A Contrastive Investigation of Intertextuality in Research Articles Authored by Iranian vs. English Writers in Applied Linguistics

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Abstract

Academic discourse enables others' voices in a text to be realized through conventionalized citational patterns. However, form amongst a variety of factors, one thing which may influence the way others' voices are textualized is writers' affiliations to different cultures. Following this assumption, the present contrastive study attempted to explore manifest intertextual constructions across the academic articles written by English and Iranian writers in the field of applied linguistics in a ten-year period (2000-2010). The typology of citation elaborated by Swales (1990), and subcategorized by Thompson and Tribble (2001) and Thompson (2005) were explored as the analytical framework of this study. The analysis demonstrated the dominance of different strategies of citations in the two corpora. The findings of this research may be helpful for novice writers and researchers in applied linguistics.

Introduction

It is now recognized that one important aspect of academic writing, among many, is the use of intertextual links where authors make use of the ideas of other people through their selection of references to previous research. Good academic writing, therefore, cannot be separated form good citations because ignoring the problems in citing from other sources can lead the writer to the practice of plagiarism, and in case information from other sources is not appropriately cited, miscommunication can happen. Research on the use of citations has demonstrated that appropriate citing practices have been a challenge for both native and nonnative students, at undergraduate and postgraduate levels (e.g., Connors, 1995, The National Commission on Writing in America's Schools and Colleges, 2003). The mentioned challenge has also motivated a growing interest in studies on practices of citation which is marked by Swales' (1990) work. In academic discourse studies, citations have often been examined with reference to reporting verbs (e.g., Charles, 2006; Hunston& Thompson, 2003; Hyland, 1999, 2001; Shaw, 1992; Thomas & Hawes, 1994; Thompson &Ye, 1991). Many scholars believe that reporting verbs are the key feature of academic discourse through which writers are enabled "[…] to clearly convey the kind of activity reported and to precisely distinguish an attitude to that information, signaling whether the claims are to be taken as accepted or not" (Hyland, 1999, p. 344).

In the past two decades (i.e. since the culmination of interest in the study of citations in academic discourse), a number of studies have looked into the ways that citations are used. For example, Thompson and Ye (1991) studied the introduction sections of more than 100 articles to examine how reporting verbs are used by writers to both report their own claims or ideas and to demonstrate the attitudes writers have towards others' claims. Swales' (1990) study investigated the introductions of 158 research articles of various disciplines and identified two forms of citations: integral and non-integral. The integral citation is one in which the names of researchers appear in the citing part as a grammatical element while the non-integral citation refers to one in which the names of the researchers occur outside the citing sentence either in parentheses or other devices. Hyland (1999) investigated the pattern of author attribution in 80 selected articles from

eight disciplines. Using Swales' (1990) distinction between integral and non-integral citation structures, Hyland found that hard disciplines (e.g. Engineering, Physics) tended to use non-integral citations whereas the soft disciplines (e.g. Sociology, Philosophy) tended to use integral references more frequently. Thompson and Tribble (2001) examined the differences between integral and non-integral citations in two doctoral theses written in two disciplines (Agricultural Botany and Agricultural Economics) and found that writers in different disciplines use different citation practices. Their results showed that novice writers use a limited range of citation types. Petric (2007) examined the rhetorical function of citation in 16 master's theses (eight A-graded theses and eight lower graded theses) written by second language writers from 12 countries in Central and Eastern Europe. She examined eight rhetorical functions, namely attribution, exemplification, further reference, statement of use, application, evaluation, establishing links between sources, and comparison of one's own work with that of other authors. Her study found that writers of high-graded master's theses used citation for a greater variety of purposes than writers of low-graded master's theses. Salmi and Dervin (2009) investigated citation conventions in research articles from a single discipline (business management) written in two languages, English and Spanish, published in two different sociocultural environments and found that Spanish writers used less citation, especially in the discussion section; they rarely used reporting structures and did not refer to previous work. They explained such differences in terms of the different sociocultural contexts in which the articles were produced. Mansourizadeh and Ahmad (2011) examined the expert and novice writers working in the same discipline and found that nonnative expert writers use citations differently than novice writers: the experts usually use them strategically to show their own findings in relation to earlier contributions while the novices use them in isolation and lack advanced skills. In another insightful investigation, the citation practice of Iranian master's theses writers has been investigated by Jalilifar and Dabbi (2012). The study focused on a corpus of 65 high- rated master's theses from a number of Iranian universities and indicated a pronounced tendency to use integral citations (and very little use of non-integral citations) in which the

name of the author appears in a prominent functional position. Little use of the non-integral citation category in the theses of Iranian students has been interpreted as a sign of lack of familiarity with the conventional patterns of academic citation. HelaliOskueia and Kuhi (2014) have also resorted to a contrastive study of citation in academic writing and have compared the use of citations in the introduction sections of Iranian and native English master's theses. Their analysis indicated that Iranian MA thesis writers used more citations than native English writers and preferred the integral over non-integral form. The study also revealed that native theses had a richer and more diverse use of the different functions of citations. In a more recent interesting study, Pipalova (2014) also went through a contrastive investigation of manifest intertextuality, namely free (direct) speech in academic discourse. The study focused on three sub-corpora (samples of professional academic prose written by native speakers, samples of professional academic prose written by nonnative Czech linguists and samples of prose written by nonnative Czech undergraduates) and provided acomprehensive analysis of discourse parameters, range of framing structures, position, subjects featured, word order, types of verbs, etc. used by the three groups. Amongst many significant findings, the study reported that the citation practice of the non-native professional subcorpus came closer to the native tendencies than did the data drawn from the non-native novices' subcorpus in a variety of respects. The researcher saw it natural to conclude that the socialization process into the academic community is a long one and that should they want to, students have yet a way to go to come to terms with some of the strategies and conventions in order to be well accepted by the international academic community.

Previous studies on citations in academic writing have predominantly focused both on expert texts found in academic journals (Hyland , 2000) as well as student writing in the form of doctoral dissertations (Thompson &Tribble, 2001) and master's theses (Charles, 2006; Petric, 2007). The majority of these studies have given more attention to citations employed in texts produced by native English speaking writers. Furthermore, despite existing literature indicating that nonnative writers have some difficulties with respect to citation practices, there is a need for more research relevant to Iranian EFL context. Motivated by this necessity and also motivated by

the desire for understanding the possible effects of sociocultural context on citation practices of writers, the present research aimed to explore the differences in citation practices of Iranian and English writers working in the field of applied linguistics.

Method

Corpus

A corpus of 60 research articles in applied linguistics published during a ten-year period (2000-2010) was constructed through random sampling for the analysis; the diachronic limitation imposed on the corpus was motivated by the findings of Salager-Meyer (1999) and Salager-Meyer et al. (2003) in relation to the diachronical differences in the use and frequency of reference patterns in the constructions of academic texts. The native (English writers) corpus – including 30 research articles – was constructed from the articles published in three internationally recognized journals of applied linguistics: *Applied Linguistics, English for Specific Purposes,* and the *Journal of Pragmatics.* The non-native (Iranian writers) corpus – including 30 research articles – was constructed form the articles published in three Iranian journals of applied linguistics: *Pazhuhesh-e Zabanha-ye Khareji*, *Journal of English Language Teaching and Learning*, and the *Iranian Journal of Applied Language Studies*. To decide on the linguistic/cultural background of the authors, names and affiliations were used as the criteria.

Model of analysis

To meet the objective of the present research, Thompson and Tribble's (2001) framework for integral and non-integral citations was used to compare the two corpora in terms of the dominance of different patterns of citations. The main categories which Thompson and Tribble (2001, pp.95-6) set are as follows:

a. Integral citations consisting of three sub-classes (verb controlling, naming, non-citation). The three sub-classes are defined as:

　1. Verb controlling: the type of citation acts as the agent that controls a verb, in active or passive voice, as in: *Bakhtin (1986) argues that every text (or utterance) is dialogical, in the sense that it gains its meaning in relation to other texts.*

2. Naming: in this kind of citation, the citation is a noun phrase or part of a noun phrase, as in: *Another study was conducted by Eva ThueVold (2006) who investigated the use of non-citation.*
3. Non-citation: there is a reference to another writer but the name is given without a year reference. It is most commonly used when the writer does not want to repeat it as in: *Paltridge also argues that definitions of structural e*lements *are often determined 'intuitively', concluding therefore that the boundaries are cognitively rather than linguistically determined.*

b. Non-integral citations consisting of four sub-categories (source, identification, reference, origin). The subcategories are defined as:
1. Source: this type of citation indicates where the idea or information comes from, as in: *Hedges are significant in academic discourse since they are central rhetorical means of gaining communal adherence to knowledge claims (Meyer, 1997).*
2. Identification: this citation type identifies an agent within the sentence it refers to, as in: *Hedging is defined as the expression of tentativeness and possibility in language use and it is crucial to language writing where statements are rarely made without subjective assessment of truth (Hyland, 1995).*
3. Reference: this is usually signaled by the inclusion of the directive "see", as in: *the use of metatextual elements (see Bunton, 1999) asrhetorical device also bears mention.*
4. Origin: this type of citation indicates the originator of a concept, technique or product, as in: *Those terms that have died out include gambit (Keller, 1979), speech marker (Olynak et al., 1990), pragmatic particle (Ostman, 1981, 1982, 1995; Foolen, 1997) […].*

The analysis was run on all sections of the research articles (i.e., Introduction, Methods, Results, Discussion). After the assignment of identified pieces of citations to different functional categories by one of the researchers, the second researcher also went through the task. In cases where there were disagreements between the two researchers, the items were double-checked and a common decision was made on the functional

value of the specific citation. This can be taken as an indicator of the reliability of the analysis procedure.

Results

A general overview of the findings

As Table 1 illustrates, the analysis revealed a similar frequency of citations in both corpora, with frequency of 7.9 per 1000 words in native and 8.07 in non-native articles, which cannot be considered as a significant difference in terms of the frequency of occurrence of citations. However, a closer look at Table 2 and Table 3 demonstrate both similarities and differences in the two corpora in terms of citation types: the frequency of occurrence of non-integral type was far lower and in both corpora the integral citations were preferred over the non-integral ones. That is to say, the writers in both corpora tended to use integral citations far more than non-integral ones. Moreover, native writers tended to use more non-integral citations than non-native writers, while the non-natives tended to use more integral ones.

Table 1

Total number of citations per1000 words in Natives and Non-natives Research Articles

Articles	Word frequency	Citation Frequency	Density per 1000 words
English Research Articles written by Native writers	229050	1830	7.99
English Research Articles written by Non- native Persian writers of English	141263	1140	8.07

Table 2
Non/Integral citation in Native Articles

Integral citation in Native texts	Frequency	percentage
Verb controlling	393	21.53
Naming	286	15.62
Non-citation	267	14.59
Total	947	51.748
Non-integral citation	frequency	percentage
source	381	20.81
identification	294	16.06
reference	152	8.30
origin	56	3.06
Total	883	48.251

Table 3
Non/integral citation in Non-native Articles

Integral citation in Non-native texts	Frequency	percentage
Verb controlling	429	37.63
Naming	179	15.70
Non-citation	47	4.12
Total	655	57.45
Non-integral citation	frequency	percentage
source	233	20.43
identification	180	15.78
reference	60	5.26
origin	12	1.052
Total	485	42.54

The results of analysis also revealed substantial differences in the frequencies of integral citation types in different rhetorical sections of the research articles: verb controlling was the most frequent integral citation type; while non-citation was the least frequent citation type. Additionally, as shown in Tables 2 and 3, within the integral citation category, non-native writers resorted to verb controlling more than native writers did. In both corpora, naming appeared as the second most frequent integral citation type. However, it had a higher frequency in the non-native corpus. Non-citations stood as the least favored type of integral citation in both corpora.
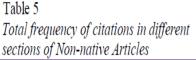
Considerable variation was also observed in non-integral citation types, 'source' type as the most frequent in both native and non-native corpora and 'origin', which can function as an indication of the origin of a theory, technique or product, had the lowest frequency in both native and non-native corpora. As Tables 2 and 3 show the identification type occurred as the second most frequent citation type of non-integral category in both corpora. Reference, was the least frequent type among the subcategories of non-integral citations.

A comparison of frequencies in the four rhetorical sections (Introduction, Methods, Results, Discussion)

In the second phase of the analysis, citation practices were compared across each of the four rhetorical sections: Introduction, Method, Result and Discussion (IMRD) in both native and non-native corpora. As can be seen in Tables 4 and 5, the frequencies of citations vary from one rhetorical space into another one: the highest frequency was observed in the *Introduction* and *Discussion* sections and the lowest frequency was seen in the *Method* and *Result*s sections.

In comparing the two corpora from the mentioned point of view, we noticed some differences: placing majority of citations in the *Results* and *Discussion* sections by native writers and the relatively higher frequency of citations in *Introduction* and *Method* sections of the articles written by non-native writers was a noteworthy distinction.

Table 4
Total frequency of citations in different sections of Native Articles

Native writers	Frequency	percentage
introduction	932	50.928
methodology	139	7.59
result	145	7.92
discussion	614	33.551

Table 5
Total frequency of citations in different sections of Non-native Articles

Non-native writers	Frequency	percentage
introduction	598	52.456
methodology	90	7.89
result	87	7.63
discussion	365	32.017

The frequencies of the subcategories of citation types in the IMRD structure have also been demonstrated through Tables 6 to 13.

In the *Introduction* section, the most frequent type of citation in both corpora was integral with a heavier appearance of verb controlling. Among the subcategories of non-integral citation, source type was the most frequent one in the *Introduction* section. Similarly, in *Discussion* section, integral citations had the highest frequency, but there were considerable differences in the frequencies of the subcategories.

Table 6
Non/integral citation in Introduction sections of Non-native Articles

	Integral citation Non-native writers	Frequency	percentage
I N T R O D U C T I O N			
	Verb controlling	242	40.468
	Naming	91	15.217
	Non-citation	20	3.344
	Total	353	59.0301
	Non-integral citation	Frequency	Percentage
	source	128	21.404
	identification	96	16.053
	reference	21	3.511

Table 7
Non/integral citation in Introduction sections of Native Articles

	Integral citation Native writers	Frequency	percentage
I N T R O D U C T I O N			
	Verb controlling	209	22.424
	Naming	151	16.201
	Non-citation	146	15.665
	Total	506	54.291
	Non-integral citation	Frequency	Percentage
	source	199	21.351
	identification	154	16.523
	reference	65	6.974

Table 8

Non/integral citation in Discussion sections of Non-native Articles

DISCUSSION	Integral citation Non-native writers	Frequency	percentage
	Verb controlling	159	43.561
	Naming	55	15.068
	Non-citation	14	3.835
	Total	228	62.465
	Non-integral citation	Frequency	Percentage
	source	73	20
	identification	56	15.342
	reference	7	1.917
	origin	1	0.273
	Total	137	37.534

Table 9

Non/integral citation in Discussion sections of Native Articles

DISCUSSION	integral citation Native writers	Frequency	percentage
	Verb controlling	142	23.127
	Naming	98	15.960
	Non-citation	91	14.820
	Total	331	53.908
	Non-integral citation	Frequency	Percentage
	source	130	21.172
	identification	101	16.449
	reference	43	7.003
	origin	9	1.465
	Total	283	46.091

Non-integral citations were more frequent in the *Results* and *Discussion* sections of the two corpora: reference and origin types occurred more frequently in *Methods*, and a relatively more frequent occurrence of source type was seen in *Results*. The analysis of the two corpora revealed some differences in the frequencies of the subcategories.

Table 10

Non/integral citation in Methodology sections of Non-native Articles

METHODOLOGY	Integral citation Non-native writers	Frequency	percentage
	Verb controlling	9	10
	Naming	23	25.56
	Non-citation	8	8.89
	Total	40	44.45
	Non-integral citation	Frequency	Percentage
	source	8	8.89
	identification	9	10

Table 11:

Non/integral citation in Methodology sections of Native Articles

METHODOLOGY	integral citation Native writers	Frequency	percentage
	Verb controlling	19	13.669
	Naming	23	16.546
	Non-citation	10	7.194
	Total	52	37.410
	Non-integral citation	Frequency	Percentage
	source	17	12.230
	identification	16	11.510

Table 12

Non/integral citation in Result sections of
Non-native Articles

	Integral citation Non-native writers	Frequency	percentage
R	Verb controlling	19	21.839
E	Naming	10	11.494
S	Non-citation	5	5.747
U	Total	34	39.080
L			
T	Non-integral citation	Frequency	Percentage
	source	24	27.586
	identification	19	21.839
	reference	9	10.344
	origin	1	1.149
	Total	53	60.919

Table 13

Non/integral citation in Result sections of
Native Articles

	Integral citation Native writers	Frequency	percentage
R	Verb controlling	24	16.551
E	Naming	14	9.655
S	Non-citation	20	13.793
U	Total	58	40
L			
T	Non-integral citation	Frequency	Percentage
	source	35	24.137
	identification	23	15.862
	reference	14	9.655
	origin	15	10.344
	Total	87	60

Discussion

In the present research, both corpora were constructed from the articles published in prestigious international and Iranian applied linguistics journals, so the authors can be judged to be among the highly expert members of the discourse community. Hence, we need a careful explanation on the findings of the research, and the outcomes cannot and should not be approached from a behavioristic point of view which may encourage the non-native writers to imitate the communicative practices of the natives. Of course, what we have found in the light of the analytic procedure of this study shows more similarities than differences. However, differences do exist. In the general frequencies of the two main types of citations, we find a similar tendency, but the subcategories have been used more differently. Without any attempt to delve deeper than what we did in the nature of these differences, we propose that the findings of this and similar studies be seen and understood from a cultural point of view. In other words, without any attempt to necessarily guide the findings towards a pedagogical/behavioral interpretation, we recommend that the differences be seen in the differences of the traditions of scientific/academic writing. In fact, if we look at the main discoursal/functional value of citations in academic discourse, we may find some major themes: "citations are used to recognize and acknowledge the intellectual property rights of authors. They are a matter of ethics and a defense against plagiarism" (Swales &Feak, 2004, p.251); "citations are used to show respect to previous scholars. They recognize the history of the field by acknowledging previous achievements" (Swales &Feak, 2004, p.252); "citations operate as a kind of mutual reward system rather than pay other authors money for their contributions, writers "pay" them in citations" (Ravetz, 1971 as cited in Swales &Feak, 2004, p.252); "citations are tools for persuasion; writers use citations to give their statements greater authority" (Gilbert, 1977 as cited in Swales &Feak, 2004, p.252); "citations are used to supply evidence that the author qualifies as a member of the chosen scholarly community; citations are used to demonstrate familiarity with the field" (Bavelas, 1978 as cited in Swales &Feak, 2004, p.252); citations are used to create a research space for the citing author (Swales, 1990).

By describing what has been done, citations point the way to what has not been done and so prepare a space for new research" (Swales, 1990 as cited in Swales &Feak, 2004, p.252). Any contrastive research which aims to find out the similarities and/or differences between the citation practices of native and non-native members of a particular discourse community (like applied linguistics) needs to re-evaluate these assumptions in the wider context of cultural backgrounds of the authors. This interpretation can result in finding out particular differences regarding the roots of communicative practices like citation. This interpretation would help us understand to what extent the mentioned functions are seen as culturally feasible, appropriate and acceptable. As we mentioned above, in the context of the present research, we mainly encountered similarities in the major patterns of citation practice. However, without a true ethnography of writing practices in the two cultures, it would not be wise to rush to the conclusion that this similarity is the outcome shared cultural assumptions about the discoursal value of citations in academic writing.

It would also be equally unfair to conclude that this similarity is the outcome of a behavioristic installation of native conventions of communication in a non-native context like Iran. A major implication of this perspective for further research would be contextualizing the findings of the empirical research in a thicker ethnography of writing practices within different cultures. Then the findings may have much better pedagogical implications.

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Appendix A

List of the English Research Articles Used as the NE Corpus (The articles have been alphabetically ordered based on the author (s)' names.)

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Appendix B

List of the English Research Articles Used as the NNE Corpus (The articles have been alphabetically ordered based on the author (s)' names.)

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Biodata

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