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## Citation Practices of Education Student Researchers in their Undergraduate Thesis

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**Abstract:** Citation practices among expert writers and dissertations in postgraduate level have been widely investigated in scholarly community. Although recent literature have already expounded on the citation practices in the undergraduate level, few, if none, have paid attention on corpus written by education students. It is therefore the focus of this paper to present citation practices of the pre-service teachers in a teacher education institution in Southern Philippines. Discussion sections of the Chapter 4 of the thirty seven undergraduate corpuses were analyzed using the integral and non-integral citation structures employed by Luzón (2015). Interviews were also conducted to obtain data on the grounds of their identified (problematic) citation practices. Findings reported that there was an overutilization of integral citation pattern and a great number of citation practices are indeed problematic mainly due to lack of knowledge of rhetorical citations and poor linguistic skills. Grounding from these results, we recommended that an academic writing subject be offered in the College of Education to address the pressing need for scholarly writing.

**Keywords:** Citation practices; Pre-service teachers; Undergraduate thesis; Integral; Non-integral.

### 1. Introduction

Undergraduate to post-graduate students are expected to be equipped with skills in academic writing. This can be rooted from the gradual proliferation of research in some universities in rural areas, thus, thesis is no longer deemed to be a mere requisite to seal a degree but a call for production of quality research that can be refereed for publication. Then again, the conditions disclose that there is a dilemma in writing research among undergraduate students with regards to the acceptable use of sources or referencing.

Several studies (Luzón, 2015; McCulloch, 2012; Obuh and Babatope, 2011; Petrić, 2007; Schembri, 2009; Thompson and Tribble, 2001) noted that citation is an essential academic writing skill and a distinguishing feature in scholarly community, however, research indicates that as basic as it may seem, majority of novice writers find considerable difficulty in acquiring the skill (Luzón, 2015; Petrić, 2007; Thompson and Tribble, 2001). This difficulty or problematic citation tends to appear as an act of plagiarism. Nevertheless, a number of scholars are in consensus that inappropriate citation or poor referencing (e.g. patch writing) cannot be solely associated to plagiarism ((Abasi *et al.*, 2006; Davis, 2013; McCulloch, 2013; Pecorari, 2003;2008) and (Shi, 2004;2012) as cited in (Luzón, 2015; McCulloch, 2012)) rather an indication of various factors governing citation practices.

Luzón (2015) mentioned that academic writers use references for different reasons. She made mentioned that citing source is an “information-based” that presents studies that have been conducted and that writers may understate others’ claims or arguments, incorporating their own ideas and “aligning themselves with a particular” school of thoughts. Furthermore, West and Stenius (n.d.) stated that citation is an indication of the quality of a paper because of the supposition that to some degree, the more sources are cited, the better the paper is. For various reasons, West and Stenius emphasized that this assumption is misleading. Rationalizing that one of the reasons is the unsuccessful grasp of the importance of the work. This is especially the case among novice writers’ tendency not to evaluate the cited sources or give further elaboration on what they have cited.

The most common underlying causes of problematic citations are, but not limited to, lack of familiarity with the variation in citations and/or low level of linguistic skill and academic literacy (Luzón, 2015; McCulloch, 2012; Petrić, 2007; Thompson and Tribble, 2001). And that novice writers tend to have the notion that source claims are “uncontestable truths” (McCulloch, 2012) or an existing fact that their argument cannot be juxtaposed with that of the cited source because they are considered to be experts in the field; resulting to poor evaluation of the source or completely failing to have an evaluative stance (Hewings *et al.*, 2010; Luzón, 2015; McCulloch, 2012; Thompson and Tribble, 2001).

In a review of a small collection of written student assignments, Thompson and Tribble (2001) pinpointed four existing problems: (1) lack of variation in the types of citation within single texts; (2) lack of linguistic variety and

inappropriate selection of verb; (3) absence of certain categories, for example categories in non-integral reference; and (4) overuse of non-citational references to authors or authorities. Luzón (2015) identified three main reasons extracted from 35 literature reviews written by students of a Bachelor's Degree in English studies. First, it was found that student writers are unaware that academic convention is "dialogic in nature" and that citation has various (rhetorical) functions. Second, they have low level of linguistic and academic literacy predominantly in paraphrasing and synthesizing; and lastly, given that the participants are second language (L2) learners, they lack familiarity with the language of citations. Other studies also indicated the problems in language competence and contribution of previous training in academic writing (Schembri, 2009); and that student writers have weak authorial stance and apparent lack of a strong argument (McCulloch, 2012).

Clearly, language proficiency plays a major role in realizing what is acceptable and not in textual practices. The above mentioned studies were all participated by L2 learners; hence, there case may not be surprising as some scholars (Doró, 2013) concluded that in comparison with citing sources between L1 and L2 learners, difficulties are more prevalent and frequent among L2 learners because competence in language hinders them to correctly express their claims or arguments; resulting to "excessive use of direct quotations" (Borg in McCulloch (2012)) and/or relying on a "smaller number of linguistic and rhetoric options" (Doró, 2013) It should be noted though that the present study does not dwell on the factor of language proficiency in referencing among novice writers.

A number of studies in the analysis of citation practices have focused more on expert writers and post-graduate level, methodologically concentrating on high graded theses or dissertations in various fields (Hewings *et al.*, 2010; McCulloch, 2012; Petrić, 2007; Schembri, 2009; Thompson and Tribble, 2001). However, few have investigated theses written by undergraduate students or labeled as novice writers particularly in the field of Education. This paper, therefore, attempts to investigate further into citation practices employed by undergraduate students, particularly, pre-service teachers (PST)

## 2. Citation Patterns

Swales (1990) (as cited in Thompson and Tribble (2001)) distinction between non-integral and integral citation structures paved way for analysis on citation. *Non-integral* is when the author's name is written in parenthesis and is placed outside the sentence, while *integral* citation explicitly includes the author's name with the use of some grammatical items.

Discourse on the categorization of citation patterns in this section was drawn from the analysis utilized in Luzón (2015) who concentrated on the forms and Thompson and Tribble (2001) who focused on the functions. Citing Thompson and Tribble (2001) according to Doró, English for Academic Purposes (EAP) textbooks and other writing materials are problematic because they only provide list of verbs that can be used for citations without proper explanation as to the specific connotation each verb has. Consequently, student writers incline to look for a word synonymous to what they have used for variations purposes without a full understanding that those are "markers of stance (Doró, 2013). For the purpose of possible rationalization of the findings of this paper, Doró (2013) and Thompson and Tribble (2001) categorization of citation based on their functions or meanings are also discussed.

### a) Non-Integral Citation Pattern

- a1. No reporting verb: single author
- a1.1 No reporting verb: multiple authors
- a2. Research noun (e.g. research, studies, paper) or plural reference to authors (e.g. some researchers) + reporting verb
- a3. Reporting verb in the passive voice
- a4. Directives in Brackets

### b) Integral Citation Pattern

- b1. Reported author + reporting verb
- b2. Research noun + reporting verb
- b3. Reporting noun controlling the citation

The above classification of non-integral and integral citation was the model used by Luzón (2015) which was partly drawn from Thompson and Tribble (2001) pattern. As can be seen, her paper focuses on the places of reporting verbs as opposed to the functions of citation pattern which was utilized by other researchers (e.g. Doró (2013)). In comparison with Thompson and Tribble (2001) categorization, the non-integral patterns refer to the *source* (a1, a1.1 and a2), *identification* (a3) and *reference* (a4). For integral citation, this refers to *verb controlling* (b1) and *naming* (b2 and b3). In Luzón's paper, some patterns were excluded such as *origin* for non-integral and *non-citation* for integral.

Based on the Thompson and Tribble (2001) discourse on the conventions of the patterns of citations, *source* mainly functions as an acknowledgement of the proposition to another author. A proposition is a statement of facts where the writer can either be in consent or in disagreement; as with the examples given in a1 to a2 in Table 1. Simply put, source denotes where "the idea comes from." *Identification* on the other hand is a reporting verb in the passive voice because of its focus on the information or the report rather than the author. This is where distinction on

**Table-1.** Categories of Non-integral and Integral citations based on function and form.

Based on function (Thompson and Tribble, 2001)	Based on form (Luzón, 2015)	Examples
<b>NON-INTEGRAL</b>		
<i>Source</i> functions as an acknowledgement of the proposition to another author.	a1. No reporting verb: single author	<i>...being a positive thinker would be possible to reduce the effect of stress (Nayak, 2008)</i>
	a1.1 No reporting verb: multiple authors	<i>As far as social cognitive theory is concerned, human functioning is seen as a result... (Aydin, Uzuutiryaki &amp; Demirdogen, 2011; Bandura, 1986; Pajares, 2002)</i>
	a2. Research noun (e.g. research, studies, paper) or plural reference to authors (e.g. some researchers) + reporting verb	<i>Some science educators (Freedman 1997; Thompson and Sohiyo 2002) reported</i>
<i>Identification</i> is a reporting verb in the passive voice which focuses on the information.	a3. Reporting verb in the passive voice	<i>It has been reported that high levels of self-efficacy (...) (Bandura 1997; Jinks and Lorschbach 2003; Stajkovic and Luthans 1998)</i>
<i>Reference</i> , functions both as a support for the proposition made or a “shorthand device” signified by the word “see”	a4. Directives in Brackets	<i>(see review in Davis 2003)</i>
<b>INTEGRAL</b>		
<i>Verb controlling</i> refers to the citation that controls the lexical verb in active or passive as well as the tenses to be used.	Reported author + reporting verb	<i>Julie (2010) stated that activity using manipulatives was useful to students’ learning.</i>
<i>Naming</i> refers to the findings or work of researchers being reported are controlled by a noun phrase or part of a noun phrase	Research noun + reporting verb	<i>The study of Aultman, Johnson, and Schutz (2009) revealed that...</i>
	Reporting noun controlling the citation	<i>The results are similar to those studies like that of Espinosa (2008) and Olweus (2007)</i>

prominence is conveyed to author or to the information (Thompson and Tribble, 2001). The third type, *reference*, which is commonly signified by the marker “see,” functions both as a support for the proposition made or a “shorthand device.” Accordingly, shorthand device is when the writer directs his/her reader to another text due to lengthy texts. The fourth type of citation which was not included in Luzón (2015) model is the *origin*. It is termed as such because it indicates the originator of the concept or a product. From the example lifted from Thompson and Tribble’s example (1) in which Scott is the creator of the Wordsmith Tools.

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

For the integral citations, *verb controlling* or the reported author + reporting verb, the source being cited control the lexical verb in active or passive as well as the tenses to be used. Research noun + reporting verb and reporting noun controlling the citation are both under the *naming* citations. Drawing from Luzón’s pattern (in b2 and b3), naming is used when the findings of researchers being reported are controlled by a noun phrase or part of a noun phrase, which is a similar function with a verb controlling. This is an alternative function, because according to Thompson and Tribble, naming mainly refers to the emphasis placed on the text instead of human agent. The preference of Luzón in focusing on such function is again due to her concentration on reporting verbs. Another pattern which was not included in her paper is *non-citation*; this is when the cited author’s year reference is not indicated the second time (or more) that it is mentioned.

Considering the discussion on the two types of citations, the present paper would focus on those two aspects, with more emphasis on the syntactic distinctions of the citations. Specifically, we identified first the citation patterns used in the pre-service teachers’ thesis and to examine other practices in citing sources that are deemed to be inappropriate or unacceptable based on the standard of expert writing. This study then poses and addresses the following questions: (1) between non-integral and integral citations, what usage patterns are most prevalent? (2) Are there occurrences of citation practices that are not in context with the two patterns? Finally, borrowing Luzón (2015) research query, (3) what do these practices reveal about the challenges faced by students?

### 3. Methods

#### 3.1. Participants and Corpus

The corpus used in the study is the thirty seven (37) hardbound undergraduate theses of the College of Education, Mindanao State University-Marawi City. The theses were chosen regardless of the specialization, except that all corpuses were dated year 2014 to 2015, written by Pre-Service Teachers. The participants were 7 English, 13 General Education, 4 Mathematics, 4 Biology, 2 Chemistry, 3 Early Childhood Education, 3 History and 2 Technology & Livelihood Education major students. The paper focuses only on the Chapter 4 of the theses, particularly the discussion of the results and findings. This chapter was chosen because it provides a better or accurate illustration of the participants' practices and knowledge in citation as compare to referencing in other chapters or sections. In addition, it has been observed that majority of the student writers tend to "copy paste" citations or plagiarize in large quantity the Chapter 2 (Related Literature and Studies). Unlike in the discussion of results (Chapter 4), they are obligated to analyze the data and cite sources that either confirm or dissent the findings. As mentioned by Hill, Soppelsa, and West (as cited in [Thompson and Tribble \(2001\)](#)) studies or works of a certain discipline are magnified in the Discussion sections (along with the Introductions) because to be able to establish a strong claim or state of knowledge, relevant studies or references are ought to be cited.

#### 3.2. Data Analysis

This paper focuses on the syntactic distinctions or forms between the two citations and partly on their functions. Initially, there were 38 theses to be analyzed, but due to one thesis that did not cite any author or study in Chapter 4, corpus was then narrowed down to 37. Data were analyzed first by getting the number of occurrences of the two citation patterns based on form. The categories of citations in terms of their functions were then integrated in the discussion of results and findings for the purpose of shedding light on possible grounds as to the preferences of the students in choosing a specific citation pattern. Frequency and percentages of the two types of citations were totaled; and interview was also conducted to support the findings of the data.

### 4. Results and Discussions

Overall, there were 546 occurrences of the two types of citations. Although these are relatively small, it could somehow indicate a significant implication to the locale and participants of the study.

**Table-2.** Frequency distribution of the citation patterns (N=37 theses)

Citation patterns	f	%
Non-integral citations	144	26.37
Integral citations	402	73.63
<b>TOTAL</b>	546	100

As revealed in Table 2 of the frequencies of citations, Chapter 4 is mostly governed by integral citation patterns. Participants may find integral to be easier than the non-integral citations because of its simplicity in structure. Student writers only have to explicitly report what they have read using some grammatical items. It allows them to repeatedly use certain verbs or noun phrase without taking a serious consideration whether they have paraphrased or not. Infrequent occurrences of non-integral citations are of the same case with that of [Luzón \(2015\)](#) and [Davis \(2013\)](#). Their work disclosed that student writers tend to overutilize a particular type of citation and have limited range of citation patterns which could be rooted from their lack of familiarity with the language of citations. Contrastingly, [Thompson and Tribble \(2001\)](#) paper showed that non-integral citations dominated majority of the Agricultural Botany (AB) theses

**Table-3.** Frequency distribution of Non-integral citation patterns (N=37 theses)

Non-integral citations	f	%
No reporting verb: single author	47	32.64
No reporting verb: multiple author	69	47.92
Research noun	27	18.75
Reporting verbs in the passive	0	0
Directives in brackets	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	144	100

A closer look at the frequencies of the different forms of non-integral citations is detailed in Table 3. As can be seen from a total of 144 occurrences, nearly half of the non-integral citations are the use of 'no reporting verb with multiple authors'. Not far from its figure is the same pattern with single author; but in a more distant figure is none occurrence of the 'reporting verbs in the passive' and the 'directives in brackets'.

What these findings overtly imply on a positive note is the student writers' tendency to cite many sources or authors to support claims. This could mean that they do a lot of library research on related literature and studies that are relevant to their paper. Citing many sources could bring impression that they read a lot and that their study has sufficient parameters for its significance. In terms of the functions or connotations, almost all of the instances of non-integral use sources simply to attribute a proposition to the original author/s without contesting their ideas. This is in



accordance with some researchers' (Borg, 2000; Luzón, 2015; McCulloch, 2012) claim that novice writers tend to deviate from expressing their stand or evaluate the source.

These findings corroborates the study of Luzón (2015) wherein students tend to repeatedly use non-integral format such as attribution with single author in brackets, multiple citation patterns, and research noun for synthesizing information. In her paper though, there were few instances of the usage of reporting in passive voice, while directives were only used once. This limited to none occurrences of citations using 'reporting verb in the passive voice' and 'directives in brackets' supported several researchers' (Doró, 2013; Luzón, 2015; Petrić, 2007; Thompson and Tribble, 2001) contention that student writers lack familiarity with the language of citations. This could be truer with the participants of this paper because the locale is in a rural area, wherein they are not very much exposed to English as a second language. More so is the fact that lessons on citations are not included in the content of the subject or course that teaches Research writing in the said university. Therefore, the root of the problem is from the curriculum itself, which suggests that members of the curriculum committee have to make the necessary revision in the syllabus or offer a separate subject that mainly focuses on Academic writing.

**Table-4.** Frequency distribution of Integral citation patterns (N=37 theses)

Integral citations	f	%
Reported author and reporting verb	215	53.48
Research noun and reporting verb	133	33.08
Reporting noun controlling the citation	54	13.43
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>402</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 4 lists the frequency and percentages of the use of integral citation patterns from the 402 occurrences. As can be seen, two patterns predominated this type of citation: the 'reported author + reporting verb' and 'research noun + reporting verb' with almost 60% and 40% respectively. Furthermore, there were small occurrences of citations controlled by a reporting noun.

The infrequent use of 'reporting noun controlling the citation' implies the struggle of student writers to evaluate the cited sources as does by expert writers. This pattern is used for intellectual display of the researchers in the way they evaluate previous researches' claims, hypotheses, and ideas (Luzón, 2015). However, partly due to limited language proficiency and citations skills, students may find difficulty in the usage.

Although the results revealed a high frequency of integral citations in reporting verbs, these instances are indicative of inappropriate citations both in the form and functions. As seen in the example (1) of citation controlled by a reporting noun, student writer merely reported what the study is all about, instead of evaluating its relevance to the current research findings. The pattern is an example of *naming* if it is to be analyzed according to its functions. Naming is supposed to highlight the text not the human agent; hence, evaluation of the source is necessary. The form of the pattern is also problematic because of the unnecessary inclusion of the title of the paper.

(1) In the study of Kabre and brown (2011) about "The influence of..."

Moreover, there was a prevalent overuse and faulty use of the phrase *according to* and other instances of incorrect use of verb based on its function. The case in example (2) showed the inclusion of unnecessary information (*the study of*) to put emphasis that the idea came from the work of the three researchers. This practice connotes redundancy and is not used by expert writers as practically observed. The second example (3) takes on a different connotation of using the phrase. The student writer's aim is perhaps to simply report that the idea was from Disomangcop's, however, because of the inclusion of the conjunction 'then' in the beginning of the sentence, it followed an impression that the statement was the consequence of a prior report.

(2) According to the study of Murray-Cloe, Ostov, and Crick (2010) as children grow...

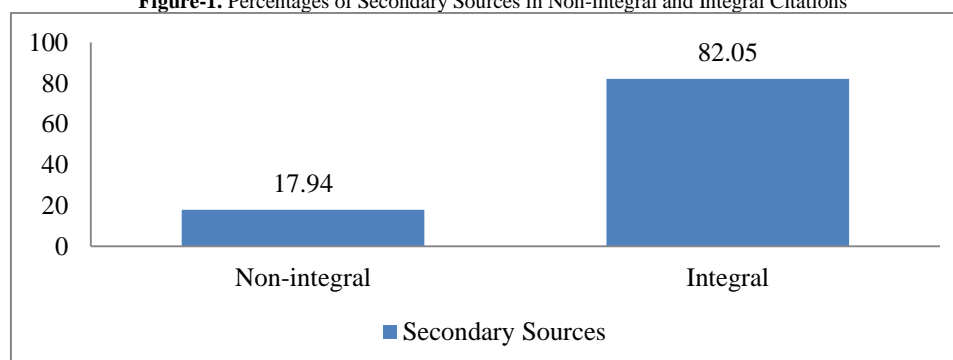
(3) Then according to Disomangcop (1991), metal works from Tugaya generally come in two forms...

(4) This is similarly to the study of Ziyaemehr and Kumar (2014) who found that...

There were also a significant number of errors in grammar as in the case of the example above (4), wherein *similarly* is an incorrect modifier for the pronoun *this*. In general, these occurrences of problematic citation patterns all relate to the lack of familiarity in the variety of citation types and the lack of competence in English language.

The data gathered further reveal another citation practice employed by the student writers. As observed in Figure 1, out of 546 identified citation patterns, 78 (14.28%) uses secondary sources.

**Figure-1.** Percentages of Secondary Sources in Non-integral and Integral Citations



Secondary sources are done when the writer/s were unable to locate, retrieve or read the original source (Publication Manual, 2010) or to update the sources due to its outdated year. The pattern is 'original source (author) + as cited in/by + secondary source (author and year)' and could be used for non-integral or integral citations (example 5 and 6). If the writer uses non-integral citation, original source should be placed in the brackets along with the phrase *as cited in/by* and the secondary source, if it is the latter, original source should be outside the brackets.

(5) ... it contributes to more productivity and a less disturbing environment... (Alberta Teachers' Association, 2003 as cited in Noonan and Duncan, 2007)

(6) According to Carney and Merrel (2001) as cited by James (2010), victims of bullying are...

The Publication Manual (2010) of the American Psychological Association mentioned that there is no need to cite the year of the original source, while this is contrary to the practice of the participants of this study; no literature yet states that it is incorrect. It should be noted that the differences in the position of the brackets between the pattern suggested by the Publication Manual and the student corpus were not analyzed for this will call for another area of focus.

As can be seen further in the figure above, secondary sources are more apparent in integral citations. Accordingly, citation in secondary sources is acceptable in the academic writing provided that it is used sparingly. However, the figures significantly indicate a tendency to excessively use this pattern. This practice implies the tendency of the student writers to rely heavily on the secondary sources rather than doing their own extensive research of the discipline.

## 5. Conclusion

The present paper shed light on the citation practices of the pre-service teachers' thesis grounding from the distinctions of integral and non-integral citations based on their form. The apparent prevalence of integral citation in the chapter 4 of the corpus reveal two underlying aspects of the participants' knowledge and skills of academic writing: first is their lack of familiarity in the variation of citation practices, the overwhelming almost 80% occurrences of integral citations suggest that they are not aware of the other citation patterns, and that they tend to overuse a particular phrase or inappropriately use a specific citation pattern. Second, linguistic competence plays a major role in their lack of familiarity of language of citations. There were instances of grammatical errors in the format or pattern of citations and occurrences of the usage of secondary sources. Secondary sources are not discouraged in the academic writing but occasional use of this citation is recommended.

The rarity in the use of non-integral citations does not only imply little knowledge of the other citation types but also an indicative of language incompetence because of the absence of clear argument or authorial stance (McCulloch, 2012) about the ideas presented in the text. Instead, they use sources simply to report a proposition without contesting the ideas.

Although the analysis of citation in this paper is limited to Chapter 4 of the 37 undergraduate theses, it yielded more indicative, if not conclusive, circumstances of the citation practices among pre-service teachers of Mindanao State University, Marawi. Thus, it calls on the curriculum revision committee and other stakeholders to address and take action on these existing difficulties among learners. The researchers recommend that a subject or course on Academic Writing be offered together with a research manual. This would allow the learners to have intensive and extensive understanding and exposure of the various citation practices and other skills in academic writing. Specifically, rhetorical function on the use of source is of great focus in the instruction. This is for the learners to have a complete grasp on the purposes of referencing to enable them to construct their own knowledge of the cited source. Moreover, language instructors should develop learning experiences that would enrich the learners' proficiency in English language

Finally, it is also considerably recommended that further studies should be done in this line of inquiry by examining citation practices of other area of discipline, stressing on the rhetorical functions as well as a work on the correlation between language competence and citation practices.

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