ANALYSIS OF EFL STUDENTS' CITATION PRACTICES AND PROBLEMS IN ACADEMIC WRITING

Yanti Sri Rezeki

(yantisrirezeki@gmail.com)

Faculty of Education Universitas Tanjungpura

Abstract: Citing sources correctly is vital in academic writing including research proposals. Despite its significance, students seem to perform it poorly due to lack of knowledge and awareness of its role in their writing. As the result, they are often accused of committing plagiarism. One of the ways to prevent students from committing plagiarism is by providing them with sufficient knowledge and skills related to proper citations. This study is a preliminary effort to identify student citation practices within the English Education department of a state university in West Kalimantan, Indonesia. Employing qualitative content analysis, the researcher examined samples of students' proposals to describe the ways in which citations were written and the common problems that occurred. The findings suggest that students mostly cited as non-integral/non-reporting. The study also reveals that students' most common mistakes in the citation are found in language and content. The study concludes with the need to provide students with clear guidelines for citation and strong remarks on plagiarism.

Keywords: *Citation, plagiarism, EFL students, academic writing, research proposal*

INTRODUCTION

Citation refers to the writer's acknowledgments of other people's work in his/her writing. The importance of citation has been addressed by researchers including Bereiter and Scardamalia (as cited in Hinkel, 2004, p. 11). Both researchers argue that in academic writing, students are required to "obtain, synthesize, integrate, and analyze information from various sources, such as published materials, textbooks, or laboratory experiments". In addition to providing credits for the authors whose works are cited, citation aims at showing readers or audience what a writer knows about a topic and helping them to follow up the source materials and to locate the relevant sources that may be useful for their own work (Lipson, 2006). Failure to cite properly will lead to plagiarism, which is a serious problem yet commonly happens in almost all fields (Kashkur, Parshutin, & Borisov, 2010) and especially among non-native speakers of English (Wallwork, 2011). While citation has gained serious attention in the western academic society, the case is different in EFL context, including in Indonesian

universities. In such a context, citation materials and guidelines are not explicitly included in the curriculum and its requirement is not strongly imposed, especially at the institutional level. As the results, students are found making a lot of mistakes in the citation, including in their research proposal.

This research employs writing as social practice (Lillis, 2013) as its theoretical framework. Viewed as a social practice, writing counts as a way to participate in the practices of the specific community of which writers are members. In the context of EFL higher education, academic writing is considered an integral part of the student writers because it is primarily used to assess and evaluate their competence (Sun, 2008). Thus said, every discipline has its own conventions that rule out the ways academic writing should be conducted not excluding citation. Sun (2008) emphasizes that citation is "one of the most important realizations of the research writer's concern for his or her audience" (p. 2). As a practice of a specific community, citation formats and styles follow the specific field in which it is used. Different field of study usually assigns a specific reference system with formats unique to each style, such as APA (American Psychology Association), Harvard, MLA (Modern Language Association), and Chicago style. In brief, students' citation practices should be framed under which system they are required to confirm and how much this system is introduced to them.

Although each referenced style carries out different rules, Swales (1990) contends that citation generally can be categorized into integral/non-integral and reporting/non-reporting. According to Swales, a citation is integral when a writer puts the cited author in the citing sentence or running text whereas non-integral citation is where the cited author occurs in parenthesis or referred to using notes, numbers or through other devices. Furthermore, Swales classifies citation into reporting citation when the writer uses reporting verbs such as *suggest, claim, state, argue,* and *conten*t. On the other hand, non-reporting citation, as the term suggests, refers to the citation that does not contain reporting verb.

Furthermore, Swales (p. 148) lists the ways in which a writer introduces the author's name in integral citation: as subject (as in "Brie (1988) showed that the moon is made of cheese".), passive agent (as in "The moon's cheese composition is was established by Brie (1988)."), a part of-of a possessive noun phrase (as in "Brie's theory (1988) claims that the moon is made of cheese."), and as an adjunct of reporting (as in "According to Brie (1988), the moon is made of cheese."). These examples of citation could indicate the writer's commitment to or detachment to the cited authors and the importance of their work (Sun, 2008).

In addition to the level of in-text citation demonstrated above, reference guides also regulate the ways in which the cited works should be written. These guides include the ways page number is used and written and how subsequent sources should be stated. The excerpt below from Regier (as cited in Lund University, 2011) shows examples of MLA in-text citation:

> As a text translating a narrative time and space characterized by many kinds of travel, *Gardens in the Dunes* puts into motion increasingly hybrid sequences of transnational plots, narrative forms, and admixtures of environmental and archeological objects. The resulting narrative syncretism enacts a narrative politics that could be described variously as "post-nationalist" (Rowe 78) or as ideologically "hybrid" (Bhabha 1). Their narrative politics share a call for discourses not fully defined by any singular national identity. Bhabha keys hybridity to the service of "transnational and translational sense[s] of imagined communities" (1).

If the citation is written by following the 6th Edition of APA style, the above excerpt becomes (please note that years are given a modification of the original source) :

> As a text translating a narrative time and space characterized by many kinds of travel, *Gardens in the Dunes* puts into motion increasingly hybrid sequences of transnational plots, narrative forms, and admixtures of environmental and archeological objects. The resulting narrative syncretism enacts a narrative politics that could be described variously as "post-nationalist" (Rowe, 1980, p. 78) or as ideologically "hybrid" (Bhabha, 1978, p. 1). Their narrative politics share a call for discourses not fully defined by any singular national identity. Bhabha keys hybridity to the service of "transnational and translational sense[s] of imagined communities". (p, 1)

Notice that while in MLA the year of the work cited is not stated and the page number is directly written following the author's name; in the APA style, the year is included and the page number follows it and written as 'p.' (i.e., page number). Due to the differences and complexities of citation formats and styles, writers are required to follow these sets of rules carefully and consistently throughout a single paper.

A large body of research has investigated students' problems in a citation in their academic writing. For example, Sun (2008) examined the citation problems found in Chinese MA theses. Among the findings, Sun reported that students lacked an awareness of the importance of citation in the introduction section of their theses and that they had little critical evaluation when citing others' work. Similarly, Jalilifar and Dabbi (2013) investigated the citation problems of MA students' theses but in an Iranian context. Their findings showed that integral citation outnumbered other ways of citing authors' work as indicated by the prominent occurrence of the authors' names within the running texts. Moreover, Lamptey and Atta-Obeng (2012) sought challenges in citation faced by more than five-hundreds postgraduate students in a university in Ghana. One of the challenges reported was their difficulties in mastering the many variations in citation styles. All the researchers agree that inadequate ability to cite properly may lead students to plagiarism. Relating citation and plagiarism, Gullifer and Tyson (2010) explored students' perceptions regarding plagiarism. Their participants came from various academic disciplines, year, and mode of study. From the results of focus group discussions with their participants, the researchers identified six themes related to plagiarism: "confusion, fear, perceived sanctions, perceived seriousness, academic consequences and resentment" (p. 463). In relation to 'fear', for example, the participants reported feeling anxious that they would plagiarize unintentionally since

they hardly found clear guidelines about plagiarism and how to avoid it. Both researchers strongly suggested that citation related skills such as "critical reading, note-taking, paraphrasing, writing and referencing" (p. 479) are to be introduced and developed since students' first year of study. Likewise, Gullifer and Tyson (2013) conducted a study to investigate students' understanding of plagiarism. They found that the majority of participants did not read the university policy on plagiarism and that they felt confused about what behaviors count as plagiarism.

The above studies mostly involved postgraduate students and were carried out in ESL context. Since the research proposal and thesis writing have been the major requirements for most undergraduate students in Indonesian universities, research that looks into citation issues at this learners' level is timely. Another reason that necessitates the current research is the increasing cases of plagiarism by EFL students, including in Indonesia. The fact that they major in English and thus are required to write academic papers in English might present another challenge for students in the citation. Despite the increasing plagiarism cases, most evidence is anecdotal. Henceforth, this study aimed to fill in these gaps by investigating Indonesian EFL undergraduate students' citation writing in their research proposals. Specifically, it aimed to answer these research questions: 1) In what ways do students cite in their research proposal? 2) What common mistakes are found in the students' citation? Findings of this research serve as a preliminary effort to identify the ways students cite and whether or not they have done it properly.

METHODOLOGY

The best way to understand the students' practice in citation writing is by doing an in-depth analysis on the ways they write the citation in their research proposals. Therefore, qualitative research methodology is considered the best approach for the study. It allows the researcher's close attachment to the data and eases data analysis and interpretation (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

Subjects and Data Collection

The data source for this research was 10 undergraduate students' research proposals submitted in the academic year 2015/2016 to the English Education department of Lotus University, Indonesia (pseudonym). They were written as partial fulfillment for the degree of Bachelor of Education in the institution. The ten research proposals were purposefully selected maintaining the varieties of categories: the writer's sex, the research design/methodology, length of study, and the area of research focus. For the data corpus and to maintain the confidentiality of proposal's writer, the sample proposals are presented as P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, with Preferring to

'Proposal'. The following table shows the distribution of data sampling for the current research:

Table 1 Sampling Distribution

Criteria		Number of Research Proposal
Author's sex	Male	5
	Female	5
Research design	(Pre) Experimental Design	2
	Classroom Action Research (CAR)	2
	Case Study	3
	Descriptive Study	2
	Development Research	1
Author's length of study	4 to 5 years	8
	More than 5 years	2
Total number of research proposal		10

Data Analysis

Qualitative content analysis was employed to analyze the data for the study by focusing on the communication of meaning and analyzing the data inductively (Merriam, 2009). This means that categories and themes may occur at any stages in the data analysis. The main characteristic of qualitative content analysis is that it looks for insights in which "situations, settings, styles, images, meanings, and nuances are key topics" (Altheide, 1987 as cited in Merriam, 2009, p. 205). Similarly, Schreier (2014) mentions three characteristics of qualitative content analysis: "[it] reduces data, it is systematic, and it is flexible" (p. 170). The process of data analysis using this technique involves "simultaneous coding of raw data and the construction of categories that capture relevant characteristics of the document's content" (Merriam, 2009, p. 205). Applying this to the current study, the researcher analyzed the contents of the research proposals that are related to the citation, identified common themes and used them to answer the research questions.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Students' Forms of Citations and Their Implications

Based on the data analyses, the following table is created to show students' forms of citations.

Table 2 Forms of student citations

RP	Total number of citations	Reporting /Integral	Reporting/ Non-integral	Non reporting /Integral	Non-reporting/ Non-integral
P1	37	20	2	10	5
P2	49	24	-	1	24
P3	28	18	1	6	3
P4	33	16	-	15	2
P5	26	12	-	6	8
P6	45	26	-	16	3
P7	48	19	2	11	16
P8	50	6	1	6	37
P9	53	-	-	-	53
P10	43	21	1	1	20
Total	412	162	7	72	171

The present study confirms previous findings (Jalilifar & Dabbi, 2013; Okamura, 2008; Sun, 2008) in that students utilized all citation forms categorized by Swales (1990). It was found that out of 412 citations, non-reporting/non-integral form of the citation was employed the most (i.e., 171 citations) whereas the least form used was reporting/integral citation (i.e.,162 citations). Some examples of each form of citation are presented below:

1. Reporting/integral
   Raimes (1983) explains that writing [is] also important to help the students in learning the foreign language;… (P4)
   Hitchcoock and Hughes (1995) maintain that a case study has the following distinctive features. (P5)
2. Reporting/non-integral
   Lohan in 2012 also used the 3-2-1 strategy in his previous research. (P7)
3. Non-reporting/integral
   According to Hyble (2001:45), speaking is any process in which people share information, ideas, and feeling. (P5)
4. Non-reporting/non-integral
   The distractor analysis can be determined by comparing the number of students in the upper and lower groups who selected each incorrect alternative (Krishnan, 2013). (P2)
   Assessment plays a crucial role in what and how students learn and what and how teachers teach (Biggs, 1999; Dochy, 2001 in Naidu 2003:196). (P1)
   Parts of speech are consisting of nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, pronouns, prepositions, conjunctions, and interjections (Stobbe, 2008: 2). (P6)

With regard to the prominent use of non-reporting/non-integral citations, this finding contradicts Jalilifar and Dabbi's (2013). Researchers argue that the writer's choices of a certain form of citations indicate his/her emphasis on the authors or their work, as well as "the writer's attitude toward what is cited" (Sun, 2008, p. 5). They also argue that these choices are also reflected in the uses of reporting verb and tense. As seen in the findings, the students used various reporting verbs, such as *state, explain, say,* and *maintain*. However, the reporting verbs that they used were mostly positive in that they represent their agreement toward the cited work. Reporting verbs that indicated their negation or showed that the information presented by the author is false, such as *fail, exaggerate, ignore,* or *overlook* (Hyland, 1999) were absent. In this sense, the findings echoed the previous research (Jalilifar & Dabbi, 2013; Sun, 2008) and proved that students' overuse of positive reporting verbs portrays their lack of critical evaluation toward authors' work.

In addition to the use of reporting verbs, the writer's choices of tense in citations can also be an indication of their knowledge about proper citation. Evident in the findings is that the students inconsistently used present tense and past tense. They did not seem to distinguish the use of each tense based on the intention of citing author's work. For example, they used present tense when they cited authors' definition. Other time, they also used present tense for previous research results. Align with Sun's (2008) research findings, the students' inconsistency in using appropriate tenses demonstrated that they lacked adequate knowledge about proper citation.

Problems in Students' Citation

In addition to revealing the citation forms and what they indicated, this study also located problems or incorrect ways of citing especially the areas of language and content, each is discussed below.

   1. Language

     a) Starting paragraphs with citations or quotations
       It was found in the data that students often began a paragraph with a quotation or citation, which is not recommended in academic writing. Example:

       Zygouris-Coe et al (2004: 382) stated that "3-2-1 strategy can be modified to facilitate reading comprehension of struggling readers by asking them to provide… (P7)
       "A variable is a characteristic or attribute of an individual or an organization that … " (Creswell, 2008, p. 123). (P8)

     b) Too much or too little details of the sources

The examples below show that the writer put too much detail on the sources that is by including authors' full name, initials, or research or book title. It is recommended that they just include authors' surname. In other occasion, student writers did not include sufficient details of the sources. For example, they did not provide the author or year of the sources.

Example:
According to Patel in his journal in International Journal of advancement in Research and Technology (2013) stated that there are… (P1)
Research finding conducted by Ali-Saadi, Hamed, [and] Samuel entitled "An Analysis of the Writing Needs of Omani EFL students … (P8)
A similar research has been conducted in one of the Universities in Japan. The research analyzed … (P9)

c) The use of double subjects.
   In the example below, the writer used double subjects to refer to the authors they cited, which is incorrect. An author should be cited only by their surname or pronounce if they have been referred to in the preceding section.
   Example:
   As in line with James (2006: 48), he stated that the generic structure of … (P7)
   Completely, they (Dudley-Evans & John, 2011, p. 125) extend needs in 8 points. (P8)
   Then he (Littlewood, 2008, p. 1) explains more as follows. (P8)

d) The use of double reporting verbs.
   The use of double reporting verbs is frequently found when students used non-reporting/integral citations, which is started with *'According to'*, as seen in the following examples:

   Example:
   According to Marczyk, DeMatteo & Festinger (2005: 42) define, "A variable is anything that can take on different values." (P6)
   According to Siahaan (2007: 215) states that writing is a psychological activity of the language… (P3)

e) Mechanics of writing (e.g., punctuation, capitalization) and Grammar (tense)
   Mistakes related to the improper punctuation, capitalization, and S-V agreement are frequently located in students' proposal writing analyzed in this study. In terms of punctuation, the most occurring problem is in the case when students did not put a comma in non-reporting/integral citations, which contains *'according to'*.
   Example:

According to Kelly (2009: 7), the term 'curriculum' can be, and is, used, for many different kinds of a programme of teaching and instruction. (P1)
According to J. B. Heaton (1988: 96), The criteria are fluency, vocabulary, accuracy, and comprehensibility. (P4)
According to Diestch (2003), the general purpose of writing may … (P3)
Thornbury (2002: 75) state that there are three stages in teaching vocabulary. (P6)

The frequently found mistakes in the students' citation related to language aspects as described above might be the indication of their poor proofreading and editing skills, low English competence, and knowledge about proper citation.

2. Content

a) Indications of plagiarism

The findings of this study also reveal cases of plagiarism intentionally or unintentionally committed by the student writers whose' proposals had been examined. An example of this is the ways in which authors' original ideas were copied while proper citations were not given. This is visible by their use of 'we' or 'you', leaving out the quotation mark.
Example:
According to Wallace (1992) cited in Pauline (2002:84) a useful way to think about a text with your class is to divide the planning into three sections: (1) what you will do before the reading; (2) what you and children do while the reading is going on; (3) what you will do after the book/text has been read. (P7)

In the above example, although the writer has provided the sources, it is not clear where his/her statements started and which statements belonged to the cited author. A proper citation would require that author's original words are to be written within the quotation mark as a sign of direct quotation (Elander, Pittam, Lusher, Fox, & Payne, 2010). In the above case, the use of 'you' clearly showed that the statements were taken directly from the original source. Thus, the fact that proper citation was not given has made this a case of plagiarism.

Furthermore, a case of plagiarism is also shown by the improper student citation for the materials taken from other sources such as tables, diagrams, formula, or samples of texts. The data showed that such materials were often used without acknowledging the authors of the original sources at all (e.g., P7; P8; P2).

b) Lack of critical evaluation

The students' prominent use of non-reporting/ non-integral form of citations described previously and the unclear difference between the original words and the student writer's indicate that they lacked critical analysis and evaluation when reading supporting references. Additional evidence is the students' overuse of direct quotations. In P10, for example, direct quotations were found on almost every page.

While identifying reasons that underlie student citation practices is beyond the purpose of the current research, viewing academic writing, in this case, citation as socially constructed (Lim & See, 2001; Lillis, 2013) helps generate what contextualizes student citation practices. It can be concluded that students' citation practices, including problems they encountered when citing, might be related to the ways citation is perceived and treated at the personal and institutional level (Elander et al., 2010; Park, 2003). For example, students' excessive use of direct quotation was possibly caused by their lack of English academic writing skills. Additionally, despite the fact that students' research proposals have been through a consultation process with their supervisors, evidence of plagiarism indicated that plagiarism has not been considered a serious matter by all parties (faculty members, the institution).

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

This research has examined the citation practices of EFL undergraduate students in their research proposals. It has described the ways in which students wrote their citations and identified problems in the citations. Among the major findings is that the citation was mostly written as non-integral/ non-reporting. There were also indications of plagiarism and evidence of students' lack of critical thinking.

This research only examined 10 students' research proposals thus the findings could not be generalized beyond this scope. However, the researcher is able to offer several suggestions. First, further research needs to include bigger data, employ more detailed discourse analysis, and elicit students' perceptions. Second, students must develop their critical thinking skills to be able to evaluate relevant sources. Third, citations and issues of plagiarism must be explicitly introduced in the curriculum as early as possible. Last, clear guidelines on citations and regulations for plagiarism must be made available to all students.

REFERENCES

Bogdan, R. C., & Biklen, S. K. (2007). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theories and methods (5th Ed.).* New York: Pearson.

Gullifer, J., & Tyson, G. A. (2010). Exploring university students' perceptions of plagiarism: a focus group study. *Studies in Higher Education, 35* (4), 463-481.

Gullifer, J., & Tyson, G. A. (2013). Who has read the policy on plagiarism? Unpacking students' understanding of plagiarism. *Studies in Higher Education*, DOI: 10.1080/03075079.2013.777412

Hinkel, E. (2004) *Teaching academic ESL writing: Practical techniques in vocabulary and grammar.* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence and Erlbaum Associates, Inc.

Hyland, K. (1999). Academic attribution: Citation and the construction of disciplinary knowledge. *Applied Linguistics, 20*(3), 341-367.

Jalilifar, A., & Dabbi, R. (2013). Citation in applied linguistics: Analysis of introduction sections of Iranian Master's theses. *Linguistik Online, 57* (7), 91-104.

Kashkur, M., Parshutin, S., & Borisov, A. (2010). Research into plagiarism cases and plagiarism detection methods. *Scientific Journal of Riga Technical University*, 138-143.

Lamptey, R. B., & Atta-Obeng, H. (2012). Challenges with reference citations among postgraduate students at the Kwame Nkruma university of science and technology, Kumasi, Ghana. *Journal of Science and Technology, 32*(3), 69-80.

Lim, V. K. G., & See S. K. B. (2001). Attitudes towards, and intentions to report, academic cheating among students in Singapore. *Ethics and Behaviour*, *11*(13), 261-275.

Lillis, T. (2013). *The sociolinguistics of writing*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Lipson, C. (2006). *Cite right: A quick guide to citation styles- MLA, APA, Chicago, the sciences, professions, and more.* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Lund University. (2011). Academic writing in English. Lund University. Retrieved March 15th, 2017 from http://awelu.srv.lu.se/sources-and-referencing/quick-guides-to-reference-styles/mla/#c7782

Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation. Revised and expanded from qualitative research and case study applications in education.* San Fransisco: Jossey-Bass A Wiley Imprint.

Okamura, A. (2008). Citation forms in scientific texts: Similarities and differences in L1 and L2 professional writing. *Nordic Journal of English Studies, 7* (3), 61-81.

Park, C. (2003). In other (people's) words: Plagiarism by university students-literature and lessons. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education, 28* (5), 471-488.

Schreier, M. (2014). Qualitative content analysis. In U. Flick (Ed.), *The SAGE handbook of qualitative data analysis* (pp. 170-183). London: SAGE.

Sun, Y. (2008). Citation problems of Chinese MA theses and pedagogical implications. *The Journal of ASIA TEFL, 5* (1), 1-27.

Wallwork, A. (2011). *English for writing research papers.* New York: Springer.