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EVALUATION OF CITATION SOURCES IN ACADEMIC PAPERS: A CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

This study evaluates the characteristics of the citation sources in 15 papers presented in an international linguistics conference in Indonesia to find some model papers that employ appropriate citation sources in appropriate ways. The papers consist of 3 groups: 5 were written in Indonesian, 5 in English, and 5 in Malay. The evaluation is of the total number, language, format, age, and presentation of the citation sources in the reference lists of the papers. The findings reveal that the citation sources in the three groups have different characteristics. Moreover, the data show inaccuracies in presenting the citation sources and inconsistencies with the acceptable academic writing conventions, which do not support good academic papers. This study, which can be a significant contribution to the teaching and learning of academic writing, also discusses some potential influence of the characteristics of citation sources on the quality of an academic paper.

KEY WORDS
Academic Writing, Citation Sources, Reference List

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Academic writing knowledge and skills have such an important role in the development of science and technology that some experts (e.g. Flower,
1990; Campbell, 1993; Hyland, 2000; Ferris, 2001; Wilkinson, 2006) have
discussed them comprehensively. A lot of text-books on academic writing
(such as Oshima & Hogue, 1991; Swales & Feak, 1994; Paltridge &
Starfield, 2007) have also been published for tertiary students and novice
writers. In addition, several manuals presenting different academic writing
styles are available for writers of different disciplines; two of them are
manuals of Modern Language Association (MLA) and American
Psychological Association (APA). The books and manuals aim to help
academic members communicate their knowledge, ideas and research
results by using “conventional forms” to be understood and accepted by
other scholars in the same field (Graham, 2004).

Despite the availability of the books and the manuals, tertiary students and
novice writers seem to gravely require model academic papers that will
inspire them to cite appropriate sources and present the citation sources
appropriately. Moreover, real models will prevent them from getting
confused when encountering inconsistent ways of presenting citation
sources in non-standard academic papers. To find models of appropriate
presentation of citation sources, the reference lists of 15 academic papers
of similar topics presented in an international linguistics conference in
2008 were evaluated. The papers were divided into three groups of
different languages: five papers in Indonesian, five in English and five in
Malay. The citation sources in the reference lists were analyzed by using
some theories of academic writing. This study thus compares the
characteristics of the citation sources in the three groups and discusses the
potential influence of the inappropriate characteristics on the quality of the
papers.

Research Questions and Objective

Based on the background of the study presented earlier, the research
questions of this study are formulated as follows:

(1) What characteristics of the citation sources in the three groups of
data are (in)consistent with the acceptable academic writing
conventions?

(2) Which of the characteristics may have potential influence on the
quality of the academic papers?

More specifically, the objective of this study is to evaluate the citation
sources in the data to find the characteristics of the citation sources that
may have potential influence on the quality of an academic paper.
Previous Research

Research in citation sources generally involves the analysis of citations and citing behaviors in academic papers. Research of this kind has been used to evaluate the

(1) library facilities (Tiratel, 2000; Davis & Cohen, 2001; Thompson, 2002)
(2) academic research (Gross & Gross, 1927, cited in Bornmann & Daniel, 2007)
(3) academic articles and their authors (Garfield, 1989)
(4) academic journals (Vincent & Ross, 2000)
(5) academic institutions producing the papers (Garfield, 1983).

Researchers have also investigated (a) the patterns of citations in academic papers to evaluate the development of a certain discipline (Georgas & Cullars, 2005), and (b) the language of citations in the academic writing of experts and novice writers to support the teaching of English for Academic Purposes (Pickard, 1995; Buckingham & Neville, 1997; Hawes & Thomas, 1997; Thompson and Tribble, 2001; Adnan, 2004; Rinnert & Kobayashi, 2005). In addition, two other studies have been reported: a comparative study on the citations of L1 and L2 academic writers (Okamura, 2008) and a study on the citations and citing behaviors of EFL undergraduate students’ theses (Yugianingrum, 2008). All of the studies are brought up to support the idea that this present study, which is significant for the teaching and learning of academic writing, is worth doing.

ACADEMIC CONVENTIONS OF PRESENTING CITATION SOURCES

The following information about citation sources, reference lists and bibliographies are cited from American Psychological Association (APA), 2003. The APA publication manual presents “explicit [academic writing] style requirements” but acknowledges that “alternatives are sometimes necessary” and states that the standard conventions are not “static” (pp. xx-xxi). According to this publication manual, a writer must credit the source of the information s/he cites (p. 120). Moreover, APA journals require a reference list, which “cites works that specifically support a particular article” and do not require a bibliography, which “cites works
for background or further reading and may include descriptive notes” (p. 215). This manual also informs that “references cited in text must appear in the reference list; conversely, each entry in the reference list must be cited in text” (p. 215). Examples of the appropriate ways to present citation sources in a reference list are provided in this manual so that a writer using the APA style can refer to the examples.

Writers of academic papers are reminded that the purpose of listing references is “to enable readers to retrieve and use the sources”; therefore, “accurately prepared references help establish [the writer’s] credibility as a careful researcher” (p. 216). Accordingly, displaying appropriate citation sources in an appropriate reference list of an academic paper may indicate the writer’s good attempts to avoid plagiarism and to present a good academic paper.

**METHODOLOGY**

*Scope of the Study*

The data are the reference lists (reference list is sometimes presented in the papers as Bibliography) of 15 papers selected from the proceeding of an international linguistics conference in Jakarta in May, 2008. The parameters used to select the data sources of this study are as follows. Firstly, 78 linguistics papers in the proceeding are classified into 18 papers containing language teaching and language acquisition topics and 60 papers of other topics. Of the 18 papers with similar topics, only 15 papers are used as the data source. They are divided into three groups of five papers, each written in English, Indonesian and Malay. The rest, one paper in Indonesian and two papers in English are not included in the three groups because they contain some characteristics not found in the 15 papers, such as the use of non-Roman alphabet in the text. The five papers in Indonesian and the five in English were written by Indonesian writers, whereas the five in Malay were written by Malaysian writers. In fact, there is one paper in English written by a Malaysian, therefore it cannot be grouped.
Evaluation of Citation Sources in Academic Papers: A Case Study
(Yugianingrum)

Procedure of the Study

After the grouping, the reference lists of the papers in each group were evaluated to find the total number, language, format, age and presentation of the citation sources. The presentation of the citation sources included the following elements: the author’s name, year of publication, source title, use of punctuation, name and number of journal, place of publication and name of publisher, and if necessary, the website address of the e-source.

Features to Be Evaluated

The features to be evaluated are related to the acceptable academic writing conventions as well as to some previous relevant studies and literature. They consist of the total and average number of the citation sources, language of the citation sources, age and format of the citation sources, and consistency in presenting the citation sources in the reference list. These features are elaborated in the discussion on the evaluation results.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Total and Average Number of the Citation Sources

Table 1 below presents the total and the average number of the citation sources in the Indonesian, English and Malay groups. It shows that the average number of the citation sources in the Indonesian and the English groups is more than ten, whereas the average number of the citation sources in the Malay group is only nine.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Total number</th>
<th>Average number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indonesian</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>11.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>12.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malay</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In academic paper evaluation, a paper can be assessed from (a) whether or not it documents all its citation sources (Hyland, 1999; Windsor &
Windsor 1973, cited in Nicolaisen, 2002) and (b) the number of the authoritative sources it has cited (Price, 1970, cited in Nicolaisen, 2002). Thus, a paper that does not present all or part of its required citation sources cannot be regarded as excellent. In addition, Graham (2004) argues that the ideal number of citation sources in an academic paper should suit the author’s qualification. In practice, a doctorate thesis/dissertation is normally required to demonstrate more literature than a master or bachelor thesis. More specifically, an academic paper in some particular fields is said to fulfill “the norm of scholarship” if it presents at least 10 citation sources (Price, 1970, cited in Nicolaisen, 2002, p. 132).

Based on these criteria, the Indonesian and the English groups in the data can be said to have fulfilled the requirements of the ideal number of citation sources in academic papers, whereas the Malay group shows a less ideal number of citation sources. In this study, the less ideal number of citations in the Malay group is interpreted as an indicator of an incomplete presentation of the necessary sources of the papers. However, as the average numbers of the citation sources in the three groups are ideal and almost ideal, they have no potential influence on the quality of the papers.

Language of the Citation Sources

Table 2 shows that each group has citation sources with different languages: the Indonesian group has cited from Indonesian, English and Sundanese sources; the English group has cited from Indonesian and English sources; the Malay group has cited from Indonesian, English and Malay sources.

The language of citation sources is commonly related to the field of the study (Georgas & Cullars, 2005) and may reflect the development of the study field. For instance, studies on local problems, e.g. a study on an ethnic culture, will require more citation sources in the relevant local language than the studies on global issues do (Swales, 1990).

In this study, all the three groups have cited mostly from the sources in English. This finding can be related to the fact that current information in linguistics is generally published in English more than in local languages.
Table 2: Language of the citation sources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Indonesian</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Malay</th>
<th>Sundanese</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indonesian</td>
<td>24 (41.3%)</td>
<td>33 (56.8%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1 (1.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>2 (3.2%)</td>
<td>60 (96.7%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malay</td>
<td>2 (4.4%)</td>
<td>24 (53.3%)</td>
<td>19 (42.2%)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is also found that the English group has cited more English sources. This tendency is not only because most of the current sources are published in English but also because some of the cited English sources (such as previous papers) have been written by Indonesian authors.

All the three groups use Indonesian citation sources but each has a different reason. The Indonesian group does so because the papers discuss local problems, whereas the English and Malay groups use Indonesian sources because the contents of the sources are relevant to the topics discussed. The Malay group uses Malay citation sources because the papers discuss topics about Malay. In contrast, Malay citation sources are not used by the Indonesian and the English groups because the information in the sources is not relevant. Evidently, a Sundanese source is used by only an Indonesian paper because the paper discusses a topic about Sundanese. The findings suggest that the different languages of the citation sources in the three groups are just in line with the acceptable academic writing conventions in linguistics studies and they have no potential influence on the papers’ quality.

Age and Format

Table 3 and Table 4 in this section present the age and the format of the citation sources in the three groups. Table 3 shows that the oldest citation source in the Indonesian group was published in 1962, the Malay group 1957, but the publication year of the oldest citation source in the English group is not clear as this group shows two suspicious years: 1083 and 1898. These two unrealistic years are regarded as a typographical error.

The sources that are 0-10 years old in the three groups are limited:

1. In the Indonesian group there are 25 out of 58 citation sources (43%), which can be found in paper no I (6 out of 13), no II (11 out
of 19), no III (3 out of 8), no IV (5 out of 10), and no V (0 out of 8).

2. In the English group there are 18 out of 62 citation sources (29%), which can be found in paper no l (16 out of 18), no II (1 out of 22), no III (0 out of 8), no IV (0 out of 8), and no V (1 out of 7).

3. In the Malay group there are 11 out of 45 citation sources (24%), which can be found in paper no I (8 out of 9), no II I out of 7, no III (1 out of 8), no IV (0 out of 6), and no V (2 out of 15).

The data also show that at least one paper in each group does not have citation sources of 0-10 years old.

Table 3: Age of the citation sources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Total number of citation sources</th>
<th>The oldest (total)</th>
<th>0-10 years old (in each paper)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>*1083</td>
<td>I:16/18 II:1/22 III:0/8 IV:0/8 V:1/7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malay</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>1957</td>
<td>I:8/9 II:1/7 III:1/8 IV:0/6 V:2/15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: The oldest publication year of the citation sources in the English group is regarded as the result of a typographical error.

In linguistics studies, current citation sources are regarded as essential and most citation sources over ten years old tend to be less valued than the newer ones because of the fast development of the discipline (see Georgas & Cullars, 2005). However, sometimes using only current citation sources in an academic paper can also indicate that the author is not familiar with the development of the topic discussed. In contrast, in literary studies, especially the traditional ones, the author is free to cite from older sources (Beaugrande, 1993). Thus, the ideal age of the citation sources of an academic paper will depend on the study field of the paper.

The findings of this study reveal that the citation sources of 0-10 years old are not dominating the three groups; therefore, the age of the citation sources in the data may have potential influence on the quality of the papers. The presence of two suspicious years (1083 and 1898) in the English group is considered to be typographical errors but this fact will become a defect that may degrade the quality of the paper(s).
The age of citation sources can also relate to their formats. In linguistics studies, information from academic journals is more valued than information from textbooks because the information in the journals is more up to date (Georgas & Cullars, 2005). However, Thompson (2002) writes that academic writing in the humanities cites more from monographs, newer or older, than from journals. Therefore, linguistics is considered to be closer to social sciences than to the humanities.

Table 4 presents the findings of the formats of the citation sources. The table shows that the citation sources of the three groups have been dominated by books. Journals have also been cited but the number of the cited journals is very small, indicating the limited attitude toward accessing the latest information in the field of study. Specifically in Indonesia, financial problem can be the main factor behind the rare availability of standard international journals in most universities' libraries.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indonesian</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>17.7%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malay</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On the other hand, electronic sources are used mostly by the English group. It is commonly known that topics on the English language are abundant in the Internet. The Indonesian group uses one electronic source and the Malay group uses none probably because specific topics relevant to theirs are rarely found in the Internet. The findings show that the English group has the most ideal proportion of the source formats; however, all the groups still need to cite more from current standard international journals to demonstrate the state of art of the field.

Consistency in Presenting a Reference List

The reference list in an academic paper shows the way the cited sources or references are presented in the section called References, Works Cited, or
the Bibliographies. This study uses seven elements to evaluate the presentation of citation sources in a reference list, i.e. the author’s name, year of publication, source title, punctuation, electronic source, name and number of journal, place of publication and publisher. Based on these seven elements, all the papers in each group are classified into three types: consistent, almost consistent, and inconsistent:

1. The consistent type consists of the papers showing accurate and consistent ways of presenting all the seven elements in the reference lists.
2. The almost consistent type presents 4-6 elements accurately and consistently.
3. The inconsistent type contains only 1-3 accurate and consistent elements.

Table 5 demonstrates that all the three groups belong to the inconsistent type.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Total number of papers</th>
<th>Consistency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>consistent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesian</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malay</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Table 5, the Malay group has presented the most inconsistent reference list, a little worse than the other two. In theory, the presentation style of the cited sources in the reference list should conform to the conventions of the relevant academic discourse community at the time the paper is written (see Hyland, 2002; Graham, 2004). The same academic discourse communities of different periods or different academic discourse communities of the same periods may apply different ways of presenting a reference list; however, a number of principles should be followed to present an appropriate academic writing, four of which are necessity, accuracy, clarity and consistency (see Yugianingrum, 2008). In this study, the inaccuracies and inconsistencies found in the data can be perceived as the potential factors that may degrade the value of the papers.

The following are examples of the inaccurate and inconsistent ways of presenting citation sources in the reference list. All the inaccuracies and
inconsistencies below belong to the data selected from the conference proceeding:
1. The first example is from a paper in the Indonesian group (p. 225):


The example shows inaccuracies and inconsistencies in presenting the authors’ names, the use of capital letters and the punctuation marks.

2. The second example is taken from a paper in the English group (p. 122):


The example contains inaccuracies and inconsistencies in presenting the authors’ names (abbreviated and not), the sources’ titles (with/without bold or italic and the use of capital letters), the journal (with/without volume and number) and the use of “&/and”.

3. The third example is taken from a paper in the Malay group (p. 11):


The example shows inaccuracies and inconsistencies in presenting the authors’ names (not alphabetical, abridged and not abridged), the title of
the source (italicized and not italicized), and the use of punctuation marks and capital letters.

Specific Characteristics of the Citation Sources in Each Group

In addition to the findings presented in the previous section, this study reveals some specific characteristics of the citation sources in each group. The Indonesian group, for example, has been the only group that employs citation sources in an ethnic language, i.e. Sundanese. This fact indicates that the scope of linguistics studies in Indonesian domain can be almost limitless considering the great number of ethnic languages in the country. In this group, the names of the cited authors are mostly reversed and fully written, which is evident in the following examples: Farhan, Muhammad; Ellis, Rod (p. 225); Zaorob, Maria Lucia (p. 240). A few names are written with abbreviation, such as Halliday, M.A.K. (p. 225), Goh, Christine C.M. (p. 240), Sternbeerg, Robert J. (p. 265), Rifai, Mien A. (p. 269), and Alwasilah, A. Chaedar (p. 321).

In the English group, the reference lists in the papers seem to be similar, except for one paper, which has a style similar to none of the styles used in the other 77 papers in the proceeding. The following is a part of it:

Gardner, Howard: *Frames and Mind*; BasicBooks, New York, 1083
Jensen, Eric: *Teaching with the Brain Mind*; Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development; Virginia; 1998

The above example shows the inappropriate uses of colons and semicolons and the unusual final position of the year. Also, the year 1083 must be a typographical error.

The Malay group shows reference lists that are less consistent in writing the authors’ names, e.g. Hudson, M.A; Cook, Vivian; Nababan, P.W.J.; moreover, the authors’ names are not alphabetically presented (p. 11). Specifically, the names of Malaysian authors are always written in full, e.g. Zaitul Asma Zaimun Hamzah although the names of the other authors are not. Obviously, these inaccuracies and inconsistencies are not in line with the acceptable academic writing conventions and will degrade the value of the papers.
CONCLUSION

The findings show that the citation sources in each group have different characteristics. Some of the characteristics of the citation sources in the three groups cannot be regarded as ideal as they do not conform to the acceptable academic writing conventions. Moreover, the presentation of the citation sources in the reference lists of the three groups is neither accurate nor consistent, which can degrade the value of the papers. A unique style occurs in the presentation of Malaysian authors’ names, which are always written in full although non-Malaysian authors’ first names in the same reference lists are abridged. Also, the inappropriate use of punctuation marks and capital letters in the data indicates that the presentation of citation sources in the reference lists of the papers requires much more attention.

This study is potential to remind writers of academic papers that presenting appropriate citation sources in an appropriate way will support the quality of their papers. The study has also demonstrated that the presentation of the citation sources in academic papers, even of an international conference, has not received appropriate attention. This fact is not advantageous for the teaching of academic writing because students are in need of model academic papers to refer to in their writing practice. Finally, it is suggested that further research on topics similar to that of this paper should use a larger number of data in order to achieve a more general conclusion and investigate the in-text-citations to reveal more problems.

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