Use of Reporting Clauses in Citations across Two Contrasting Disciplines

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Abstract

This article is aimed at explaining the use of citation forms in reporting clauses, as well as voices behind each clause type used to report other researchers' work. The main focus is on the vital role citation patterns used in reporting clauses play in academic writing, and their contribution to the construction of knowledge in two contrasting disciplines. Making references to other people's research, writers normally use three clause types: a human subject (e.g. *Thompson; They*); a non-human subject (e.g. *This study suggested; Research has shown*); and an introductory *it* followed by a passive construction (e.g. *It could be concluded; It was found*). Some scholars have found that the frequent use of three clause types is significantly different in two contrasting disciplines: science and social science and humanities. The differences also imply the writers' stance towards the claims they have made, which could affect the acceptance in their own academic communities. The findings may be useful for English research/report writing teachers and course developers to develop research/report writing courses that will enhance the students' academic writing skills as well as the quality of their works.

Keywords: citation, reporting clause, integral citation, non-integral citation, academic writing

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ก ารใช้รูปแบบการอ้างอิงในอนุประโยครายงาน ของสองสาขาวิชาที่แตกต่างกัน

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บทคัดย่อ

บทความนี้อธิบายการใช้รูปแบบการอ้างอิงกับรูปแบบอนุประโยคและเหตุผลของการเลือกใช้ อนุประโยค แต่ละแบบในการอ้างถึงงานของนักวิจัยท่านอื่น จะเน้นพูดถึงบทบาทของรูปแบบการอ้างอิงที่ใช้ในอนุประโยค รายงานในการเขียนงานเชิงวิชาการ รวมทั้งบทบาทของรูปแบบการอ้างอิงที่มีส่วนช่วยสร้างองค์ความรู้ในสาขา วิชาต่าง ๆ โดยปกติ มีการใช้รูปแบบอนุประโยค 3 แบบในการอ้างถึงงานของผู้อื่น แบบแรก คือ ประธานที่เป็น มนุษย์ (เช่น Thompson, They) แบบที่สอง ประธานที่ไม่ใช่มนุษย์ (เช่น This study suggested, Research has shown) และแบบที่สาม *It* เป็นประธานแล้วตามด้วยโครงสร้างกรรมวาจก (เช่น It could be concluded, It was found) นักวิชาการบางท่าน พบว่า ในสาขาวิชาที่ต่างกัน ได้แก่ วิทยาศาสตร์และสังคมศาสตร์และ มนุษยศาสตร์ ความถี่ในการใช้รูปแบบอนุประโยคแตกต่างกันอย่างมีนัยสำคัญ ความต่างนี้บอกเป็นนัยถึงท่าที ของผู้เขียนที่มีต่อความคิดเห็นของเขา ซึ่งอาจจะมีผลกระทบต่อการยอมรับในสังคมวิชาการมากกว่านั้น ผลที่ ได้จากการศึกษาอาจจะเป็นประโยชน์ต่ออาจารย์ผู้สอนวิชาการเขียนรายงานเชิงวิชาการและผู้พัฒนาหลักสูตร ในการปรับเปลี่ยนการสอนการเขียนรายงานเชิงวิชาการให้ดีขึ้น เพื่อที่จะพัฒนาทักษะการเขียนงานวิชาการของ นักศึกษา ทำให้นักศึกษาสามารถผลิตงานที่มีคุณภาพ

คำสำคัญ: การอ้างอิง อนุประโยครายงาน การอ้างอิงที่เน้นชื่อเจ้าของผลงาน การอ้างอิงที่ไม่เน้นชื่อเจ้าของ ผลงาน การเขียนเชิงวิชาการ

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Introduction

According to American Psychological Association (2001), a citation is a reference to a word or piece of writing taken from other writers. It plays an important role in academic writing and enables writers to cite other researchers' work in their own research. In writing an academic report, writers normally take a stance toward a particular issue and persuade readers by referring to previous studies related to the topic to support a claim (Hyland, & Tse, 2005a). Thus, how writers report other researchers' work should be highly concerned.

Moreover, the way in which writers present the information can contribute to the construction of knowledge in different disciplines (Hyland, 1999). It can also enhance the quality of work to be more acceptable in academic communities. In other words, if writers did not form ideas in a discipline-specific style, it could be graded as low quality or rejected for publication.

However, novice writers may not know how to cite within text properly in their own field. They may randomly use different citation patterns to report other researchers' work or support a claim without realizing the reason behind those patterns. For example, a writer may not know why the author's name (e.g. *Thompson; Hyland*) is either given in the beginning of the sentence or in the parentheses, why some researchers begin the claim with a noun group with a non-human reference or a non-human subject (e.g. *This study suggested; Research has shown*), and why an introductory *it* followed by the passive voice (e.g. *it could be concluded; it was found*) is commonly used in specific disciplines. Thus, the main focus to which this paper is devoted concerns citation patterns used to report other researchers' work and why they are employed in two contrasting disciplines.

Hard and Soft Disciplines

Hard discipline and soft discipline are informal terms used to compare two academic fields, saying that the natural sciences are described as "hard," whereas the social sciences are "soft." Hard disciplines are such as biology, mathematics, physics, chemistry, astronomy, etc. while soft disciplines are psychology, sociology, political science, linguistics, philosophy, etc. These two disciplines are different in terms of the methodological rigor in research or the objectivity of results (Hay, 2000; March, & Smith, 1995; Peffers, Tuunanen, Rothenberger, & Chatterjee, 2007).

Hard disciplines are experimental so the researchers tend to use quantitative data to make their claims or results more convincing. As can be seen in Hyland's work (2002), he interviewed expert writers and used a concordance program to analyze 240

published journal articles, 30 from each of eight disciplines. The interesting results revealed that writers in the hard sciences and engineering emphasize the issue under study; they tend to use more statistical numbers to support the results. Meanwhile, the writers deemphasize their personal role. It can be noticed from less use of the author pronouns *I, me, my, we, us, and our*. The author pronouns could make the findings less reliable since readers would think that they mix their personal beliefs or findings with them.

Unlike hard disciplines, writers in soft disciplines claim a stronger identity in their papers; they tend to use more author pronouns or even author's name (Hyland, 2002). The reason is that it is hard to precisely measure soft knowledge domains which are influenced by personal opinion and can therefore be subjective. For example, in writing a philosophy paper, writers mostly criticize other philosophers' ideas and propose something new. It has nothing to do with numbers or any statistics so a personal stance or an authority's claim can help them support what they have to say and make it more reliable (Ivanic, 1998). Thus, the construction of knowledge in soft disciplines is quite personal, saying that the names of the authorities are often cited to convince readers to buy the author's arguments or claims. Surprisingly, a number of studies also showed the similar results to what Hyland found about hard and soft disciplines (Charles, 2006a, 2006b; Hyland, 1999; Hyland, & Tse, 2005a, 2005b).

Citation Types in Academic Writing

In academic writing, writers not only create a piece of paper to share knowledge with readers, but also to make them believe that the information is true (Hunston, 1994). Thus, a number of studies have examined the ways authors present their findings or previous studies in research articles (Lores Sanz, 2008; Lindeberg, 1995; Hyland, & Tse, 2005a, 2005b; Promsin, 2006; Rundblad, 2007). For example, Hyland and Tse (2005a, 2005b) found that *that*-construction in reporting clauses is widely used in academic writing. The reason is that the *that*-construction gives writers a variety of ways in expressing their views or reporting their findings. Citing other researchers' names to take a stance on the reliability of the reported information is one way that will be discussed in this paper. Thus, two distinct classifications of citations need an introduction: Swales' classification of citations and Thompson's classification of citations.

Classification of citations by Swales (1990) is a framework designed to categorize the type of research reports. Citation is a reference to the source of a word or piece of writing taken from other writers' work. It is a common practice in writing academic reports.

Without citing sources, a report may be unacceptable or even of low quality. According to Swales (1990), citations are divided into two types: integral and non-integral.

In integral citations, the name(s) of the cited author(s) are included in reporting clauses and the author(s) can be a subject in active clauses as in

> **McCarthy (1998)** argued that the line where highly idiomatic expressions gave away to transparent … disadvantages.

Sometimes a human subject in reporting clauses can be a third-person pronoun that refers to the author mentioned earlier. An example of this is

> **He** suggests that interpersonal and textual meanings are conveyed through metadiscourse.

The other is non-integral citations where the name(s) of the cited researcher(s) appear(s) either in brackets or in numerical references that mention the author name and date of publication in the reference list at the end of paper. In these citations, emphasis is given to the author's product or findings, as in this example:

> Several studies have shown that psychosocial problem affect the child's social competence, school performance, and later psychosocial development **[5,6]**.

Extending Swales' (1990) classification of citation forms, Thompson (2001) further categorized integral and non-integral citations. In Thomson's categorizations, the grammatical structure of citation patterns is similar to Swales'. Roughly speaking, in Thompson's non-integral citations, the author's name in parentheses indicates the origin of ideas and identifies an agent referred by the citation. For example,

> The software package used was Wordsmith Tools (Scott, 1996).

The author's name *Scott* in parentheses tells readers that Scott created the software package *Wordsmith Tools*. On the other hand, Swales describes it as the way writers make the author's name less prominent by putting it parentheses in order to put more emphasis on the research instrument instead of the researcher behind all the activities. The citation forms are the same, but the functions are different.

In integral citations, Thompson made grammatical distinctions among three types of integral forms: verb-controlling, naming, and non-citation.

"Verb-controlling" shows that the agent controls a verb, as in

> Swales (1981, 1986, 1990) had pioneered the study of citation analysis from an applied linguistic perspective.

The agent *Swales* controls the verbs *had pioneered,* showing the action of the agent. Another is "naming" where a non-human subject refers to a text. For instance,

> A small corpus of applied linguistics articles was used to investigate the citation practices of "expert" writers in Pickard (1995).

The human agent *Pickard* is made less prominent by the position in which it stands. Rather, the non-human subject *A small corpus of applied linguistics articles* is emphasized since it is the in-text content that readers want to know.

The last type of Thompson's citation forms is "non-citation" where writers give only name without a year. It normally appears when writers mentioned it earlier in the text and want to repeat it in the same paragraph. An example of this is

> A more sensitive set of categorizations, developed by Thompson, was used to further explore questions.

Thompson mentioned in the example is not followed by a year. The year has been mentioned earlier in the beginning of the paragraph when the writer introduced Thompson's categorizations to the readers. The example of this is

> **Thompson (2000)** further categorized integral and non-integral citations.

In the example *A more sensitive set of categorizations, developed by Thompson, was used to further explore questions.*, the writer repeats the name *Thompson* again but without the year, assuming that the readers already know to whom the repeated *Thompson* refers or in what year his work was published. Presumably, the ideas or parts that relate to each other in a way that is clear and reasonable in the paragraph may help the readers make sense of the text so that they know that the repeated *Thompson* is the same person as *Thompson (2000)* mentioned earlier.

In addition, citations can also be the author's original words through direct quotations, summarizing, and paraphrasing. However, these are excluded in this paper as they do not appear in reporting clauses. The article focuses only on citation patterns—integral and non-integral—in research reports and the use of citation types that are acceptable across hard and soft disciplines.

That-Clause Types in Research Reports

In crafting an academic paper, *that-*

clauses are normally used to tell readers about the previous studies relating to the current topic, report, and summarize the findings. Within *that*-constructions which are flexible in nature, authors can express their attitudes or views through the use of controlling verbs (Pho, 2013). In *that*-constructions in citing other people's work, writers are required to give credit to the authors whose findings are reported. Within the research reports, the name of the cited author is given either in a subject position of the reporting clause or in the brackets or in numerical references. Otherwise, the writer is committing plagiarism, the act of copying others' ideas without stating where they came from.

In this way, Charles (2006b) suggested three clause types distinguished according to the grammatical subject of reporting clauses frequently used in citation:

1. A human subject: a writer begins the clause with a subject that refers to a person or a group of people whose research is cited. For example,

> ***Kayastha (2011)*** explained that it is important to understand the factors that contribute to student satisfactions.

The proper noun *Kayastha* refers to the author in the previous studies. The subject can also be the third-person pronoun. For example,

> ***She*** explained that it is important to understand the factors that contribute to student satisfactions.

2. A non-human subject: a writer begins the clause with a subject that is not human. The subject could be findings, research, etc. For example,

> ***Research*** has shown that the conventions followed in the use of discourse markers vary in different cultures (Abdollahzadeh, 2003).

3. An introductory *It* followed by the passive voice: the *It* subject in this clause type has no meaning. It does not refer to anything, which is called a dummy pronoun. For example,

> ***It can be concluded*** that there is indeed a stage of lexical access to a content word where only its meaning is activated, followed by a stage where only its form is activated (Schriefers, Meyer and Levelt, 1990)

The citation patterns mentioned above, especially *a noun group with a human subject* and *a noun group with a non-human subject*, are commonly used when the work of others is reported; they are also included in Swales' (1990) classification of citations. Interestingly, Charles (2006a) further categorized non-integral citations as *an introductory It with passive constructions*, which has not been mentioned in Swales' framework. Therefore, there could be

hidden reasons behind these citation patterns.

Reasons behind Three Citation Patterns in Research Reports

There are a number of factors, including citation conventions, genre, and discipline, that affect writers' decision in selecting citation styles (Charles, 2006a: 493). In addition to those factors, the communicative purposes, writers' preference, language background, and an awareness of the functions might lead to the different frequency of citation types used (Jalilifar, 2012). In this article, only three citation patterns often used in reporting clauses— a noun group with a human subject, a noun group with a non-human subject, and an introductory *It* with passive constructions—will be discussed in terms of motives behind those patterns.

To begin with a noun group with a human subject, a number of studies have shown that writers in soft disciplines like social sciences and humanities tend to use more integral citations and clauses with human subjects to construct a body of knowledge by highlighting the human-author when reporting other researchers' work or findings (Charles, 2006a, 2006b; Hyland, 1999). It can be noticed that a noun group with a human subject in integral citations always comes with an action (e.g. *Many researchers have found; McCarthy argued*) (Thompson, & Tribble, 2001). Charles (2006a) also found that soft disciplines like

politics deal with the actions of human beings. Therefore, it makes sense that the actions of human beings should be stressed.

Another example is that philosophy which is one of the soft disciplines employs the highest number of integral forms in which the name of the cited author is included (Hyland, 1999). Writers in this field are more likely to cite or state other researchers' idea (Samraj, 2008). It could be that the integral forms help authors avoid plagiarism and gain acceptance from the research community or even for publications among peers. Citing the name of an author could offer assurances that the researcher did not copy other people's work or claims. The reason may be that the name of the cited author could generate the authority for a claim, thus making it more convincing. However, it could be argued that this remains far from achieving objectivity.

Furthermore, a noun group with a non-human subject in non-integral citations is commonly used in hard disciplines like science and engineering (Charles, 2006a, 2006b; Hyland, 1999; Hyland, & Tse, 2005a). In the science and engineering papers, writers tend to use more non-integral citations in research reports that contain no agents. They use clauses with a non-human subject without mentioning the name of the cited author or non-integral citations; the name of the author is not emphasized. Using more non-integral and non-subject

citation forms can also explain journal styles in the physical sciences that require numerical endnote forms that refer to the name of the author and the date of publication given in a reference list. Without the researchers' names, it could make the findings more objective so the readers could feel that the findings are based on facts, not on personal beliefs.

Finally, an introductory *It* with passive constructions is not commonly used in hard disciplines like medicine (Charles, 2006b). A passive voice frequency of 10% is a reasonable upper limit for all types of medical articles (Amdur, Kirwan, & Morris, 2010). The low frequency could be one reason why Swales and Thompson and Tribble did not include this clause type in their citation frameworks. They might select the clause types or forms that are most frequently used among all articles. Another reason is that excessive use of the passive structure may make contents unclear and confuse readers, especially those who are non-native speakers of English (Amdur, Kirwan, & Morris, 2010). For this reason, a non-human subject with active constructions (e.g. *The findings suggested; Research has shown*) should be used to make contents clear and maintain objectivity at the same time.

However, in academic writing a clause type *a non-human subject passive constructions*—e.g. *Research has been shown*—is rarely seen in reporting clauses where writers cite other researchers' ideas (Davies, 2008). Reporting the findings or other people's ideas, authors often use *a non-human subject active constructions* by using *that*-complement structures (Pho, 2013). With the use of controlling words in active constructions, they can state what they have found more clearly.

Pedagogical Implications

As teachers, students should be taught how to state other people's ideas or work more properly in their own discipline (Dujsik, 2014). The teaching should focus on a wide range of citation types used in authentic texts in order to expose them to a variety of ways in making a reference in research reports. To learn from the authentic, a "corpus" should be first introduced.

Having taught students how to use the corpus or a collection of electronic texts, teachers begin with teaching *that*-complement clauses which are commonly used to convey authorial stance. They may find a list of most frequent controlling verbs which are retrieved from a corpus and teach them in context; controlling verbs refer to the action of the agent or the subject in reporting clauses. Teachers may ask students to find examples of *that*-complement constructions introduced by the most frequent verbs they found in a corpus and see how those words are used to take

authorial stance (Pho, 2013).

Similarly, to teach students how to use the active voice *a noun group with a human subject or a non-human subject* and the passive voice with *an introductory It*, teachers should have students find examples of those constructions and encourage them to use those structures in their writing.

All things considered, it is important for students to learn how to make references and gain the insight into the types of citation patterns found in written academic discourse in order for them to produce work which serves the specific purposes within their disciplinary community and gains the acceptance for publication.

Conclusions

Writers in hard disciplines like medicine tend to use more clauses with non-human subject without mentioning the name of cited author, saying that they tend to use more clauses with subjects which are not human in reporting other researchers' work in order to convince readers that their work is not based on personal beliefs but facts, while in soft disciplines like the social sciences or applied linguistics writers are more likely to use more integral citations when making references to the work of others (Amdur, Kirwan, & Morris, 2010). They prefer to put an emphasis on the authors and make the role of the authors

more important. Moreover, integral citations, with the name(s) of the cited author(s) as a sentence element or are included in reporting clauses can enable the writers to generate the authority for the claims and make those claims more credible. It may be suggested that there exists the relationship between clause types and disciplinary differences, showing various voices of other researchers (Parkinson, 2013).

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