

A Comparative Study of the Differential Effect of In-Text and End-of-Text Reference Citation on Reading Comprehension and Speed among Iranian EFL Learners

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Abstract: *This study attempted to determine the effect of in-text and end-of-text reference citations on reading comprehension and speed among Iranian EFL learners. To this end, based on their scores on the TOEFL proficiency test, a total of 60 MA students of TEFL participated in this research. They were selected based on their availability to the researcher from different universities in Tehran and Mazandaran. For the purpose of the study, they were divided into two groups of in-text and end-text. A multiple choice reading comprehension test was used to answer the research questions. Two passages with approximately the same readability level were chosen. Two versions of each passage were produced; one of them with in-text reference citation and the other with end-text reference citation. Each passage followed 10 multiple choice questions and there was a time limitation to do the test because of the importance of reading speed in this study. After administering the reading comprehension test the group's results were compared through independent t-test. Analysis of the results revealed that there was not any significant difference between those who read academic texts with in-text reference citation and those who read academic texts with end-text reference citation.*

Keywords: *reading comprehension, reading speed, in-text reference citation, end-of-text reference citation*

Introduction:

Citation styles are considered very important in academic writing. They give the reader the ideas about the authenticity of the material and also tell about the related research links. Jalilifar (2012) states that researchers not only want to express their own work, but they also need to refer to the works of others and their findings. They cite in order to provide a framework and a support for their own work as well as to establish their own authority within the special discourse. The stronger the citation style, the stronger the impact of arguments. Therefore, it is very necessary for the writers to select the best citation styles. One important thing during writing the article should be in mind that the citation should be for the convenience of the readers and not to divert

them. After considering the importance of citation styles, there are various styles that have been designed. Some of them are APA, Oxford referencing system, MLA, Vancouver system, Chicago and so on. The selection of the appropriate citation style depends on various factors such as subject of writing, the expectations of the reader or the preference of the writer or other factors.

Swale (1986; 1990) pioneers the study of citation analysis from an applied linguistic perspective. He distinguishes two basic classifications of citation: integral and non-integral as well as reporting and non-reporting. He defines an integral citation as a research report in which the name of the researcher appears as a sentence element and plays an explicit role in the syntax of the sentence. Non-integral citation, on the other hand, is a research report in which the name of the researcher appears in brackets, or a number refers to a name, which appears elsewhere. This latter tendency to use numbers to refer to names is a citational characteristic adopted in hard sciences.

Reporting citation is employed when the author exploits a reporting verb (show, establish, claim, etc.) to introduce previous researchers and their findings. In non-reporting citation, however, no reporting verb is used.

Divisions of Citation Styles:

Broadly speaking, there are two citations styles:

1. Documentary-note style (Oxford system):

For the documentation in the standardized style, the documentary-note style is important. In this citation style the footnotes and the other forms of citation like endnotes can be used. The aim of using this citation style is that the reader can easily get the information about the source as well as may not get interrupted during the reading (Admin, 2012). Oxford referencing system is an example of documentary-note style. It is one of the two referencing styles (end-of-text) compared in this study.

2. Parenthetical style (APA style):

In this citation style, the sources are given along with the referred text. When the quotations are depicted, such method is preferred to be used (Admin, 2012). It is also known as author-date and sometimes in-text style. In this citation style the footnotes and the endnotes are not used, but it is better to give the link in the bibliography. This method is sometimes disturbing because the reader has to go through the sources even if he does not want. We used APA style (in-text) as one of the two referencing styles in this investigation.

Documentary-Note Style (Note system):

Note systems involve the use of sequential numbers in the text which refer to either footnotes (notes at the end of the page) or endnotes (a note on a separate page at the end of the paper) which give the source detail. The notes system may or may not require a full bibliography, depending on whether the writer has used a full note form or a shortened note form (Wikipedia, 2012). For example, an excerpt from the text of a paper using a notes system without a full bibliography could look like this:

“The five stages of grief are denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance”¹.

The note, located at the foot of the page (footnote) or at the end of the paper (endnote) would look like this:

1. Elizabeth Kubler-Ross, on death and dying (New York: Macmillan, 1969) 45-60.

In a paper which contains a full bibliography, the shortened note could look like this:

1. Kubler-Ross, on Death and Dying 45-60.

An example of a parenthetical reference would be:

(Smith 2010, p.1)

Depending on the choice of style, fully cited parenthetical references may require no end section. Alternately, a list of the citations with complete bibliographical references maybe included in an end section sorted alphabetically by author’s last name (Wikipedia, 2011).

2. Parenthetical Style (APA)

When using APA format, the author-date method of in-text citation is followed. This means that the author’s last name and the year of publication for the source should appear in the text, e.g., (Jones, 1998), and a complete reference should appear in the reference list at the end of the paper. If you are referring to an idea from another work but not directly quoting the material, or making reference to an entire book, article or other work, you only have to make reference to the author and year of publication in your in-text reference. In APA style, references either for direct or indirect quotations and paraphrased materials appear before or after the material inside the text, whereas in Oxford (Documentary-note system) all references appear at the end of the text signaled by a number in the text.

Given the importance of citation styles, this study aims to find out the probable effect of two common citation styles including in-text and end-text reference citations in academic texts on the level of reading comprehension among Iranian EFL learners.

Based on the preceding discussions, the following research hypothesis will be tested statistically:

There is no significant difference between level of reading comprehension of those who read academic texts with in-text reference citations and those who read texts with end-text reference citations.

Related Research in Citation

Making references to the literature is an essential part of most academic writing, and it is also a source of considerable difficulty for most novice writers (Borg, 2000; Campbell, 1990).

Some of the reasons that academic writers are expected to make references are to integrate the ideas of others into their arguments, to indicate what is known about the subject of study already, or to point out the weaknesses in others' arguments, aligning themselves with a particular camp/school/grouping. Novice writers may face problems because they are not at the appropriate stage of cognitive or intellectual development (Britton, Burgess, Martin, McLeod, & Rosen, 1975; Penny cook, 1996), or because of cultural factors (Connor, 1996; Fox, 1994). Failure to acknowledge the source of ideas can lead to charges of plagiarism, whereas inexpert phrasing of reporting statements can lead to confused or misleading indication of both the writer's, and the cited author's, stance (Groom, 2000).

Citation as a complex communicative purpose with syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic variables and a distinguishing feature of academic writing is of interest not only to information scientists (White, 2004), but also to English for academic purposes (EAP) scholars (e.g., Charles, 2006a,b; Hyland, 1999; Petric, 2007; Swales, 1986, 1990; Thompson, 2001, 2005). In academic studies, citations have often been examined in terms of reporting verbs (Hyland, 1999; Thompson, and Ye, 1991). Researchers believe that reporting verbs are the key feature which enables the writers to position their work in relation to that of other members of the discipline (Jalilifar, 2012). Despite the differences in approaches and methods, researchers agree that the role of citation in scientific discourse is not only to acknowledge the works of others but also to promote the writer's own knowledge claims.

In discourse analysis, citations have often been examined with reference to reporting verbs (Charles, 2006; Hunston & Thompson, 2003; Hyland, 1999, 2001; Shaw, 1992; Thomas & Hawes, 1994; Thompson and Ye, 1991). For example, Thompson and Ye (1991) studied the introduction sections of more than 100 papers to examine how writers show their evaluation of previous work, and interact with their discourse community, through the reporting verb.

Thompson & Ye (1991) also showed that writers reveal positive and negative evaluation of previous studies by the choice of reporting verb.

This study can be considered totally new in its topic since, to our knowledge; no studies were found which investigated the differential effect of citation styles on reading comprehension of EFL learners.

Method:

Participants:

A total of 60 MA students of TEFL participated in this study. They were both males and females. They were studying at the first semester of their MA. The subjects were selected from Payam Nour university of Tehran, Azad University, Tehran Markaz, Tehran Shomal, Mazandaran University and Azad university of Sari, Mazandaran. This selection was due to the limited number of MA students in each university. They were the same level of proficiency (advanced level) as a result of the proficiency test of TOEFL administered to homogenize the subjects.

Instrumentation:

Two instruments were used in this study as follows:

Proficiency test

To be assured of the homogeneity of the subjects regarding general knowledge of English, TOEFL proficiency test was used. Advanced level of English proficiency was needed for the purpose of this study. It had 20 items of multiple choice reading comprehension questions.

Reading comprehension test

Two passages each of them with 10 multiple choice questions were prepared by the researcher to test the level of reading comprehension of the participants. The passages were chosen from one of the MA textbooks in TEFL. The title of the book is *Understanding language teaching from method to post method* by Kumaravadivelu.

The 1st reason behind choosing this book was that this study intended to compare the different effects of citation styles on reading comprehension and reading speed of EFL learners studying academic texts at advanced level. The 2nd reason was the existence of references in these academic texts. General English texts could not be used due to the fact that they usually do not have references.

Texts were chosen from one of the chapters of the above mentioned book with the same readability index. The readability index was calculated via famous readability formula "Flesch Kincaid Grade Level" to make sure that the 2 texts were at the same level of difficulty and the number was 14.1 for the passage "learning factors" and 13,7 for the next passage "Affective factors". Two versions of each text were produced for the purpose of the study. One version with

in-text reference citation (APA referencing system) and the other with end-text reference citation (Oxford referencing system).

Procedure:

The data collection was done in different universities but under the same condition. Permission was taken from professors before collecting data. The overall data collection time was 65 minutes. 40 minutes was allocated for the placement test and 15 minutes for the multiple choices reading comprehension test. Placement test was administered before the main test in a separate session. As mentioned above intact classes were used. After administering the placement test 4 students were dropped. 60 students were selected, thirty students were assigned to in-text group and thirty students to the end-text group.

Two similar multiple choice reading comprehension tests were used each with two different versions one in-text reference citations and the other end-text reference citations. Before administering the tests the subjects were given verbal instructions on how to do the tests. They were told that the placement test should be done in 40 minutes maximum.

About the main test which was multiple choices reading comprehension test, they were told that timing is very important and it should be done in 15mins maximum and that they should mark the correct answers on the question papers. The tests were done after the professor held that session. After administering the test the raw data were collected.

Results:

The data consisted of the participant's answers to the MC comprehension questions.

The descriptive statistics in table 1 and table 2 provide an overall view of the participants' performance on the reading comprehension test.

Table.1 A comparison of the means and standard deviations of the in-text and end-text groups on reading comprehension test

	Group	N	Mean	Std.deviation	Std.Error
				n	Mean
RC	in text	30	7.27	2.116	.386
	end text	30	6.50	2.209	.403

As displayed in the table, the 4.3 the mean scores for the in-text and text group are 7.27 and 6.50 respectively. A comparison of the group means reveals that the mean performance achieved by the in-text (m: 7.27) and the one obtained by the in-text group (M: 6.50) were not very different. Regarding standard deviation, end-text group had a slightly higher mean than in-text group. In order to test the null hypothesis and find out whether the means of the two groups are significantly different or not independent t-test was conducted.

Table 2 summarizes the descriptive statistics conducted to test significant differences of the in-text and end-text groups on reading comprehension test.

Table2 Comparison of in-text & end-text groups differences by means of T-test

		Levene's		t-test for Equality of Means						
		Test for		T	Df	Sig.	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		Equality of Variances								
		F	Sig.			(2-tailed)	Difference	Difference	Lower	Upper
RC	Equal variances assumed	.124	.726	1.373	58	.175	.767	.558	-.351	1.885
	Equal variances not assumed			1.373	57.894	.175	.767	.558	-.351	1.885

$P \leq .05$

According to table 2, when equal variances are assumed, the mean difference of the in-text group and end-text group is .767. The degree of freedom is 58.

T-observed is 1.373 and p value is .175 and it means that there isn't any significant difference between level of reading comprehension of students who read academic texts with in-text reference citation and those who read academic texts with end-text reference citation; because p is greater than .05. Thus, the null hypothesis is supported.

Discussion & conclusion

A comparison of the results obtained by the two groups confirmed the research hypothesis, according to which there is no significant difference between the reading comprehension of those who read academic texts with In-text reference citation and those who read academic texts with End-text reference citations. Both groups did moderately as supported by the group mean of 7.27 for the In-text group, and the mean of 6.50 for End-text group, when t-observed is 1.373 and p value is .175 which means that the difference was not significant. In-text group performed slightly better but it was not significant when compared using t.test .the mean difference of the groups was .767.

In the absence of evidence to reveal any effect of chosen reference citation style, practitioners and students can rely on their own decision for choosing the type of reference citation for writing EFL materials and theses.

It is important here to remind the readers that due to the originality of the research topic there was no study found in this area in the literature which could be comparable to the results of this study.

Studies regarding citation styles were limited to the use of citations among different disciplines and the comparison between L1 & L2 writer's uses of citations in writing research papers. No study was found about the effect of different citation styles on reading comprehension of EFL learners. So, it is recommended to conduct researches to find out more about the effect of important citation styles on EFL learners especially at the advanced level of proficiency. This will help material developers and authors to choose the best style of citation which would be more beneficial to the goal of language learning.

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