacceptable citation practices. For this purpose, I analyzed a learner corpus consisting of 35 literature reviews written by students of an EAP subject in the third year of a Bachelor's Degree in English Studies. The results suggest that their inappropriate use of sources arises mainly from three factors: (i) an unawareness of the dialogic nature of academic texts and of the functions of citation in these texts; (ii) low linguistic level and low level of academic literacy regarding the procedures involved in paraphrasing and synthesizing; (iii) lack of familiarity with the language of citations.

Introduction

The use of sources by L2 student writers has been the focus of much recent research, which has attempted to identify the problems that these students encounter when integrating others' voices and ideas in their own text. Texts written by university students exhibit frequent examples of textual practices unacceptable by their prospective discourse community, which include, but are not limited to, textual plagiarism, e.g. long fragments copied from source text without acknowledgement, partially attributed borrowings, excessive quotation and scarcity of summaries and paraphrases, patchwriting, limited range of reporting verbs, lack of evaluation (Abasi, Akbari and Graves 2006, Davis 2013, McCulloch 2012, 2013, Pecorari 2003, 2008, and Shi 2004, 2012).

There is wide agreement amongst scholars that poor referencing and inappropriate use of sources do not usually result from an intention to deceive, but from the challenges that students face when attempting to produce writing that is expected to meet the standards of expert writing (Howard 1995, Pecorari 2003). Many factors have been identified as contributing to the difficulties experienced by student writers, among them lack of awareness of which textual practices are considered plagiarism and of when and how they have to make reference to sources, and a belief that it is acceptable to borrow others' ideas without acknowledging them (Chanock 2008, McCulloch 2012, and Shi 2012). Cultural differences regarding authority, ownership of ideas and the expression of one's own voice may also lead to different perceptions of plagiarism and different attitudes towards the use of others' ideas (Currie 1998, Pennycook 1996).

Other reasons for the limited ability to use sources is the lack of knowledge of the discourse conventions of the disciplinary community (Abasi and Akbari 2008, Angélil-Carter 2000, Currie 1998, Gu and Brooks 2008, Pecorari 2003, 2006, and Thompson 2005), low levels of academic literacy and poor linguistic skills, e.g. students may acknowledge sources but paraphrase them unskillfully, or they may attribute direct quotations but fail to mark them as such (Chanock 2008, Currie 1998, Howard 1995, McCulloch 2012, Pecorari 2003, 2010, Pennycook 1996, and Shi 2004). Interestingly, patchwriting, defined by Howard (1999: xviii) as 'copying from a source text and then deleting some words, altering grammatical structures, or plugging in one synonym for another' is not generally considered to be the result of dishonesty, but has been accounted for as resulting from developmental needs: patchwriting is a necessary step which may facilitate the development of writing skills (Howard 1999, Pecorari 2003, 2010). This conception of patchwriting as a necessary stage has led Pecorari (2003: 338) to state that 'today's patchwriter is tomorrow's competent academic writer'. A related cause of students' poor referencing is their lack of confidence in their own writing skills and in their mastery of disciplinary knowledge, the feeling of being overwhelmed by the need to produce texts which meet the standards of the discipline, and the desire to perform like expert writers (Abasi and Akbari 2008, Angélil-Carter 2000). As Hyland (2001: 380) puts it 'plagiarism seems to be the most realistic strategy' to meet these performance expectations. Another important factor is the lack of awareness of the dialogic nature of academic texts. This results in a limited understanding of the important functions of citation in these texts and in the inability to construct one's own text by evaluating and recontextualizing others' ideas, to express authorial stance and to distinguish clearly between others' voices and one's own voice (Abasi, Akbari and Graves 2006, McCulloch 2012).

Much of the previous research on the use of sources by student writers has involved postgraduate students and has focused on the analysis of citation practices in PhD or Master theses (e.g. Abasi, Akbari and Graves 2006, Davis 2013, Harwood and Petrić 2012, McCulloch 2012, Pecorari 2003, 2006), although citation in undergraduate dissertations has also been studied (Schembri 2009). Less attention has been paid to how less expert students struggle to integrate sources in their assignments, although the challenges that these students may experience when using sources will probably be different from those experienced by postgraduates or undergraduates writing their dissertation. Penrose and Geisler (1994), for instance, compared the use of sources by an L1 freshman and a doctoral student and found that while the doctoral student considered the texts as sources of competing claims, the freshman considered them as sources of facts. Jamieson and Howard (2011) analyzed the writing of first year students in 16 colleges and universities in the United States and found that most of them failed to understand and use ideas in their source texts appropriately.

In most studies of undergraduate writing, participants were L1 students or L2 students in Anglophone institutions (e.g. Hirvela and Du 2013, Jamieson and Howard 2011, Thompson, Morton and Storch 2013). L2 student writers in non-Anglophone contexts will probably encounter more difficulties (Shi, 2004). However, despite the high number of English-medium degrees offered by European institutions, there has been little research on source-based writing produced by students in this context. The purpose of the study reported here is to understand the difficulties experienced by Spanish undergraduate students when faced with the task of writing an academic text in English involving the use of sources and to derive some implications for the teaching of EAP in Spanish universities. More specifically, I will analyze a learner corpus to answer the following questions: Which textual borrowing and referencing practices found in the corpus are inappropriate and what do these practices reveal about the challenges faced by students?

Participants and Learner Corpus

The participants in this study were 35 Spanish students in their third year of an English Studies degree at a Spanish university. Except for two courses dealing with an extra foreign language (e.g. French) in the first year, all courses in the degree are taught in English. The degree program includes two compulsory EAP subjects: Academic English I (AE1) and

Academic English II (AE2). These are one-semester courses, for second-year and third-year students, respectively. All participants were studying AE2, although three of them had not passed AE1 yet. In AE1 students are introduced to the strategies of summarizing, citing and paraphrasing. In AE2 these strategies are explored in more detail and more emphasis is put on the functions of referencing, given that in several subjects in their third and fourth year students are asked to submit source-based essays where a correct use of sources is expected. In addition, in their fourth and last year, students have to write a senior thesis, where they have to demonstrate their ability to find, analyze and synthesize information from several sources.

The data for the study was a learner corpus of 35 literature reviews[1] on wikis and collaborative writing produced by the participants as an assignment for AE2. Students were instructed on how to write a literature review and they were provided with a set of sources that they could use (although they could include any other source of their choice), in order to make it easier for the researcher to compare the student text with the source texts and analyze how sources had been integrated into the students' texts. The reviews averaged 2,000 words in length. Before submitting this assignment, students had practiced source-based writing with shorter texts.

Data Analysis

I first read all the reviews carefully to check when the students made use of source materials without acknowledging them and to identify unacceptable or problematic use of sources. The following step was to compare citation patterns used by expert writers and students. For that purpose I developed a classification of citations based on form (see Table 1 below), drawing partly on Thompson and Tribble (2001). The comparison was not based on a quantitative analysis because in many cases students did not include references, even when they were taking information from other sources, or they used unconventional or unacceptable citation forms. Therefore, I examined whether the citation patterns used by experts were missing or clearly underused in the learner corpus and analyzed the patterns used by students that would be unacceptable in expert writing.

Table 1. Types and examples of citation structures[2]

Non-integral citation	
Pattern	**Example**
1a. No reporting verb: single author	Open-ended items have the advantage of eliciting ideas expressed in the respondents' own words (Oppenheimer 1992).
1a. No reporting verb: multiple author	… there is a lack of consensus about what the term denotes (S. Borg 2003, M. Borg 2001; Woods 1996).
Research noun (e.g. paper, work, research) or plural reference to authors (e.g. some researchers) + reporting verb	Recent research (Lyster and Ranta 1997; Lyster 1998; Ellis et al. 2001a, b) has documented the fact that incidental focus on form occurs frequently in CLT.
Reporting verb in the passive voice	search into teacher beliefs has been critiqued for eliciting tract notions only (…) (Munby 1984; Woods 1996).
Directives in brackets	(see review in Borg 2003)
Integral citation	
Pattern	**Example**
1. Reported author+ reporting verb	Ellis (2001) has pointed out that focus on form can be either planned or incidental.
2. Research noun+ reporting verb	A study by Borko and Niles (1982) found that..
3. Reporting noun controlling the citation	The study reported in this article takes up Borg's (2003) call for investigations that …

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[1] Although this may seem a small corpus, a larger corpus would have been unmanageable, since the study involved juxtaposing the students' texts with source texts.
[2] All the examples have been taken from Basturkmen, Loewen and Ellis (2004).

After analyzing the learner corpus, some of the problems found (e.g. excessive quotation, ambiguous attribution, patchwriting, under-referencing) were discussed with the students in a compulsory 80 minute class, so as to elicit their response and attitude to these problems. For the discussion session the class was divided into two groups. Students were presented with anonymized examples of poor use of sources and were asked to identify and discuss the problems. All students were encouraged to take part in the discussion and respond to each other's comments. During the discussion session I took notes, focusing on the different explanations for each problem. In order to enable students to elaborate on their comments and reflect on their own use of sources, I also discussed the reviews with them in a one-to-one interview during office hours, which also yielded useful information about the reasons for their citation practices.

Results and Discussion

The analysis of the corpus revealed different types of unacceptable or problematic citation practices, which can be attributed to several reasons: (i) unawareness of the function of referencing and of the need to acknowledge sources; (ii) low linguistic level and low level of academic literacy; (iii) lack of familiarity with the language of citations.

(i) Unawareness of the function of referencing and of the need to acknowledge sources

Several researchers have pointed out that one of the main reasons for poor referencing is that students are unaware that academic discourse is intertextual and dialogic and that knowledge is socially constructed by developing and responding to others' ideas (Chanock 2008, McCulloch 2012). As a consequence, students often fail to evaluate and recontextualize sources to create and support their own arguments. This results in the following practices:

a. Under-referencing
Several students seemed to be unaware that any assertion that is not common knowledge should be supported by bibliographical evidence. Most students began their literature review presenting general claims accepted by previous research or general statements about previous research. This is a frequent move in expert writing, where references tend to be used to provide support for the topic generalization or centrality claim in the introduction (Swales, 1990). As example (1) shows, expert writers use non-integral multiple references to show active research on a topic. However, many students included the topic generalization or the centrality claim without references that supported them. In example (2) there was no reference to 'the researchers' nor did the subsequent text provide more information on their research. That was a common practice (present in 71.4% of the texts) when beginning the paper with a general description of previous literature or whenever students wanted to make general reference to previous research:

(1) *Expert writing:* Recent research (Lyster and Ranta 1997; Lyster 1998; Ellis et al. 2001a, b) has documented the fact that incidental focus on form occurs frequently in CLT.

(2) *Learner corpus:* There is not a clear answer about the usefulness of wikis as a resource to improve writing skills. Nevertheless *most of the researchers* agree that the use of wikis by non-native speakers create a cooperative environment.[3]

When this problem was discussed with students, most of them stated that, since these claims were present in many of the sources (which in some cases attributed the claim to other previous sources), they regarded them as accepted and considered referencing unnecessary. Others said that they were not sure whether a claim could be attributed to so many authors.

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[3] The extracts from the students' work presented in this paper have not been changed or corrected.

General reference to literature was not the only case where students presented assertions taken from other texts without attributing them to their authors. Students sometimes included a reference to the sources for some of the information in a paragraph but it was not clear whether the previous or following statements were also attributed to the same source. In example (3) only the general claim in the quotation has been attributed to Bradley et al. The following sentence seems to provide evidence for this claim but it is not attributed to the previous authors. Similarly, in example (4) it is not clear whether all the information or only the last sentence is attributable to the sources:

(3) It is suggested (Bradley et al., 2010) that 'collaboration becomes specifically interesting from a language learning perspective'. Some of the advantages of wikis are that they facilitate learning, interaction, participation and self-confidence.

(4) But the main point of the use of wikis deals with the role of social interaction between the students or between the students and the teacher, that is, the collaborative writing. The students see benefits since they can exchange source and learn from the other's output. The fact that they could have an almost immediate online response from their teacher is also another fact that makes them feel comfortable with this new tool (Lin, & Yang, 2011).

Discussion of this problem with the student writers revealed two related causes. One was the belief that only quotations should be attributed, as in example (3). The other reason is that students believed that it would be clear for readers that all the information had been taken from the cited source. McCulloch (2012) explains this under-referencing practice as a result of the students' attempts to use the views and claims of the source in their text instead of constructing their own argument. As examples (3) and (4) show, very often the way material is cited makes it difficult for the reader to identify whose voice is represented: others' voice or the writer's voice. These examples illustrate clearly the difficulties that students have to combine attribution and their own voice, to use attribution to support their stance, and to express their position in relation to source material, as already noted by Groom (2000).

Omission of in-text references was also frequent when students used Internet sources (of the 12 students who used online sources, 7 omitted some or all in-text references). Previous research has pointed to students' tendency to pay less attention to authorship when using Internet sources (Davis 2013, Li and Casanave 2012), probably because in Internet texts the author's identity is not always so prominent and visible.

Discussion of the absence or underuse of in-text references revealed that, like students in previous research (Abasi, Akbari and Graves 2006, Penrose and Geisler 1994), some participants in this study considered sources as facts, as repositories of knowledge to be reported, not as claims to be evaluated.

b. Overuse and inappropriate use of integral citation
In AE2 attention was drawn to the distinction established by Swales (1990) between 'integral citation' (the name of the cited author is included in the sentence), and non-integral citation (the name of the author is in brackets, at the end of the cited information). In expert writing, while non-integral citation places emphasis on the claim or information being reported, integral citation is mostly used to place emphasis on the authorship of the claim and make the researcher prominent (Pecorari, 2010). In the learner corpus integral citation was much more frequent (74.24% of citations) and students did not seem to distinguish between the functions of integral and non-integral citation, but tend to use integral citation for all purposes.

(5) One of the advantages of using Wikis was that they made it possible to suggest constructive changes as pointed out by Bradley, Linstrom & Rystedt (2010).
(6) Considering the student's point of view using wikis, literature shows duplicity of opinions. Several studies as Kessler, Kost, Ducate and Lee, among others, agree that the use of wikis have in general a positive impact on students.

In example (5) the use of integral citation gives the cited author prominence and the reader would expect further explanation of the research and some evaluative statement revealing the writer's positioning, but this is missing in the text. In example (6) the student synthesizes information from different sources but seems to be unaware that non-integral citation is the most suitable pattern when synthesizing sources or when providing examples of research supporting a claim. In the class discussion students explained their preference for integral citation by saying that it made it clearer who the source for the information was. Interestingly, Pecorari (2008) points out that non-integral citation gives the impression that the writer is confident about the information reported. It seems that participants in the study did not feel sure about disciplinary content and preferred to relinquish authority and distance themselves from the claim. The students' overuse of integral citation could therefore be seen as a facilitating step towards writing about the discipline, establishing their own voice, and developing their confidence as members of their disciplinary community.

(ii) Low linguistic level and low level of academic literacy
Many of the problems with poor referencing arise partly from students' low level of English proficiency and low level of academic literacy. Although students had received instruction on paraphrasing, summarizing and synthesizing, these are extremely difficult skills that few managed to master. Many students lacked the necessary paraphrasing and synthesizing skills to incorporate sources in their own text and to establish relations between information from different sources. This is reflected in several ways in their reviews:

a. Too much quoting and for no good reason
Some students constructed their text by incorporating lengthy chunks of source text, very often to present information that should be summarized or paraphrased, with quotations representing between 25% and 35% of the text in five reviews. Previous research has also found that students overuse quotation (Petrić 2012, Shi 2004), but, as McCulloch (2012) points out, the problem is not only the quantity per se but that excessive quoting may indicate that students have problems in establishing the purpose of their own text and recontextualizing others' ideas into their argument. A common problem in the learner corpus is using quotations to replace the students' ideas or incorporating quotations that were not useful for the student's arguments, because the main idea is not presented through the student's own voice but in the quotation. Students reported that they chose to quote when they did not fully understand the source text or when they did not feel able to use academic discourse to change the language without changing the content, or, as they put it, 'to say the same with my own words'. Since they agreed with the reported author's claim, they relinquished the floor to him/her.

Some students also failed to integrate quotations in their text, resorting to what Borg (2000) called 'hortatory citations' (i.e., citations that stand alone) (e.g. 7). When asked, students said that the purpose of these quotations was to provide authority to what they had written in the preceding text. In example (7) the first sentence (paraphrase) and the second one (quotation) convey the same idea. Therefore, the writer uses the quotation to show that he is not misrepresenting or misinterpreting the author's ideas.

 (7) The research illustrates that collaboration among students was very positive and they
     feel motivated. 'The participants enjoyed the project and thought it was a valuable tool'
     (Ducate, Anderson and Moreno, 2011).

b. Patchwriting and unsuccessful paraphrasing
In some cases students' attempts to paraphrase resulted in patchwriting. Table 2 shows how one of the students paraphrased a fragment from Zorko (2009). There are few changes to the first two sentences of the original paragraph: the student deletes some fragments, changes the morphology of two words (*facilitating* and *reacted*) and uses two synonyms, one of them (*prompt*) suggested by the text (*promptly*). The student explained that she had used some of the strategies discussed in class to paraphrase (e.g. substituting synonyms) and had kept two short strings of words (e.g. 'interaction with the English teacher'), because she thought there

was no problem in doing so. The second sentence in the student's text seems to be an unsuccessful attempt to paraphrase the remaining text in Zorko's paragraph.

The corpus displayed a high number of unsuccessful paraphrases, which did not reflect the original's ideas. Patchwriting is generally accepted as a facilitating step prior to students' ability to paraphrase successfully (Hirvela and Du 2013, Pecorari 2003). Both unnecessary quotations and patchwriting sometimes arise from the difficulty to understand the source text (Hirvela and Du 2013, Li and Casanave 2012), as some of the participants in the study acknowledged. Both in the discussion and in the one-to-one interview they reported that when they did not fully understand the source text, they tended to quote or to change as little as possible, so as to avoid misrepresenting the original idea.

Table 2. Comparison of source text and student's text

Zorko (2009)	Student's text
The wiki environment was very successful in *facilitating* interaction with the English teacher. One reason mentioned was that the teacher responded promptly to the students' queries, *or reacted* immediately if there was a problem, so that the **students had immediate** feedback. Another reason was the teacher's encouragement to use the wiki when in need of guidance or advice so that the students did not feel ashamed to publicly ask for help. The teacher also encouraged the students to perform the tasks well, which the students found motivating.	Zorko (2009) also argued that *Wikis facilitate interaction with the English teacher* because he could *react* immediately if there was a problem and students **received prompt feedback**. The students found teacher's explanations in the Wiki very useful.

c. Unskillful synthesizing
Synthesizing is a complex and challenging skill that students need to develop in order to use sources successfully. It involves critical reading, analysing, evaluating, connecting, and combining ideas from different sources to integrate them in their own argument. In this assignment, students were asked to write a literature review so that they could develop these skills, but few students were successful in establishing relations between information from different sources and synthesizing previous research effectively. In most cases, students did not synthesize information from different sources to construct their own argument, but added together the paraphrases of several sources. Students explained that they found it difficult to 'group sources', i.e. to see whether different sources dealt with the same issue/ idea or whether two authors hold similar or conflicting positions. They also had problems condensing ideas from several authors in a single sentence and using the appropriate academic language to establish connections between sources and indicate how claims or arguments by different authors are related.

(iii) Lack of familiarity with the language of citations

a. Limited range of citation patterns
Students displayed a limited range of citation patterns, showing unawareness of the patterns used by expert writers or of their functions. This limitation in students' writing has also been pointed out by Davis (2013), who found that one of the participants in her case study tended to repeat a single format of non-integral citation. In the learner corpus, the predominant format is integral citation with the reported author as subject of the reporting verb (see example 8).

(8) Lee (2010) argues that 'instructors need to guide during the revision process'.

There were only two occurrences (by two different students) of integral citation with a pattern different from 'reported author+ reporting verb', and in both cases the subject of the reporting

verb referred to a source (e.g. 'the paper by Ducate (2010) explains'). There were no examples of citations controlled by a reporting noun instead of a reporting verb (e.g. 'Hussein's (1995) claim that'). The reason may be that this is a pattern frequently used for evaluation of and comment on previous claims, ideas, hypotheses and, as has been said, undergraduate students find it difficult to evaluate previous research, partly because of their still limited knowledge of specific research areas in the discipline.

Non-integral citations were infrequent and, when they occurred, students repeated the following citation format: attributed information in text and single source in brackets (example 9). Multiple citation patterns (see example 1 above), needed when synthesizing information, were used only by five students. Similarly, non-integral citations with a reporting verb in the passive voice were only used by six students (example 10). Directives were only used in one of the reviews. The reason for this limited range of patterns may be that, although students were exposed to different types of citation, instructors did not place enough emphasis on the functions of the different patterns and on the fact that expert writers make meaningful choices when using a specific pattern. Strategic use of citation patterns seems to be an advanced stage in the development of academic literacy and sticking to a limited number of patterns could be considered a step in this developmental process.

(9) Students also perceive an improvement on their grammar, vocabulary and cultural content (Ducate, Anderson, & Moreno, 2011).

(10) It has been suggested (Lund, 2008) that it is possible to achieve collective knowledge advancement with the use of wikis.

The lack of familiarity with citation patterns that students exhibit in the corpus often results in problems to integrate the reference into the syntax of the text (example 11), in an overuse and incorrect use of the opener *according to* (example 12), and in the inclusion of unnecessary information (examples 11, 12). There were a high number of examples where the students included not only the source of the information (the reported author) but also a reference to their work. The writer of example (11) reported that he knew that 'according to' was a frequent way to introduce the reported authors, but he also wanted to provide information on the study and show that what the reported authors said was based on their research. However, he did not know how to use academic language to do so.

(11) According to Bradley, L., Linstrom, B., & Rystedt, H. (2010) - his study with language learners' students – indicates that there was much collaboration on the student Wiki pages.

(12) Kost (2009) states that, according to his findings, …

b. Missing information or wrong information
Other problems are related to the conventions and mechanical aspects of citation. Students sometimes failed to include all the necessary information in the reference: they did not include the year of publication or they omitted the page number of a reference when quoting. Other unacceptable practices were including the authors' initials (e.g. 11) or providing the pages for the whole chapter/ paper, not the page from which the quotation had been taken.

c. Misuse of reporting verbs
Reporting verbs play an important role in the construction of academic texts, since they enable the writers to evaluate and express their attitude towards previous research (Thompson and Ye, 1991) and use the reported claims to construct their own argument. However, the analysis of the learner corpus revealed that these students tend to perceive reporting verbs simply as a way to present the reported claim, not as evaluative devices. The corpus displays a high occurrence of inappropriate use of reporting verbs, partly due to the conception that students have of ideas as facts to be presented (not evaluated) and to their unawareness of the evaluative load of these verbs. For instance, in example (13) the writer uses *advise* even if the reported author is not giving his opinion about the best course of action. Problems also arise because students seem to have an inaccurate knowledge of the denotation of particular verbs (e.g. 14), and of their collocational or colligational patterns (e.g. 14, 15).

(13) Zorko advises that mobile phone communication and chats are more used by the students because they allow immediate feedback for peer communication.
(14) The most important positive aspects that Wikis have are proposed by Zorko (2009).
(15) Cole (2009) measured that 37% of the cohort in his study found difficulties when trying to use the wiki.

Class discussion revealed that, although some students were aware of the need to choose reporting verbs that conveyed the reported author's or their own evaluation of the reported proposition, the choice of reporting verbs was often determined by students' desire to provide variety.

Conclusions and Implications

This study adds to the current body of research on the use of sources by L2 undergraduate students, focusing on students in a Spanish university. The purpose of this research was to comprehend the challenges faced by these students when writing source-based texts in English. The results suggest that inappropriate citation practices by these students arise mainly from three factors. One of them is the epistemological construction that students have of ideas from other authors as facts to be collated rather than evaluated and of writing an academic text as information reporting rather than as argument construction. This resulted in under-referencing, especially when using Internet sources or presenting general claims, and in the overuse of integral citations. Students often lacked both disciplinary knowledge and confidence to evaluate previous research and to position themselves in relation to that research. This difficulty to evaluate others' ideas and express authorial voice has already been pointed out as one of the causes for L2 students' unacceptable citation practices (McCulloch 2013, Thompson, Morton, and Storch 2013).

The two other main factors contributing to inappropriate citation practices by students were low level of academic literacy regarding the procedures involved in paraphrasing and synthesizing and lack of familiarity with citation patterns and the language of citations. The students' poor understanding of the source text and their inability to use the disciplinary discourse or establish relations between different sources resulted in over-quotation, patchwriting and unsuccessful paraphrasing and synthesizing. Unawareness of the different citation patterns and their functions and of the use of reporting verbs for evaluation led to the limited use of these patterns and the misuse of verbs. Many participants in the study did not understand referencing as a rhetorical strategy used to achieve specific purposes, or their level of academic literacy was still too low to use referencing strategically.

Therefore, the results provide support to many scholars' claims that the inappropriate borrowing and misuse of sources by students is not usually a result of dishonesty, but of students' insufficient knowledge of the rhetorical features of academic text and low development of important skills involved in the reading-writing process. Being students of English Studies, the participants in the study had received a high level of exposure to formal English and they had already received instruction on the use of sources, but the results show that in some cases their reading-to-write skills and their linguistic skills are not developed enough to use sources effectively. Learning how to use sources is a developmental process (Hirvela and Du 2013, Howard 1995, Pecorari 2003), particularly challenging for L2 student writers (Pecorari 2010, Pennycook 1996), and stages in this process should not be considered plagiarism, but, as other researchers defend (Pecorari 2010, Petrić 2012), learning strategies.

This study highlights the need to examine closely the citation practices of L2 students in order to determine what they should be taught and what aspects should be foregrounded. It provides support to the recommendation that EAP instruction should help students become aware of the social construction of knowledge, the dialogic nature of academic texts and the rhetorical function of citation (Abasi, Abkari and Graves 2006, McCulloch 2013). The study also suggests the need to teach the use of sources within a genre-based framework, focusing

on the purpose of academic texts, on the function of different types of citations, and on the different choices that writers have to present previous research. Skills such as paraphrasing, summarizing or synthesizing should not be taught with isolated fragments of text, but focusing on why and how they should be used when writing a specific text. As Hirvela and Du (2013) claim, it is necessary to emphasize the rhetorical dimension of these skills, not only the linguistic one, as is usually the case in EAP courses.

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