

# Citation practices in graduate theses and dissertations: The case of English L1 and EFL writers

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## Abstract

This study analyzed in-text citations in 40 English-written graduate theses in applied linguistics, including 20 master's and 20 doctoral theses authored by both English L1 and EFL writers. The analysis compared citation forms and functions in the Introduction, Literature Review, Method, Results, Discussion, and Conclusion (ILMRDC) sections across different thesis types (M.A. vs. Ph.D.), as well as between English L1 and EFL writers. The functional analysis led to the development of a citation framework reflecting various rhetorical purposes graduate writers pursued. It was typical of graduate texts to incorporate novel ways of academic referencing, such as citations with dual roles. Also, despite considerable similarities between theses by L1 and EFL groups, there existed significant differences in the frequency of citation forms and functions between M.A. and Ph.D. theses. Pair-wise comparisons of M.A. and Ph.D. theses indicated heavier uses of integral citations in the whole and Introduction sections of the former and denser employment of non-integral citations in the Discussion section of the latter. The results can give insights into thesis writers' source use practices and help thesis supervisors, academic writing instructors, and materials developers effectively translate their educational policies into disciplinary practices.

**Keywords:** Applied Linguistics, citation, EFL writers, English L1 writers, graduate theses.

## Resumen

*Prácticas de citación en tesis de máster y doctorado: El caso de autores en inglés L1 y como lengua extranjera (ILE)*

Este estudio analiza el uso de citas en 40 tesis de posgrado en inglés del campo de la lingüística aplicada –20 tesis de máster y 20 de doctorado– redactadas por dos grupos de autores: hablantes de inglés L1 y hablantes de inglés como lengua extranjera (ILE). El análisis compara las formas y funciones de las citas en las secciones de introducción, revisión de la bibliografía, método, resultados, discusión y conclusión, teniendo en cuenta tanto el tipo de tesis (máster versus doctorado) como la lengua de los autores (inglés L1 versus ILE). El análisis funcional ha llevado al desarrollo de un marco de citación que refleja los diversos propósitos retóricos que persiguen los autores de posgrado. Una característica destacada de estos textos académicos fue la incorporación de formas novedosas de referencia, como las citas con funciones duales. Además, a pesar de las considerables similitudes entre las tesis de autores nativos y de ILE, se observaron diferencias significativas en la frecuencia de uso de las formas y funciones de las citas entre las tesis de máster y las de doctorado. La comparación por pares de estos tipos de tesis reveló un mayor uso de citas integrales en el conjunto del texto y en la sección de introducción en el caso de los autores de máster, mientras que las tesis doctorales presentaron un uso más denso de citas no integrales en la sección de discusión. Los resultados ofrecen información valiosa sobre las prácticas de citación entre los autores de tesis y pueden ayudar a los supervisores, docentes de redacción académica y creadores de materiales a convertir de manera efectiva las políticas educativas en prácticas disciplinares.

**Palabras clave:** Lingüística aplicada, citación, autores de ILE, autores nativos de inglés, tesis de posgrado.

## 1. Introduction

Previous citation studies have addressed various genres, subgenres, and disciplines, such as master's theses (Becker & Chiware, 2015; Pancheshnikov, 2007; Petric, 2007; Samraj, 2013), Ph.D. dissertations (Becker & Chiware, 2015; Condic, 2015; Dong, 1996; Peng, 2019; Thompson, 2001), literature review assignments and research papers (Gao et al., 2021), and published manuscripts of basic sciences (Cullars, 1998; Okamura, 2008; Swales, 2014), engineering and technical disciplines (Becker & Chiware, 2015; Mansourizadeh & Ahmad, 2011), health sciences (Hu & Wang, 2014) and human sciences (Charles, 2006; Cullars, 1998; Hu & Wang, 2014; Hyland, 1999; Jiang et al., 2014) to gauge academic writers' attempts to fit in their disciplinary communities and validate their findings. These studies have adopted formal and functional approaches, with the former checking the overt display of intertextual references and the latter tracking down the rhetorical roles of the cited documents (Petric, 2007; Swales, 1990;

Thompson, 2005). From a form-based perspective, citations adopt various syntactic placements to incorporate available published sources (Swales, 1990, 2014). Whereas from a functional vantage point, academic referencing is a rhetorical activity that clarifies writers' motives for situating their writing within the larger body of literature (Hyland & Jiang, 2017).

Depending on whether they pertain to sentence structure or appear in parentheses, citations fall into integral and non-integral categories (Swales, 1990). While non-parenthetical references give prominence to those who possess the ideas (i.e., authors), non-integral citations point to the already reported ideas and introduce them as more or less permanent concepts or facts (Badenhorst, 2018; Hyland, 1999; Swales, 2014). The available literature, from explorations of thesis sections through comparative analyses of citation practices by mature and immature writers, has also suggested the pivotal role of rhetorical effects as the basis for further branching of integral/ non-integral divisions (e.g., Pecorari, 2006; Petric, 2007; Samraj, 2013; Thompson, 2005; Thompson & Tribble, 2001) and corroborated the decisive role of citations in conveying various nuances of meaning in graduate theses (e.g., Pecorari, 2006; Petric, 2007).

In one of the leading citation analyses of 16 doctoral theses in Agricultural Economics and Agricultural Botany, Thompson and Tribble (2001) introduced “Verb-Controlling” (i.e., citations as semantic agents in passive or active sentences), “Non-Citation” (i.e., citations with no given dates after author names), and “Naming” (i.e., citations through noun phrases) as subcategories of integral citations. Then, under the category of non-integral sources came rhetorical purposes incorporating “Origin” (i.e., citing the initiators of the notions), “Reference” (i.e., directing readers to related texts), “Identification” (i.e., identifying the cited source as the agent of the reported actions), and “Source” (i.e., attributing an idea to an author) (Thompson & Tribble, 2001). In another citation study focusing on high and low-rated M.A. theses on gender studies, “Attribution”, corresponding to “Source” function (Thompson & Tribble, 2001), “Establishing Links between Sources with Similar Findings/Topics/Arguments”, “Exemplification”, “Further References”, “Statement of Use”, “Application”, “Evaluation”, and “Comparison” constituted the prime citation functions (Petric, 2007). Further, an investigation into discussion sections of eight master's theses and eight articles in Biology allowed the expansion of the functional roles of citations to “Applied/ Research Recommendations”, “Background”, “Interpretation”, and “Explanation of Results” (Samraj, 2013).

In light of the previous studies, the functions of citations go beyond simply knowledge display (Coffin, 2009) or avoiding plagiarism (Aksnes et al., 2019). Academic referencing performs various rhetorical functions worth being explicitly taught through graduate-level courses (Badenhorst, 2018). Through citations, students can persuasively express their voices, add to the argumentative potential of their writing (Badenhorst, 2018; Coffin, 2009), identify themselves as legitimate members of their discourse communities, and make a positive impression on their thesis committee (Fazel & Shi, 2015; Petric, 2007). However, due to scant attention to citations in academic writing courses at the tertiary level, and more specifically, a dearth of cross-cultural comparisons of citation employment across different sections of graduate theses by English L1 and EFL writers at different seniority levels (Johns & Swales, 2002; Li & Zhang, 2021; Pancheshnikov, 2007; Petric, 2007; Samraj, 2008), most postgraduates struggle to throw themselves into disciplinary-preferred referencing patterns (Coffin, 2009; Mansourizadeh & Ahmad, 2011; Petric, 2007; Wette, 2017; Zhang, 2023).

Given the dangers of plagiarism in academic publishing, much research has spotlighted citations to ensure acceptable paraphrasing practices (e.g., Dong, 1996; Harwood, 2009; Hu & Lei, 2016; Shi, 2010). Current research on citation practices in graduate theses indicates that in their move from knowledge telling to knowledge production, less experienced writers struggle to obtain source-led insights into rhetorically effective citation forms and functions (Becker & Chiware, 2015; Fransen, 2012; Liu et al., 2016; Wette, 2017). Also, due to the potential challenges posed by culturally diverse voices and values of anglophone and EFL writers for writing trainers and trainees in higher learning institutions (Bikowski & Gu, 2018; Liu et al., 2016), students still conceive source-based writing for publishing as a source of fear, confusion, and anxiety (Wette & Furneaux, 2018; Wette, 2021). Inevitably, they either mimic research article conventions of citation practices (Thompson, 2005) or appeal to thesis committee members for feedback (Dong, 1996; Pecorari, 2006; Zheng et al., 2020).

The decisive roles of disciplinary conventions in offering the potential room and rhetorical nuances for academic referencing (Hyland, 1999) necessitate strict control over disciplines in cross-sectional and cross-cultural examinations of citations. Disciplinary conventions may influence how post-novice and in-training graduate students authenticate their scholarly identities through their written products (Wette, 2017; Zhang, 2023). Members of a particular academic field may share similar epistemologies

about manipulating and displaying information through integral and non-integral forms of in-text citations (Hyland & Jiang, 2017). Hence, keeping the addressed disciplines constant may lead to more valid conclusions about citation variations across various cultural contexts. In EFL contexts, applied linguistics is one of the rare fields taught and learned through English, and thus, subject to the effects of growing international ESP research and communication. Above all else, various communicative purposes of graduate thesis sections (Swales, 1990) and a sharp rise in recent citation practices by applied linguists (Hyland & Jiang, 2017) can make it necessary to explore the possible effects of available citation scholarship for over a decade on current referencing routines of in-training applied linguistics postgraduates across English L1 and EFL contexts and graduate thesis sections.

Altogether, the findings referring to citation competence as a more challenging task for M.A. graduates and EFL writers than their Ph.D. and English L1 counterparts (Liu et al., 2016; Wette, 2017) on the one hand, and the possible effects of extensive citation research on homogenizing the citation practices across student writers on the other call for more recent investigations. Considering the impacts of language on thought patterns and identity development (Edwards, 2009) and the potential roles of reading comprehension on the quality of writing (Pecorari & Shaw, 2012), the regulatory effects of cultural and linguistic backgrounds on citation practices are worth investigating. The significance of such analyses lies in their potential to raise awareness about established academic writing conventions to train postgraduate students to go beyond simply avoiding plagiarism towards achieving more advanced rhetorical and disciplinary purposes such as determining disciplinary membership, representing scholarship, and developing scholarly identities through citations (Coffin, 2009; Li & Zhang, 2021).

The contribution of graduate theses as the least investigated academic genres (Pancheshnikov, 2007; Petric, 2007; Samraj, 2008; Samraj & Monk, 2008) to future success in academic research and publishing, the genre-specificity of citation practices (Zhang, 2022), the regulatory roles of culture in developing and propagating various worldviews (Edwards, 2009), and the diversity of thesis macrostructures and generic moves (Dudley-Evans, 1999; Johns & Swales, 2002) have left room for further examination of source-use practices across graduate thesis writers with different language backgrounds (Becker & Chiware, 2015; Fransen, 2012). Accordingly, and given the call for

examining the multifaceted and occluded features of academic referencing and its rhetorical functions (Harwood, 2009; Hu & Wang, 2014; Pecorari, 2006; Peng, 2019; Willett, 2013), this study explores the following questions to check how English L1 and EFL writers employ source-based input to produce and demonstrate their disciplinary knowledge and socialize into their academic discourse community:

1. What rhetorical functions do in-text citations serve in applied linguistics graduate theses?
2. Are there any significant differences between in-text citation practices in ILMRDC sections of M.A. and Ph.D. theses in applied linguistics?
3. Are there any significant differences between in-text citation behaviors in graduate applied linguistics theses by English L1 and EFL writers?

## 2. Materials and method

This study analyzed ILMRDC (i.e., Introduction, Literature review, Method, Results, Discussion, and Conclusion) sections of 20 master's theses (10 by English L1 writers totaling 136,499 words, and 10 by EFL writers with 190,805 words) and 20 Ph.D. dissertations (10 by English L1 writers with 675,800 words and 10 by EFL writers with 417,449 words), excluding footnotes, tables, and figures. The main criteria for thesis selection and ensuring the comparability of citation behaviors were graduate students' discipline (i.e., applied linguistics), native language (i.e., Persian and English), thesis defense grade level (i.e., excellent), covered themes (i.e., ESP/EAP), and thesis macrostructures (ILMRDC). We extracted English L1 writers' theses from e-thesis portals of the University of Birmingham, Durham University, University of Liverpool, University of Exeter, University of Michigan, University of Lincoln, University of Leicester, Illinois State University, and Newcastle University. As top study destinations for international students, universities in English L1 contexts welcome various English L2 and EFL writers, research topics, and thesis formatting guidelines. Hence, to collect a representative and comparative sample of theses by English L1 writers, we needed to rely on more than one English L1 context. University of Tehran, Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz,

Shiraz University, Iran University of Science and Technology, and Azad University of Science and Research Branch also granted access to the theses by EFL writers.

A hybrid approach, which combined deductive and inductive coding, helped develop a comprehensive typology of citation practices in graduate student writing. First, we swept all text sections, excluding footnotes, tables, and figures, manually coded and counted 20% of in-text citations represented as author(s)' family names and publication years and family names without publication years, and then incorporated the citation categories into a codebook. To prepare a priori codes for the deductive phase of the analysis, we initially drew on the categorization of citations into integral and non-integral (Swales, 1990) and merged it with the already proposed typologies (i.e., Mansourizadeh & Ahmad, 2011; Petric, 2007; Samraj, 2013; Thompson & Tribble, 2001) whose definitions and examples corresponded to subordinate citation patterns. Following Hu and Wang (2014), we took cited references for a single proposition or those parenthetically listed for multi-propositional patterns as one instance, or token of citations. For example, in "*there are also rare ... immediate social experience (see Stoll & Louis, 2007; Billett, 2007)*", the references cited in parentheses were one instance of non-integral citation. When citations served multiple functions, we counted the dominant ones. For example, given that "Source" was a shared rhetorical purpose among all citation practices, we counted it when in-text references performed none of the other distinctive rhetorical functions. The inductive phase helped identify and label the newly emerged citation categories made mostly traceable by previous unsubstantiated claims regarding potential citation patterns.

To ensure the inter-coder reliability of the analysis, the second researcher analyzed 20% of the texts already coded by the first researcher and expressed 95% agreement with the first coding. We then consensually resolved points of disagreement in a meeting. After the second coder's 100% approval of the coding annotations, the first coder continued their manual analysis of the remaining texts. For intra-coder reliability, the first coder reanalyzed all the coded texts after three months and came up with 100 % agreement with their first codings. Finally, given the unequal lengths of the collected texts, the absolute frequencies (i.e., raw frequencies per 1000 words) served as input for comparative analyses of citation practices (See Table 1).

Citation forms	Theses	Introduction			Literature			Method			Results			Discussion			Conclusion		
		Type	Token	D	Type	Token	D	Type	Token	D	Type	Token	D	Type	Token	D	Type	Token	D
INTEGRAL	ML1	10	160	9.91	10	509	11.72	5	158	7.56	4	102	3.54	5	72	3.73	5	35	4.41
	MEFL	5	74	4.64	9	723	9.29	7	103	6.12	6	166	4.97	5	169	5.41	5	42	2.71
	PL1	4	104	1.94	6	1178	8.50	7	531	4.37	4	160	.80	5	353	2.84	4	73	1.92
	PEFL	4	142	4.45	8	942	8.38	5	238	4.42	5	107	.85	4	226	3.78	3	61	1.8
	M	10	234	7.29	10	1232	10.16	7	261	6.92	6	268	4.31	6	241	4.77	6	77	3.28
	P	5	246	2.88	8	2120	8.45	8	769	4.39	6	267	.82	5	579	2.47	5	134	1.86
NON-INTEGRAL	ML1	11	120	7.43	13	403	9.28	8	78	3.73	9	38	1.32	8	45	2.33	6	24	3.02
	MEFL	8	168	10.53	11	592	7.6	8	83	4.93	6	22	.66	6	57	1.82	7	41	2.64
	PL1	11	397	7.40	11	1122	8.1	13	775	6.38	11	310	1.55	14	522	4.2	10	139	3.65
	PEFL	9	302	9.47	13	923	8.22	11	309	5.73	11	316	2.51	11	424	7.09	10	110	3.25
	M	12	288	8.97	14	995	8.2	10	161	4.27	10	60	.97	9	102	2.02	9	65	2.77
	P	12	699	8.18	13	2045	8.15	13	1084	6.18	12	626	1.92	15	946	5.14	12	249	3.46

Note: ML1: Master's Theses by English L1 Writers; MEFL: Master's Theses by EFL Writers; PL1: Ph.D. Theses by English L1 Writers; PEFL: Ph.D. Theses by EFL Writers; M: Master's Writers; P: Ph.D. Writers; Density per 1000 words.

Table 1. Types, tokens, and densities of citations across thesis sections and writer groups.

### 3. Results

This section introduces our typology of citation forms and functions in graduate applied linguistics theses. Then, it reports the results of the comparative analyses of citation employment across whole and ILMRDC sections of M.A. and Ph.D. theses and across English L1 and EFL writers.

#### 3.1. Our typology of citations in graduate theses

Through the deductive phase, we combined the previous typologies to identify citations, which served “Naming” and “Verb-controlling” (Thompson & Tribble, 2001), “Exemplification” (Petric, 2007), “Support” (Mansourizadeh & Ahmad, 2011), “Background” (Samraj, 2013), “Establishing links” (Petric, 2007), “Source” (Thompson & Tribble, 2001), “Recommendation” (Samraj, 2013), “Further referencing” (Petric, 2007), “Explanation” (Samraj, 2013), “Evaluation” (Petric, 2007) and “Identification” (Thompson & Tribble, 2001) purposes. Besides, further scouring the texts through inductive analyses displayed “Adjectivizing”, “Fragmentary”, “Blended”, and “Dual-Form Citations” as novel ways of citation employment. We then coined the term “Conventional” citations to represent ‘author surname+ date’ forms of integral referencing. The analyses further revealed objectification, or replacement of human sources by inanimate and abstract sources such as textbooks and institutions represented as integral and non-integral citations. Given the high frequencies of non-human sources with dual forms and their consideration as citations

in the available literature (e.g., Coffin, 2009), we also incorporated “Inanimate” references to our typology.

### 3.2. Forms of integral citations

Integral forms of citations fell into “Non-citations”, “Adjectivizing”, and “Fragmentary” categories as well as “Conventional” forms comprising surname(s) introduced by a lexical verb and a parenthetical date (Extract 1). “Non-citations” mainly assumed reduced forms of preceding conventionally cited sources with surnames and no ensuing parenthetical dates (Extract 2). The “Adjectivizing” category either presented adjectivized forms of the writers’ surnames (Extract 3) or incorporated rather lengthy paraphrases from a source wherein possessive adjectives followed by nouns replaced writers’ names (Extract 4). Finally, “Fragmentary” citations constituted intermediate sentence components between writers’ surnames and publication dates or page numbers (Extract 5).

- (1) *Kikuchi and Sakai (2009) [Conventional Citation]* state that [...] (PEFL, 5)
- (2) *Gregersen [Non-Citation]* considered the nonverbal aspect of [...] (MEFL, 9)
- (3) It was deemed suitable to seek *Whorfian [Adjectivizing]* evidence [...] (ML1, 6)
- (4) In *her study [Adjectivizing]* in 2003, she examined [...] (MEFL, 9)
- (5) *Ryan and Deci* define intrinsic motivation as [...] (2000: 55) [*Fragmentary*] (ML1, 8)

### 3.3. Functions of integral citations

Serving to highlight authorial presence, “Naming” and “Verb-controlling” were dominant functions of integral citations. However, unlike “Naming”, “Verb-controlling” required an agreement between verb forms/meanings and the cited sources, gave a slightly more pivotal role to agents of the actions, and cognitive/discourse/research acts (Coffin, 2009; Hyland, 1999; Samraj, 2013). To perform the “Verb-controlling” function, surname(s) followed by publication dates served as semantic agents of the sentences (Extract 6). The “Naming” function, represented as all or part of a noun phrase incorporating writers’ surnames and publication dates, was performed through structures ranging from ‘noun+ apostrophe+ date’ arrangement (Extract 7) through ‘according to/based on/ like/ in/ work

of+ noun+ date’ to ‘for/ by/ in accordance with/ following/taken from/adapted from+ noun+ date’ (Extracts 8 & 9).

- (6) *Van Leeuwen (1996) [Verb-Controlling]* takes up this issue [...] (PL1, 2)
- (7) It was *Poynton’s work (1989) [Naming]* on tenor, gender, [...] (PEFL, 3)
- (8) The most recent study by *Piazzoli (2016) [Naming]* focused on [...] (PL1, 5)
- (9) According to *Unsworth (2008) [Naming]*, graphic/written text relations are [...] (ML1, 7)

### 3.4. Forms of non-integral citations

Non-integral citations were either “Parenthetical” or “Blended”. In the “Parenthetical” forms of citation, writer(s)’ surnames and publication dates appeared in parentheses (Swales, 1990) (Extract 10). However, corresponding to Becker and Chiware’s (2015) “inconsistent style of referencing”, “Blended” forms mixed up various referencing and formatting styles (e.g., APA with MLA) and thus, did not fully comply with any citation guides. For example, due to the use of ‘ibid’, extract 11 shows deviations from APA, as its main citation style:

- (10) No need to say that vocabulary is unanimously ... (*Milton, 2009*)  
[*Parenthetical*] (PEFL, 10)
- (11) [...] be employed in certain situations to represent social actors ... (*ibid.*)  
[*Blended*] (PL1, 2)

### 3.5. Functions of non-integral citations

The writers employed non-integral citations to perform “Exemplification”, “Support”, “Background”, “Establishing links”, “Source”, “Recommendation”, “Further referencing”, “Explanation”, and “Evaluation” functions. To achieve the “Exemplification” purpose, the writers cross-indexed published texts as examples to elaborate on or shape their intended meanings (Extract 12). The “Support” function helped writers justify similar studies’ attempts to identify and/ or bridge the gap(s) in the literature (Extract 13) or find support for their study topic (Extract 14) or findings (Extract 15).

- (12) Note the following examples [...]: Example 1: We take an approach grounded in .... (*Don & Izadi 2011*) [*Exemplification*] (PEFL, 2)

- (13) They particularly emphasize listening and speaking “in order for students to develop practical communicative competence in the target language” (*Monbuscho: 1998b*) [*Support for other studies’ objectives*] (ML1, 1)
- (14) Given that the lexis of a language enshrines its semantic possibilities, with words being combinations of semantic features (*Richards and Schmidt, 2002: 477*) the study of lexical patterns across sentence boundaries is essential [...] [*Support for the topic*] (ML1, 5)
- (15) The reason for lack of effect for the treatments could be the lack of rule presentation, corrective feedback, or negative evidence or it might be due to the complexity of the target structures or lack of developmental readiness for them (*Pienemann, 1989*) [*Support for justifying the findings*] (PEFL, 5)

Citations also helped the students provide the required “Background” on their topics by listing or linking variables related to their focus (Extract 16). As another function, “Establishing links” facilitated writer(s)’ synthesis of available studies on a topic, arranged inside brackets, to link the sources with similar arguments (Extract 17), similar findings (Extract 18), or similar foci (Extract 19).

(16) Regarding the choice of the linguistic form, examples of the forms which were targeted in the previous studies on form-focused instruction are present perfect (*Shook, 1994*), past tense (*Doughty & Varela, 1998*), question formation (*Mackey & Philp, 1998*), relativization (*Izumi, 2002*), passive voice (*Lee, 2007*), and negative adverbs (*Reinders, 2009*). [*Background*] (PEFL, 5)

- (17) However, people are always situated in a current place which determines how their identity and social relations emerge (*Benwell & Stokoe, 2006: 211; Osberg & Biesta, 2008: 321; Gruenewald, 2003b*). [*Sources with similar argument*] (PL1, 2)
- (18) The findings of the study in terms of accuracy and fluency of learners’ written performances were in agreement with the findings of similar studies (e.g., *Foster & Skehan, 1996; Ortega, 1999; Tavakoli & Skehan, 2005*) [...] [*Sources with similar findings*] (PL1, 2)
- (19) [...] many studies have been conducted over persuasion and its role in advertisements in English context (e.g., *Arroyo, 2013; Boubebrez & Iraj, 2013; Vaičėnionienė, 2006; Yang & Smith, 2009*) [...] [*Sources with similar foci*] (PEFL, 1)

The “Source” function involved attributing an idea or proposition to a source (Extract 20) or indicating the originator of a term, concept, or technique (Extract 21). Finally, though sporadically, non-integral citations served the “Recommendation” function primarily in conclusion sections (Extracts 22 & 23), “Further Referencing” function through ‘see’ and ‘cf’ to refer to other sources for more information (Extract 24), “Explanation” function to uncover the possible reasons for their findings (Extract 25), and “Evaluation” function to interpret and assess their results (Extract 26):

- (20) Language [...] is affected by inventions and innovations, but affected little and slowly” (*Whorf 1956: 156*). [*Source: Attribution*] (ML1, 6)
- (21) [...] a visual “grammar” (*Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2006*), or a “multi-modal meta-language” (*Unsworth, 2008*). [*Source: Origin*] (ML1, 7)
- (22) [...] this study strongly supports the calls [...] for more research attention to be paid to the processes of feedback in TESOL courses (*Brandt, 2008*). It also echoes those that call for qualitative discourse analytic type research into FB meetings (*Vasquez & Reppen, 2007*) [...] [*Research recommendation*] (PL1, 3)
- (23) [...] the empirical findings of this study have been presented for the consideration and reflection of practitioners in TESOL certificate courses and other professional development contexts, with the intention that this description can lead to informed actions on the part of practitioners (*Richards, 2005*) [*Applied recommendation*] (MEFL, 3)
- (24) Despite the growing recognition of TPW (*see for example Kinsella and Pitman, 2012; Cooke & Carr, 2014*) there is a dearth of [...] [*Further Referencing*] (PL1, 9)
- (25) These examples of intratextual recontextualizations all illustrate known uses of formulations in the conversation analysis literature (*Deppermann, 2011*). [*Explanation*] (PL1, 4)
- (26) This example highlights the benefit of analysing reference chains, which trace mentions of a text’s participants through the text (*Eggins, 2004:37*). Participants are ‘the people, places and things that get talked about in a text’ (*Eggins, 2004:33*). It is incumbent for a writer to signal to the reader whether a participant’s identity is already known or not... [*Evaluation*] (MEFL, 1)

### 3.6. Dual-form citations

Graduate writers used dual (i.e., integral and non-integral) forms to represent the “Identification” function and “Inanimate sources”. For the non-parenthetical representation of the “Identification” function, the writers mostly demoted the cited source to an oblique syntactic position after the passive marker ‘by’ and an inflected reporting verb while transposing the direct object or pronoun ‘it’ to the subject position.

- (27) This curious phenomenon was first noticed by *Gaines (1932)* [*Identification*] and has been reported by many others ever since (*Kornfeld & Suvorv 1944; Benjamin & Strasberg 1958; Strasberg & Benjamin 1958; Benjamin 1964; Eller & Crum 1970*). [*Identification*] (MEFL, 6)

As a frequent type of academic referencing with dual forms, “Inanimate sources” incorporated non-human entities such as universities (Extract 28), organizations (Extract 29), well-known corpora (Extract 30), and dictionaries (Extract 31) whose contribution to the documentation of writers’ statements matched the value of human sources:

- (28) Students who wish to attend this university must first complete a one-year preparatory EFL programme (*Princess Noura University, 2013*). [*Inanimate Source*] (PL1, 9)
- (29) According to *MOE (2017a)*, there are 444 primary schools and 182 secondary schools across eight educational districts [...] [*Inanimate Source*] (PL1, 6)
- (30) [...] form an on-going local corpus that might be submitted to [...] by *the Cambridge English Profile (2012)* [...] [*Inanimate Source*] (PL1, 2)
- (31) *The 1995 edition of the Collins COBUILD English Dictionary (CCED)* is the primary resource used in this paper to determine the general textual frequency of the lexical items considered here. The 1995 edition of the CCED contains explicit information concerning the general textual frequency of headword items in the form of ‘frequency band’ markers (see below). [*Inanimate Source*] (ML1, 1)

### 3.7. Total uses of citations in M.A. and Ph.D. theses by different writer groups

Kolmogorov-Smirnov Tests for Normality showed the non-normal distribution of citation frequencies per 1000 words. Hence, we used Mann-

Whitney U tests to compare citation employment in M.A. and Ph.D. theses. The comparative analysis revealed a significantly greater resort to integral citations in master’s theses than in Ph.D. dissertations (Mean rank  $M.A.$  = 24.30, Mean rank  $Ph.D.$  = 16.70,  $p < .05$ ). However, the mean ranks did not significantly differ for total employment of integral and non-integral citations in other pairs of graduate theses (Table 2).

Citation Types	Writers	Mean Rank	Mann-Whitney	Wilcoxon W	Z	Exact sig [2*(1-tailed sig.)]
TOTAL INTEGRAL	ML1	10.7	48	103	-.15	.91
	MEFL	10.3				
	PL1	10	45	100	-.38	.74
	PEFL	11				
	M	24.3	124	334	-2.06	.04
	P	16.7				
TOTAL NON-INTEGRAL	ML1	10.9	46	101	-.30	.80
	MEFL	10.1				
	PL1	9.8	43	98	-.53	.63
	PEFL	11.2				
	M	20.9	192	402	-.22	.84
	P	20.1				

*Note: ML1: Master's theses by English L1 Writers; MEFL: Master's Theses by EFL Writers; PL1: Ph.D. Theses by English L1 Writers; PEFL: Ph.D. Theses by EFL Writers; M: Master's Writers; P: Ph.D. Writers; Exact sig [2\*(1-tailed sig.)]: the exact p-value not corrected for ties.*

Table 2. Total uses of citations in M.A. and Ph.D. theses by different writer groups.

### 3.8. Intergroup comparison of citations across graduate thesis sections

Due to the non-normal data distribution, Mann-Whitney U tests were used to compare citation employment in master’s and Ph.D. thesis sections. The findings indicated significantly more frequent integral citations in the Introduction sections of the M.A. theses and heavier uses of non-integral forms in the Discussion sections of the Ph.D. dissertations. As Table 3 portrays, the mean rank of integral citations for the Introduction sections of M.A. theses was greater than that of doctoral dissertations ( $MR_{M.A.}$  = 25.2 >  $MR_{Ph.D.}$  = 15.8,  $p < .05$ ). However, the mean ranks for non-integral citations in Discussion sections were greater for doctoral dissertations compared with M.A. theses ( $MR_{Ph.D.}$  = 25.95 >  $MR_{M.A.}$  = 15.05,  $p < .05$ ).

Citation Types	Sections	Mean Rank (Master's)	Mean Rank (Ph.D.)	Mann-Whitney	Wilcoxon W	Z	Exact sig [2*(1-tailed sig.)]
INTEGRAL	Introduction	25.2	15.8	106	316	-2.54	.01
	Literature	22.35	18.65	163	373	-1.00	.33
	Method	20.7	20.3	196	406	-.11	.93
	Results	23.6	17.4	138	348	-1.68	.10
	Discussion	20.55	20.45	199	409	-.03	.99
	Conclusion	23.28	17.73	144.5	354.5	-1.52	.13
NON-INTEGRAL	Introduction	20.15	20.85	193	403	-.19	.86
	Literature	21.4	19.6	182	392	-.49	.64
	Method	17.4	23.6	138	348	-1.68	.10
	Results	18.10	22.9	152	362	-1.3	.20
	Discussion	15.05	25.95	91	301	-2.95	.00
	Conclusion	18.5	22.5	160	370	-1.09	.29

Table 3. Intergroup comparison of citations across graduate thesis sections.

### 3.8. English L1 and EFL writers' use of citations

We found no meaningful differences in citation employment by English L1 and EFL writers. Also, the mean rank differences for integral and non-integral citations in the Introduction sections of M.A. theses by English L1 and EFL writers were noticeable but statistically insignificant.

Citation Types	Sections	Mean Rank (L1)	Mean Rank (EFL)	Mann-Whitney	Wilcoxon W	Z	Exact sig [2*(1-tailed sig.)]
INTEGRAL	Introduction	12.2	8.8	33	88	-1.2	.22
	Literature	11.8	9.2	37	92	-.98	.35
	Method	10.6	10.4	49	104	-.08	.97
	Results	9.4	11.6	39	94	-.83	.44
	Discussion	11.05	9.95	44.5	99.5	-.42	.68
	Conclusion	10.8	10.2	47	102	-.23	.85
NON-INTEGRAL	Introduction	8.4	12.6	29	84	-1.5	.12
	Literature	11.6	9.4	39	94	-.83	.44
	Method	9.85	11.15	43.5	98.5	-.49	.63
	Results	10.95	10.05	45.5	100.5	-.34	.74
	Discussion	10.7	10.3	48	103	-.15	.91
	Conclusion	9.05	11.95	35.5	90.5	-1.1	.28

Table 4. English L1 and EFL M.A. graduates' use of citations across thesis sections.

Notwithstanding the insignificant differences between English L1 and EFL Ph.D. students' use of citations, in almost all sections of the theses by EFL writers, the integral forms outran non-integral references, with the latter occurring more frequently in the Introduction, Results, and Discussion sections. English L1 doctoral graduates, on the other hand, were more likely to resort to non-integral citations for the Method and Conclusion sections of their dissertations (Table 5).

Citation Types	Sections	Mean Rank (L1)	Mean Rank (EFL)	Mann-Whitney	Wilcoxon W	Z	Exact sig [2*(1-tailed sig.)]
INTEGRAL	Introduction	8.3	12.7	28	83	-1.6	.11
	Literature	10.6	10.4	49	104	-.08	.97
	Method	9.85	11.15	43.5	98.5	-.49	.63
	Results	9	12	35	90	-1.1	.28
	Discussion	9	12	35	90	-1.1	.28
	Conclusion	9.5	11.5	40	95	-.76	.48
NON-INTEGRAL	Introduction	9	12	35	90	-1.1	.28
	Literature	10.7	10.3	48	103	-.15	.91
	Method	12.6	8.4	29	84	-1.5	.12
	Results	8.55	12.45	30.5	85.5	-1.4	.14
	Discussion	9.8	11.2	43	98	-.53	.63
	Conclusion	11.2	9.8	43	98	-.53	.63

Table 5. Comparison of English L1 and EFL Ph.D. graduates' use of citations across thesis sections.

### 4. Discussion

Remarkably, M.A. and Ph.D. graduates put prodigious efforts into using novel and already unlabeled patterns of citations, such as “Inanimate sources” and “Identification” as dual form citations as well as “Adjectivizing”, “Fragmentary”, and “Blended forms”, to achieve their intended purposes. Due to the anonymity and little recognition of the thesis writers in general and M.A. graduates in particular, and their need to socialize into their academic discourse community, such behaviors may not have been simply a matter of choice (Dong, 1996; Hyland, 2012); overriding issues such as motivation, purpose, experience, and depth of knowledge could have also played a part (Liu et al., 2016; Petric, 2007). In other words, the spotted referencing techniques could have helped writers respond to criticisms against their linguistic and citation competence (e.g., Jalilifar, 2012). For example, “Adjectivizing” and “dual-form citations” have probably compensated for the limited variety of citation forms, and “Further referencing” could make up for shortfalls in writers’ breadth of knowledge.

The novel patterns, especially non-integral and inanimate ones, could also indicate the writers’ deliberate attempts to make the cited sources less noticeable and draw more attention to the cited propositions, thereby fending off criticisms against the production of overly descriptive texts and subordination to other voices (Liu et al., 2016). Such practices, by implication, could also mediate any attempts to make an identity claim (Hyland, 2012), create and present a scholarly image the writers might have aspired to project (Dong, 1996), and prove the potential of both integral and non-integral citations for further expansion (Petric, 2007; Samraj, 2013).

However, some novel citation practices, such as “Blended” and “Fragmentary” forms, which did not characterize a standard academic writing and citation style, could suggest writers’ insufficient source use proficiency (John, 2012).

Heavier uses of integral citations in Introduction sections of M.A. theses than those of doctoral dissertations and denser employment of non-integral referencing in Discussion sections of Ph.D. dissertations compared with M.A. theses could reflect the communicative purposes of these thesis sections and close association of citation functions and distributions (Petric, 2007). Because of their pivotal role in displaying the current state of knowledge to facilitate niche establishment and centrality claims (Samraj, 2008; Swales, 1990), Introduction sections receive the most attention in any evaluations of academic texts (Jalilifar, 2012). Hence, chances are that the Introduction sections could reflect writers’ intended purposes and their best efforts to project their desirable disciplinary identities (Jalilifar, 2012). In this sense, M.A. students’ preference for integral citations was quite reasonable as they could not be competent and confident enough to synthesize the obtained information from different sources (Samraj, 2008). They might as well have tried to avoid plagiarism and tie their identities to the experts in their field by resorting to an unsynthesized representation of the information that required them to give the agentive position and prominence to the cited sources. Very consistent with such qualities was M.A. graduates’ greater reliance on knowledge transfer than production, mainly through a restatement of what each researcher had already reported (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987), thereby a passive construction of their authorial voice and a discreet expression of their propositions (Groom, 2000; Peng, 2019).

On the other hand, citation practices in doctoral theses conformed to disciplinary norms and the general trend already detected in the texts by applied linguistics experts who prefer non-integral citations to bear the stamp of authority and get their messages smoothly across to their readers (Arizavi & Choubasaz, 2021; Coffin, 2009; Dontcheva-Navratilova, 2016; Thompson & Ye, 1991). As a result, doctoral students’ employment of non-integral citations could ensure their text development in close alignment with scholarly actions, strengthen their affiliation with the community of applied linguists, promote the credibility of their standing, and authenticate their identities as academic writers (Dong, 1996; Dontcheva-Navratilova, 2016; Nishino & Atkinson, 2015).

Not unexpectedly, the M.A. group could have limited awareness of various functions performed through non-integral referencing. However, doctoral graduates showed that they were aware of the communicative purposes and generic moves of thesis sections (e.g., discussion sections), such as commenting on the results, interpreting and justifying the findings, comparing them to the previous findings, and evaluating their strengths and weaknesses as well as methodologies and limitations (Yang & Allison, 2003), which corresponded to rhetorical functions of non-integral citations and contributed to their proper fulfilment. Such non-integral citation behaviors could also reflect Ph.D. graduates' tendency to introduce themselves as mature writers by foregrounding their voices and intended messages (Thompson, 2005, 2016).

The results could partly support the previous arguments stressing the effects of less experienced EFL learners' cultural and educational background and insufficient opportunities for their disciplinary and linguistic skill development through citation practices (Jalilifar, 2012). M.A. graduates' limited uses of non-integral citations and, by implication, a small variety of citation functions can represent EFL contexts where thesis supervisors prioritize linguistic accuracy and content coverage over rhetorical features of academic referencing (Jalilifar, 2012; Pecorari, 2006). Apart from their limited access to linguistic resources, EFL writers are similar to their English L1 counterparts in that both have few thesis examiners and audiences whose least expectation is to read a modestly written text giving insights into the topic, thus leading M.A. graduates towards employment of the easiest (e.g., integral verb-controlling) but not necessarily the best citation practices (Jalilifar, 2012). However, substantial overlaps in the rhetorical functions and distributions of citations across Persian and English L1 writers imply Persian graduates' disciplinary acculturation and their tendency to situate their cognitive source proficiency in the target-language culture (Dong, 1996; Herrington, 1985; Lave & Wenger, 1991). These observations could, in a sense, undermine the potential impacts of ethnolinguistic differences on citation behaviors (Dontcheva-Navratilova, 2016; Hu & Wang, 2014).

Overall, the results highlight the complex nature of citation practice, which is not exclusively subject to linguistic factors but is closely associated with writers' conceptual and ontological experiences (Badenhorst, 2018; Chen et al., 2016; Wette, 2021). Insignificant differences between citation employment by English L1 and EFL writers with similar seniority levels may also indicate the role of graduate writers' disciplinary training and English as

a medium of instruction exposure in increased international access to English sources (Hyland & Jiang, 2017) and the regulatory roles of available current research in scaffolding the students' socialization into the English-dominated academic discourse community (Dong, 1996; Zheng et al., 2020). Nurturing English L1 and EFL writers' ambition to adapt to the established norms of their academic discourse community could, in turn, indicate a need for constant modeling of experts' behaviors (Liu et al., 2016; Pecorari, 2006) or regular adoption of an apprenticeship approach (Pecorari, 2006).

## 5. Conclusion

The present findings suggested that, in citation practices, socialization and academic seniority take precedence over ethnolinguistic backgrounds. Regardless of their linguistic backgrounds and compared with their M.A. counterparts, doctoral students indicated their greater preference for synthesizing the content of several sources and acknowledging them through non-integral citations. A rich diversity in types and tokens of citations in graduate theses by different writer groups could also open up new perspectives on citation employment and confirm that written competence, devoid of citation competence, may not tightly regulate appropriate citation practices (Samraj, 2013). Academic writing and EAP instructors and materials developers can use the present findings to advance and support the academic writing and publishing efforts of in-training students. Thesis committee members can also use these results to increase their meticulous attention to how student writers can use citations to achieve the rhetorical purposes of various thesis sections.

This study had a few limitations. First, given the extensive research on citation features, we needed to meet several criteria (i.e., structures, initial submission dates, disciplines and covered themes of the theses, and ethnolinguistic backgrounds of writers) to collect the required materials that could restrict our access to a large corpus. Second, despite its advantages, the time-consuming process of manual data coding and the felt need for further assessment of the codings might have affected the findings. Furthermore, due to the inaccessibility of the thesis writers and the time lapse between their thesis defense and the present analysis, we did not have the opportunity to interview them and further scour their thought processes and knowledge levels while citing the sources. Future studies can address the potential

impacts of exposure to appropriate artifacts, such as academic writing books, instructors, and courses on citation practices. EAP/ESP scholars can also explore how increasing authorial awareness of responsible referencing can help thesis writers, especially M.A. students, shy away from descriptions and simple functions such as “Verb-controlling” and “Source” towards more sophisticated, expert-like rhetorical strategies.

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