

Textual Borrowing Practice in English Academic Writing: From the Perspective of Content Analysis

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Abstract: Academic writing, as a research focus in the field of second language writing, has always received widespread attention. In order to explore the practice of textual borrowing by second language writers, we conducted a content analysis on the literature review part of 15 master's theses of a foreign language and literature major in a university. The contents of texts were examined from the four function dimensions of data, claim, counterargument and rebuttal, and the four stance dimensions of distance, acknowledgement, contest and endorse. The research shows that L2 writers tend to use a single form, lack sufficient dialogue with the source texts and lack of evaluative content when borrowing the texts, and are short of relevant knowledge and abilities with great differences in textual borrowing practice. This study provides valuable insights for further research on textual borrowing in academic writing.

Keywords: Textual Borrowing; Academic Writing; Stance; Content Analysis; Individual Difference

1 Introduction

Textual borrowing has a pivotal role in studying academic writing, one of the core issues of academic integrity, which involves writer's ability to understand and use literature. As an academic writing technique, it refers to borrowing language and ideas from the source text [1]. It is mainly divided into three strategies: summary, paraphrase and quotation [2]. Sun and Yang [3] found that second language (L2) writers adopt textual borrowing strategies simply with insufficient usage of paraphrasing strategies [4], and are more easily to directly copy the source text [5]. Moreover, L2 writers use more of the source text in their writings than monolingual writers

do [6]. As a novice, it may be difficult for a L2 writer to accurately understand the information in the source text, so it is inevitable that there are some shortcomings in their writings when borrowing the source text.

These shortcomings are not only a reflection of the language proficiency of L2 writers, but also imply a lack of relevant knowledge and theoretical support in their writings. For example, with the research on academic writing going further, many scholars have found that L2 writers often learned citation methods and writing skills through the way of imitation or borrowing [7]. That inflects that they lack of systematic learning and training. The textual borrowing practice of experienced L2 writers is better than that of L2 writers who lack of relevant knowledge. Because experienced L2 writers have a better understanding of readers' reading expectations, and they will use some rhetoric strategies during the borrowing process, and tactically express their views by borrowing source text [8,9]. Extensive research has shown that there are still some problems in the practice of textual borrowing by L2 writers.

In addition to the above problems in the use of textual borrowing, it is also worth exploring the stance of L2 writers who use the source text to express their views. The expression of the writer's stance in second language writing can be reflected through the usage of language, the way of discussion, the logical structure, the evidence support and so on. The writer's stance is a major area of interest within the field in academic writing, because it directly affects the reader's understanding and acceptance of the text content. Most of studies concerning L2 writer's textual borrowing practice have focused on the challenges and problems that L2 writers faced in borrowing the source text in their writings [2,6]. Although extensive researches have been carried out on the use of the original text by L2

writers, no single study exists which has focused on the function of textual borrowing and the stance of L2 writers in academic writing [10]. Therefore, this study describes the function and stance of textual borrowing in academic writing of L2 writers. Specifically, it makes sense to study how L2 writers strategically approach the source text to achieve their goals and express their stances. Therefore, this study specifically answers the following two questions:

(1) What are the characteristics of the number, type and frequency of textual borrowing function in the literature review of master’s theses?

(2) What are the characteristics of the number, type and frequency of stance expressions in textual borrowing by second language writers?

2. Theoretical Framework

Bakhtin’s [11] dialogue theory emphasized that dialogue was the essence of human existence, and he advocated the exploration of knowledge and truth through “dialogue”. On the basis of dialogue theory, the writer expressed his own stance by referring to the viewpoints or words in the source text of other writers through evaluation and summary. In order to provide a coherent conceptualization for the comprehensive analysis of textual borrowing forms and functions in academic writing, Coffin [12] developed an analytical framework. The analytical framework opened a dialogue view of language resources that can be used to attribute and explain different academic voices (see Figure 1). The first dimension is the writer stance, which refers to the stance taken by the writer to express their views or voices on source texts. According to the level of dialogue theory, writer stance can be divided into four types. The second dimension is text integration, which refers to the degree to which the author borrows the original text. The last dimension is the nature of the source, which includes two types.

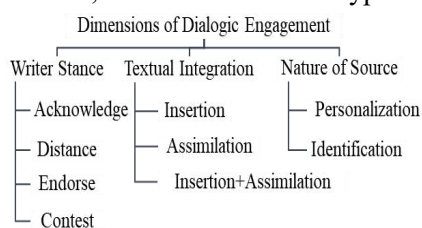


Figure 1. Dimension of Dialogic Engagement [12]

In order to explore the practice of textual borrowing in master’s theses and investigate the differences of functions and stance taken by L2 writers, this research, combined with previous studies, classified the function of textual borrowing into four categories: claim, data, rebuttal and counterargument. The analysis framework of this research is shown in Figure 2.

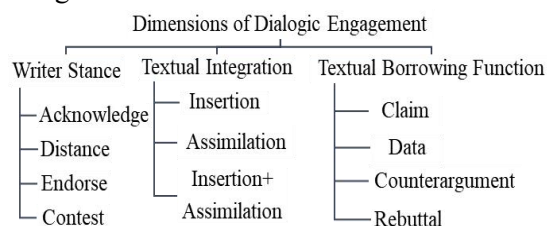


Figure 2. Text Analysis Framework

3. Research Methods

This study used content analysis to describe and interpret the patterns, themes, and trends in texts or other non-numerical data by systematically classifying, encoding, and counting them.

3.1 Analytical Materials

The main purpose of this study is to describe textual borrowing practice of L2 writers, which requires to identify the source of analytical materials. The analytical materials were selected from 15 master’s theses of foreign language and literature majors in a provincial university in central and western China. Secondly, it is necessary to certain the categories of analytical materials. The analytical materials include comparative literature and cross-cultural studies, translation studies, foreign linguistics and applied linguistics, etc. The part of literature review is selected as the research subject, with a total of 75,920 characters. The APA format adopted by L2 writers in literature review has been checked without usage errors.

3.2 Encoding Methods

Firstly, the approach of encoding the textual borrowing function follows the previous schemes. The classification methods made by Nussbaum and Kardash [13] and Stapleton [14] were used for encoding (as shown in Table 1), including four types: claim (CL), data (DA), counterargument (R), and rebuttal (T).

Table 1. Coding of Textual Borrowing Function

Function	Definitions and Examples
Claim (CL)	A viewpoint raised on a controversial topic or issue. Eg: Psychologists studying motivation have focused on four basic questions (Graham & Weiner, 1996; Pintrich, Marx & Boyle, 1993). [CL1] 1) What choices do people make about their behavior? 2) Having made a decision, how long is it before the person actually gets started? 3) What is the intensity or level of involvement in the chosen activity? 4) What causes a person to persist or to give up?
Data (DA)	Evidence, like facts, statistical data, anecdotes, definitions, analogies, expert opinions, given in the texts. Eg: In the late 1950s, Gardner and Lambert (1959) proposed the social psychological model and social educational model of second language acquisition. [DA1]
Rebuttal (R)	Challenge the effectiveness of the author's claims. Eg: Though Dörnyei (2001) sketched out the whole motivation situation from the perspective of individuals, society and teaching situation, only the language level and confidence of learner level were systematically researched by Gardner, Clément (1993) and his colleagues and other aspects have not been verified yet. [T1]
Counterargument(T)	The author responds to the rebuttal by pointing out weaknesses in claims, data, and evidence, such as logical errors, insufficient evidence, invalid hypotheses, etc. Eg: Therefore, they proposed to look for new theories and concepts from other areas of psychology, which should cover much wider theoretical frame (Crookes & Schmidt, 1991) [R].

Secondly, the approach of encoding the writer's stance in the textual borrowing follows the classification of Coffin [12] and Hu and Wang [15]. There are four main

categories of writer stance: acknowledge (A), distance (D), contest (T), and endorse (E). The coding method was shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Coding of Writer Stance

Stance	Definitions and Example
Acknowledge (A)	Do not make evaluative judgments on borrowed propositions or ideas. Eg: Janet Holmes is one of the researchers. His book <i>Women, Men and Politeness</i> first applied pragmatic theories to research in gender language (Holmes, 1995) [A].
Distance (D)	Establish a distance to avoid being responsible for its reliability when the writer borrowed the source text. Eg: The feminists realize that in order to improve women's status and let women be equal to men, they have to oppose the traditional discrimination towards women (Yang, 2012) [D].
Contest (C)	The writer directly criticizes the irrationality or fallacy of the borrowed content. Eg: This definition has been accepted and utilized by many Chinese researchers (Wang & Zhang, 2008; Li, 2010; Zhang, 2012.) But there are still other researchers holding different opinions on it [C].
Endorse (E)	Writer's support and approval for borrowed content Eg: Just as Beauvoir (1998) states, "The woman is not born to be but is turned into" (p. 30). [E1].

To ensure reliability, this article is coded twice by two coders. After integrated training, the two coders negotiated and discussed the inconsistencies with experts. And finally included the agreed results in the statistical results.

During the encoding process, the coder needs to pay attention to the context and the purpose that the writer intends to express in their writings. Regarding the differences in the encoding of the writer stance in this case, the two coders decided to change it into a endorse

stance after consultation and discussion with experts.

4. Research Results

4.1 Quantitative Research Results

Table 3 presents the results of the overall quantitative survey of the text. There are a total of 1190 pages of 15 literature, of which 195 pages are the main part of content analysis. The translation oriented texts' literature review parts have fewer pages compared to the other two directions. Table 4 shows the overall analytical results of textual borrowing function. In the analytical materials of this study, a total of 845 textual borrowing practices were found, and the proportion of each textual borrowing function was various with significant differences. Table 5 shows the analytical results of the writer's stance expression, with a total of 947 stance expressions, which are in diverse frequencies.

Figure 3 and Figure 4 are the results of individual differences in textual borrowing function and stance expression in the literature review part. It can be seen from the figures that the frequency and distribution of sub themes are in great differences, whether in textual borrowing function's or stance's line chart. What's more, there are existing large differences between individuals.

Table 3. Summary of Source Texts

Classification	Number of texts	Overall page	Number of Literature Review Part	Percentage in total number
Translation	4	295	32	26.7%
Second language learning and teaching	5	411	83	33.3%
Linguistics	6	484	80	40.0%
Total	15	1190	195	100%

Table 4. Summary of Textual Borrowing Function

Function	Number of cases	Standard deviation	Percentage in total number	Total number
Claim[CL]	114	33.053	24.3%	114
Data[DA]	705	203.660	69.6%	705

Counterargument[R]	15	4.472	3.5%	15
Rebuttal[T]	11	3.317	2.5%	11
Total	845	244.075	100.0%	845

Table 5. Summary of Writer Stance

Stance	Number of cases	Standard deviation	Percentage in total number	Total number
Acknowledge[A]	217	44.032	22.9%	217
Contest[C]	19	3.846	2.0%	19
Distance[D]	541	109.792	57.1%	541
Endorse[E]	170	34.614	18.0%	170
Total	947	192.281	100.0%	947

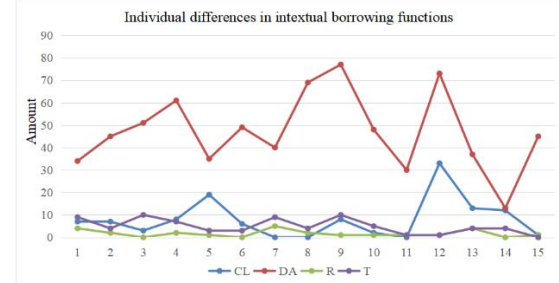


Figure 3. Line Chart of Individual Differences in Textual Borrowing Functions

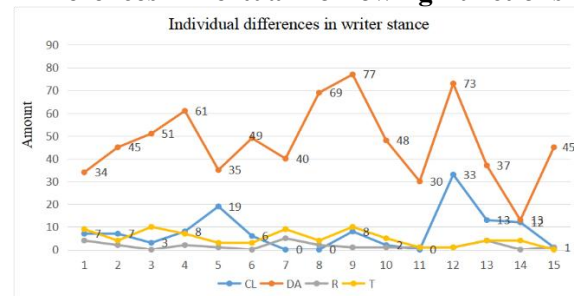


Figure 4. Line Chart of Individual Differences in Writer Stance

4.2 Qualitative Research Results

According to the dialogue engagement analytical framework, the function is analyzed mainly from the four sub-themes of claim, data, counterargument and rebuttal, as well as writer stance from the four sub-themes of acknowledge, distance, endorse and contest. These eight subtopics are coded from the 195-page literature review section, and the frequency of occurrence of each subtopic varies greatly in general.

4.2.1 Discovery of Textual Borrowing Function

Claim function. This theme is used 114 times in analytical materials, accounting for 24.3%. In general, the proportion of claim is small and

the differences between individuals are relatively significant. The line chart shows that L2 writers who use the claim function most between individuals is as high as 33 times, while the least is 0. Hence, the overall trend of the line chart is volatile.

Data function. With total number of 705, accounting for 69.6%, data function was used mostly. Therefore, it is clear that L2 writers are good at borrowing the original text to support their own propositions. The results of the inter-individual differences are also significantly different, with a maximum of 77 times of use and a minimum of 13 times, which is more obvious fluctuation than the claim function line.

Counterargument function. Accounting for relatively low, counterargument function was less than 5%. The usage of this function between individual is the smallest, which is basically in single digits, and the overall fluctuation of the line is not large.

Rebuttal function. Among the four sub-topics, this frequency is the least, accounting for only 2.5% of the total. Similar to the counterargument function, there is no significant difference in the frequency of use between individuals. As shown in the line chart, the overall trend of the rebuttal function line remains stable.

4.2.2 Discovery of Writer Stance

Endorse stance. The usage of endorse stance in analytical materials ranks third, accounting for 18%. There have the greatest differences among individual use, with L2 writers borrowing the original texts to support their views up to 122 times and the minimum number of being 0. Therefore, the line chart shows that the endorse line fluctuates the most, and the writer's behavior is significantly different in borrowing texts to support his own views.

Distance stance. This topic appears the most frequently in analytical materials, accounting for 57.1%, with a number of 541 times. The writer often uses distance stance to maintain a distance from the original texts, with a maximum of 61 times and a minimum of 10 times. The distribution of the number of segments is relatively average.

Contest stance. The proportion of contest is the lowest, with a total of 19 occurrences, similar to the number of rebuttal function used in analytical materials. The writer lacks the

ability to use the original text to contest viewpoints, so the individual differences are not very significant. The overall trend of the contest stance line is flat, and frequency is basically below 5 times.

Acknowledge stance. This subtopic occurred 217 times, accounting for 22.9%. Compared with endorse stance, individual differences between acknowledge stance are not significant, with a maximum of 80 times. The minimum is consistent with endorse stance, but individual differences between acknowledge stance are not as significant as endorse stance. The highest number of acknowledge stance accounts for nearly half of the highest number of endorse stance.

5 Discussion

5.1 Features of Textual Borrowing Function

Through content analysis, the general situation of the use of textual borrowing function in analytical materials is as following. Firstly, the function of borrowed text in academic papers are relatively diverse, including claim, data, counterargument and rebuttal. Secondly, claim function and data function are mainly used in L2 writers' writings. Finally, the proportion of counterargument function and rebuttal function is relatively low, which is quite different from the previous two. This result reveals that in real academic writing, L2 writers consciously use relevant literature to express their views, so that their own words are reasonable and well-grounded. Abasi, Akbari and Graves [8] also found that experienced L2 writers would use some rhetoric or other ways to express their views in their theses when borrowing the original text.

In terms of the use of textual borrowing function, data function was used the most for L2 writers providing evidence or supporting for their own views. Wette [9] also confirmed this claim through interviewing six L2 writers. The fundamental reason why L2 writers borrow source texts is that they believe that borrowing source texts can provide authoritative support for their viewpoints. However, according to the research results, although data function is the most commonly usage in master's theses, most of L2 writers always borrow professional definitions or descriptions of relevant researches, with few declarative summaries of source texts'

viewpoints or logical explanations of their own viewpoints through borrowed texts. Therefore, it can be seen that the purpose of using original texts by L2 writers is relatively single. The individual differences of using source texts among L2 writers are also significant, which reflects the lack of relevant knowledge and lack of ability to express their views through borrowed texts in a reasonable manner.

In terms of claim function, L2 writers use it more frequently. The use of claim function by L2 writers requires extensive reading of relevant literature both domestically and internationally, summarizing viewpoints, and identifying research trends and problems. However, there are also significant differences existing among L2 writers in using this function, with results showing that the minimum number of the use of claim function is 0. Therefore, the ability of L2 writers to extract key information from original texts still needs to be improved. Besides, the use of the other two functions is the least, indicating that L2 writers are not proficient in integrating and utilizing source texts and are only able to support their viewpoints [16]. This is consistent with the research findings of Ma [17], where the use of source texts by lower level L2 writers is still in the stage of “knowledge statement”.

From the research results, it can be inferred that in academic writing, L2 writers could only use the simplest way to borrow source texts to express their views. On the one hand, it possibly because L2 writers did not properly organize the source texts and integrate the texts into their own perspectives. On the other hand, L2 writers may lack of corresponding academic writing training and knowledge system. The research of Cheung and Kang [18] also shows that the confusion in the use of source texts by L2 writers is due to the lack of experience in obtaining source texts, the poor ability of document retrieval and recording, and the lack of academic training in using source texts. Therefore, in future academic writing teaching, corresponding knowledge teaching and practice can be appropriately added.

5.2 Features of Writer Stance

This study found that the dominant stance of L2 writers is distance stance. The L2 writer

maintains a distance from the author and avoids taking responsibility for the reliability of the content. Although distance stance does not necessarily mean that the L2 writer supports the borrowed content or not, the writer subconsciously confirms the accuracy of the borrowed content and ultimately borrows the source text [10]. In addition to distance stance, acknowledge stance is another major type of stance in analytical materials. L2 writers don't make any evaluations of the borrowed texts, and this borrowing method is similar to the writing habits of first language writers [12] and even some professional writers' writing forms [15]. As explained by Coffin [12], this acknowledge stance is an extension of the dialogue style of the source text, allowing for the existence of multiple viewpoints.

However, there are fewer endorse stance than the first two. L2 writers use authoritative textual content to support their views, demonstrating that writers have identity awareness and critically comments on the borrowed content, especially being adept at expressing agreement with the borrowed content. The least use is the contest stance, which is consistent with the results of Hu and Wang's [15] research. Similarly, professional writers tend to adopt a positive endorse stance rather than a negative contest stance when evaluating the borrowed content. Actively engaging in dialogue with the original author can actually help L2 writers present their own arguments [12]. However, this result is contrary to the result of Ma and Qin [19], which showed that L2 writers used endorse stance most frequently, followed by acknowledge and contest stance, with distance stance as the least. The reason for the different results may be due to different research subjects and inconsistent writing tasks.

The stance expression of L2 writers varies greatly among individuals. Most L2 writers hold a endorse stance, which is consistent with the use of textual borrowing function adopted by L2 writers. There are also significant differences among individual L2 writers. The use of distance stance is the same among individuals, who mostly maintain a distance from the source text to demonstrate respect for it. In addition, similar to the results of textual borrowing function, L2 writers express less contest stance when borrowing the source

content. Most L2 writers almost don't use it, and their ability to use the source text is weak. In summary, the stance taken by L2 writers towards borrowed contents is that they do not make any evaluative expressions, with few positive or negative evaluations of the borrowed content. This also indicates that L2 writers have limitations in expressing endorse or contest stance towards borrowed texts [10]. Coffin [12] suggested that excessive endorse or contest may weaken the writer's argument by constructing an inappropriate comment. Besides, unlike professional writers, L2 writers are more inclined to show respect for published literature resources, because the words and ideas of these professional authors are trustworthy, reliable and authoritative [20]. Therefore, they use more positive evaluations when borrowing the source text.

The explanation of the writer stance refers to a dialogue between the writer and the borrowed author, in which the writer evaluates the borrowed content and expresses different writer stances. L2 writers have less evaluation of the source text. On the one hand, it because L2 writers lack of the breadth and depth of knowledge, which makes it difficult for them to provide reasonable evaluations of borrowed content and integrate it with their own arguments. On the other hand, it may also be due to the lack of corresponding teaching guidance and lack of the cultivation of the awareness of writer identity. Teachers should guide L2 writers to transform their learner identity into writer identity. And also let writers take into account readers' expectations and feelings during the writing process, and express their own opinions when borrowing source texts.

6. Summary

This research summarizes the function of textual borrowing in master's theses of foreign language and literature major and the expression of the writer stance, and finds some characteristics of L2 writers in textual borrowing: (1) the distribution of textual borrowing function in L2 writers' theses is relatively single, and data function occupy a dominant position; (2) L2 writers tend to have less evaluation of borrowed texts when expressing their stance, and tend to adopt a distant attitude to avoid taking responsibility; (3) L2 writers have a weak sense of identity in

academic writing, resulting in almost none quoted content. All these results have certain implications for teaching second language writing.

Firstly, in academic writing teaching, teachers need to teach L2 writers the citation norms of literature (including native language literature), as well as the discourse organization and language characteristics of academic writing. Secondly, teachers should pay attention to the cultivation and development of the L2 writers' ability to use source texts, as well as the corresponding document retrieval, induction and integration abilities, so that they can make a reasonable evaluation of the source text and use it in their own writing. Finally, teachers should focus on cultivating the awareness of L2 writer's identity, which enables them to express their views in a reasonable manner.

However, this research still has some limitations. The small sample size of the analytical materials in this research may affect the generalizability of the research results. Future research can expand the analytical materials' level, and compare the differences in textual borrowing practices among different levels of L2 writers. Besides, scholars can also conduct in-depth interviews with L2 writers to obtain their views on the selection of the source text and explore the reasons for the lack of evaluative stance.

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