

Citation Practices among Iranian Applied Linguists: A Narrative Inquiry¹

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Abstract

Citation practices are considered to have a critical role in academic discourse across different disciplines. However, the citation practices of applied linguists have not been regularly investigated. Therefore, the researchers examined the factors affecting the use of citations of eleven Iranian applied linguists with differing research abilities. The researchers analyzed the narratives using Strauss and Corbin's (1998) systematic approach through MAXQDA 20. The results of narrative analyses showed similarities in factors motivating both low-ability and high-ability researchers to use citations. However, high-ability researchers seemed to exercise more options when citing sources. The conclusions reached demonstrate that the more experienced researchers are the most qualified to use citations for the purposes of construction and reconstruction of disciplinary knowledge. Implications for curriculum development are discussed.

Resumen

Se considera que las prácticas de citación tienen un papel fundamental en el discurso académico de diferentes disciplinas. Sin embargo, las prácticas de citación de los investigadores en lingüística aplicada no han sido investigadas sistemáticamente. Por lo tanto, los investigadores de este estudio examinaron los factores que afectan el uso de citas de once lingüistas iraníes con diferentes habilidades de investigación. Los investigadores analizaron las narrativas utilizando el enfoque sistemático de Strauss y Corbin (1998) a través de MAXQDA 20. Los resultados del análisis narrativo mostraron similitudes en los factores que motivan a los investigadores de baja y alta capacidad a utilizar citas. Sin embargo, los investigadores de alta capacidad parecen ejercer más opciones al citar fuentes. Las conclusiones alcanzadas demuestran que los investigadores más experimentados son los más calificados para utilizar citas con el propósito de construir y reconstruir conocimientos disciplinarios. Asimismo, se discuten las implicaciones del estudio para el desarrollo curricular.

Introduction

Academic discourse is represented in different genres, such as research articles, theses, dissertations, conference lectures, etc. The knowledge obtained from scientific discourse is identified as a social accomplishment (Harwood & Petrić, 2011; Hyland, 1999). When researchers write their research articles, as the most relevant representation of the academic discourse, they need to use appropriate citations to make their claims acceptable, as well as to support their research credibility (Jalilifar & Dabbi, 2012). Citations can be regarded as the practice of associating the results of a newly conducted study with that of previous studies (Charles, 2006). Given that, citations have a critical role in academic discourse since they can both persuade the members of a discourse community and justify the claims made in a particular investigation (Datig, 2016; Hyland, 1999). By using citations, researchers contextualize the results of their research (Varga & Gradečak-Erdeljić, 2017). Citations, if used appropriately, can help researchers relate the contribution of their research to the dynamic nature of existing knowledge (Fløttum et al., 2006). Given the dynamic and changing nature of citation practices, they merit further analysis to examine their complexities in multidisciplinary fields.

Applied linguistics is a multidisciplinary field of study, whose primary purpose is to address language-related problems (Carter, 2005; Grabe, 2001). This field also includes discourse analysis, language acquisition, language learning and teaching, language assessment, pragmatics, etc. (Davies, 2007). Applied linguists are continuously engaged in doing language-related research to better understand language problems and find practical solutions to the problems. Identifying factors about why and how applied linguists with different research abilities employ citations in their studies may prove promising. On the one hand, specifying the factors and providing instructions based on those factors can help applied linguistics students to be more competent in identifying, selecting, and using appropriate citations in their studies (Shi, 2012). On the other hand, specifying these factors can help applied linguistics researchers to find an overview of citation practices in the discourse community of applied linguistics. As a whole, addressing citation practices among the applied linguists will demonstrate how applied linguists provide justifications for their arguments. Hence,

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the purpose of the current study was to investigate the factors affecting citation practices of applied linguists with different research abilities.

Literature Review

A Dialogic Response to Citation Practices

Citation practices among different academic discourses are not done in a vacuum, but include multidimensional interactions. Hence, Bakhtin's (1982) theory of dialogism can be applied as the underpinning theory for addressing different aspects of citation practices. A dialogic activity can be described as an activity done through constant interactional dialogues in the form of a social matrix with the previous activities done by other people. The critical point is that the process of dialogism is not unidirectional in that dialogue can extend in different directions, meaning that not only the current activity but also the previous activities may be influenced in such a process (Ware & Mabe, 2012). Furthermore, Bakhtin (1982) also argued that individuals might be influenced directly through their activities, and this may lead them to change some aspects of their activities in the future. As a whole, Bakhtin's theory of dialogism implies that individuals do not act in a vacuum. Moreover, others' work influences researchers, and they influence others through their activities.

By the same token, citation practices can be described through Bakhtin's (1982) dialogic theory. First of all, there are different individuals involved in research, including the researchers who conduct the study, and the researchers whose studies are cited. This is an academic community in which a dialogic process is followed. Researchers demonstrate that the claims they make reflect those presented in previous studies (Hyland & Jiang, 2019). Consequently, a social matrix with many networks is established among the researchers in which they impact each other's studies. The social matrix is dynamic in that the researcher may change the methods and techniques of their citation practices. In the current study, Bakhtin's (1982) theory of dialogism was chosen as the underpinning theory. This theory was used to interpret the changing nature of citations across different research ability levels.

Empirical Studies on Citation Practices

In this section, previous empirical research studies on citation practices are presented and discussed. First, the empirical studies conducted in different fields of study about citation practices are scrutinized and reported. Then, the empirical studies about citation practices in applied linguistics are provided.

Citation Practices in General

The past two decades in applied linguistics have witnessed an increasing number of publications on citations. Hyland (1999) conducted a study to examine the relationship between academic citation and the construction of disciplinary knowledge, examining 80 research articles across eight disciplines for the use of citations and interviewing experienced writers. The results of the study showed differences among the scholars of different disciplines in the way they cited other studies and the way they reported the information. This informed us that there are differences in the citation practices across disciplines. Consequently, it is critical to address how researchers in different fields of study practice their research citations, including applied linguists.

By using promotion and tenure reports and research articles, Pajić et al., (2019) investigated the process of internalization for the accountability, capacity, and liability of scientific research to address the citation patterns among Serbian researchers. The results of their study indicated that scholars in the humanities and social sciences tended to publish more in national outlets and use national references. The results also indicated that these researchers showed a greater tendency to cite older literature. They concluded that the scholars in the humanities and social sciences are not competent enough to publish in international journals. The results of this study helped us with the thematic analysis in that it informed us of a probable factor, older literature, which might lead researchers to go through a specific citation practice.

In a study by Campos et al. (2016), the influential factors leading to the use of citations were analyzed for citation behavior. They examined the research papers of four journals in ethnobiology. The results of their study indicated that researchers' showed a tendency to cite more national sources in their articles. Furthermore, the results of their study showed that research papers published in closed access journals were cited more than the open access ones. Similar to Pajić et al.'s (2019) study, the results of this study

helped us to have a better understanding about the factors which may lead to a specific citation practice among the researchers.

In addition, Datig (2016), conducted a citation analysis on the research conducted by graduate and undergraduate students. Overall, the results of the study indicated that students relied heavily on journal articles. Also, their citation practices were affected by their professors. Moreover, the citation practices of the graduate and undergraduate biology students were studied by Swales (2014). In this study, Swales investigated the biology students' citation practices from different perspectives such as, integral versus parenthetical citations, the choice of reporting verbs, etc. Although Swales found some differences in the use of citations between graduate and undergraduate students, the differences were not statistically significant. The results of the two studies, once again, informed us that citation practices might differ due to the researchers' background in doing research studies.

Citation Practices in Applied Linguistics

Citation practice was also the focus of different research investigations in applied linguistics.

Farnia et al. (2018) conducted a study to investigate the introduction sections of applied linguistics articles for their citation practices. Their corpus included 168 research papers from the national (Iranian English-medium journals) and international applied linguistics journals. They used Thompson and Tribble's (2001) taxonomy to examine the citation practices. The overall results of their study showed that local Iranian articles tended to use citations more frequently than their international counterparts. The conclusions of this study helped us with the thematic analysis and guided us to have a better picture of what the leading factors in regards to citation practices among applied linguists.

Similarly, Dobakhti and Zohrabi (2018) conducted a study using Swales' (1990) and Samraj's (2013) typologies to understand the citation practices of applied linguists in the discussion sections of the papers in five journals of applied linguistics. The results of their study showed applied linguists' greater tendency to use non-integral citations in the discussion sections. Moreover, the results indicated that citations served various rhetorical purposes, including evidence for the interpretation of findings.

Furthermore, Soler-Monreal and Gil-Salom (2011) examined the literature review sections of applied linguistics Ph.D. dissertations in English and Spanish. The results of their study showed that English writers tended to duplicate the authors' original expressions, and they tended to use integral active verb-controlling forms. However, their Spanish counterparts used their own words, relying on passive and impersonal constructions. Jalilifar and Dabbi (2012) analyzed the introduction sections of 65 Iranian master's theses in applied linguistics for their citation practices. The findings of their study showed that Iranian master's students used integral citations, related to the overt role of grammatical structures in the sentences, more frequently than non-integral citations, related to the covert role of grammatical structures in the text. The results of this study highlighted the relevance of not ignoring the important role of theses in citation practices of the applied linguists.

As evidenced by the studies reviewed in the foregoing paragraphs, researchers have analyzed the frequency and use of citations across student vs. expert writing, genres, disciplines, and contexts of publications. These studies are invaluable to inform us about the whole picture of citation practices in the field of applied linguistics. Moreover, these studies helped us to become informed about tentative factors which probably lead applied linguists to follow specific citation practices in their studies. However, these studies (e.g., Farnia et al., 2018; Jalilifar & Dabbi, 2012; Soler-Monreal & Gil-Salom, 2011) are inadequate descriptions of citations for a number of reasons. Almost all the previous studies relied heavily on the quantitative analyses of citation behavior and citation practices. Although citations lend themselves readily to frequency analysis and the quantification of such linguistic resources has yielded consistent results, mere description and analysis of citations does not help us understand the underlying reasons for frequent uses of citations in the writing of, for example, expert writers vs. student writers. Factors motivating researchers to use citations are as important as structural and functional analyses of citations. The researchers value such research methodology, but it might be limiting because it does not provide a complete picture of how writers use citations in their studies. Therefore, the need for a more robust research methodology and a rigorous research technique could help find the factors prompting writers to employ citations when carrying out research. The present study tries to fill this gap by using narrative inquiry as the qualitative research methodology and stories as research techniques. Therefore, the following research question is set to achieve the goal of the present study:

What are the factors affecting citation practices of Iranian applied linguists with different research abilities?

Methodology

Study design

This study investigated citation practices among applied linguists with different research abilities. To that end, the researchers adopted a narrative inquiry design. The reason behind selecting this design was that through narratives, the chronological changes in the practices of individuals can be tracked down (De Fina, 2015; De Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2015). Thus, the citation practices of the applied linguists, through collecting and analyzing narratives, could be identified. Moreover, as Harwood (2009) stated, it is necessary to address citation practices through the eyes of the informants to provide an insider account about methods and techniques of citation practices. This means that, addressing citation practices through narrative inquiry can give the researchers an emic account, insider perspective, of the applied linguists about the factors leading them in their citation practices.

Context and Participants

Applied linguistics has been practiced in Iranian universities under different labels such as English Language Teaching and Teaching English as a Foreign Language. The curriculum of applied linguistics covered by Iranian universities includes, instructional materials in teaching language skills, language assessment, psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, research methodology, etc. Students who are majoring in applied linguistics are expected to research topics related to the above themes in their future career. Consequently, during their M.A. and Ph.D., the students are involved in doing research on different topics of applied linguistics. Overall, these students may obtain research experience by conducting their term projects, joint research with their instructors, and their M.A. or Ph.D. dissertations.

This study used the following criteria to select participants: years of research experience, the number and quality of research publications, and research knowledge. These specific criteria were used to see if there was any difference in factors leading citation practices between the novice and experienced applied linguists. The research purposefully included applied linguists whose research experience ranged from a year to 18 years to obtain the differences in their citation practices, if any. In addition to research experience, the number and quality of their publications were also considered as it is believed that experts need to show a constantly high level of performance in the field. Likewise, the publication of applied linguists can represent their level of performance in applied linguistics research. Finally, following Wray and Wallace (2015), applied linguists' research knowledge was operationalized as the number of books, research articles, and other sources they had studied.

Using this information, the expertise of the applied linguists was divided into six levels in which level 1 had the least experience, and level 6 had the most experience in doing applied linguistics research. The descriptions of each level along with the participants are presented below.

Level 1: Applied linguists who were doing their first research project. They had no previous publications, although they had completed research methodology and research writing courses. In the current study, two of the participants, Ali and Ziba (pseudonyms), were at Level 1. They were M.A. students and had just started to conduct their research projects.

Level 2: Applied linguists who had already done their M.A. thesis and had at least two published papers in academic journals. They had had at least two years of experience in applied linguistics research. Hamed and Kamal (pseudonyms) were the two participants at this level. Similar to Level 1, these student researchers had completed the research methodology and research writing courses.

Level 3: Applied linguists who were Ph.D. students. They had completed their M.A. thesis, written papers from it, and published them. Moreover, they had published at least three papers during their M.A. and Ph.D. courses. They were involved in their Ph.D. courses at the time of doing this study. Consequently, their knowledge of applied linguistics research was more compared to the participants at Level 1 and 2. Mohammad and Zahra (pseudonyms) were the participants at this level.

Level 4: Naser (pseudonym) was the only participant at this level. He had all the characteristics that Level 3 participants had. The only difference was that Naser had passed the Comprehensive Exam Ph.D. students need to take in Iran after they have completed three terms of theoretical courses.

Level 5: Applied linguists who were assistant professors at the Iranian universities at the time that this study was carried out. They had published various papers with their colleagues and students. They had taught research

methodology and research writing to bachelor-of-arts (B.A.) students of language-related majors. Ahmad and Akbar (pseudonyms) were the participants of this level. Ahmad and Akbar had received tenure as assistant professors for four and six years, respectively.

Level 6: Applied linguists who were associate and full professors at Iranian universities. They had conducted not only numerous research studies in applied linguistics, but had also supervised many M.A. and Ph.D. theses. Moreover, they had taught advanced research methodology and research writing at M.A. and Ph.D. levels. Furthermore, they had authored many joint research papers with national and international applied linguistics researchers. Saeed and Mahnaz (pseudonyms) were the participants at this level.

Table 1 summarizes the information about the participants across different research ability levels.

Research Level	Pseudonyms	Gender	Research ability information
Level 1	Ali	Male	MA students who just started to conduct their first research projects
	Ziba	Female	
Level 2	Hamed	Male	Students who had already done their M.A. thesis, and at least two published papers
	Kamal	Male	
Level 3	Mohammad	Male	Ph.D. students who had finished their M.A. thesis, extracted papers and published them from it; moreover, they had published at least three papers during their M.A. and Ph.D. courses
	Zahra	Female	
Level 4	Naser	Male	Ph.D. holder who had the experience of directing M.A. and Ph.D. theses; research projects during M.A. and Ph.D., and published extracted papers from their M.A. and Ph.D. theses
Level 5	Ahmad	Male	Assistant professors at the universities in the time that this study was done
	Akbar	Male	
Level 6	Saeed	Male	Applied linguists who were associate and full professors at the universities
	Mahnaz	Male	

Table 1: Information about participants' research ability

Data Collection Procedures

Biographical narratives

One of the data sources used in this study to obtain the determining factors in Iranian applied linguists' citation practices were biographical narratives. According to De Fina (2015), the biographical narratives authored by different individuals can provide the images that the individuals have about themselves and the changes happening during different time intervals in those images. Through concentrating on cognitive and psychological processes as pointed out by Gregg (2011), the biographical narratives can show the researchers the trends of changes and the points of departure. They were asked to include all issues that they thought were influential in their citation practices. The applied linguists were free to select whether to produce their narratives in either written or oral forms.

Researchers' Publications

The second source of data collected were the participants' publications. The rationale for reviewing the papers was to gain a clearer understanding of the participants' citation practices. It can be stated that the researchers' publications were used to triangulate, thus confirm, the findings of the biographical narratives.

Data Analysis

The analysis of the narratives authored by the participants was performed through two stages of qualitative data analysis including familiarizing and organizing as well as coding (Ary et al., 2014). MAXQDA 20 was used to address data analysis. MAXQDA is software to analyze qualitative and mixed methods data. In the first stage dealing with familiarizing and organizing, the narratives were examined several times, then they were transcribed, and a log was prepared. This log included the participants' narratives and their published papers.

Coding and reducing data are central to qualitative data analysis. Strauss and Corbin's (1998) systematic approach was used to code the data. In open coding, the examination of the narratives was based on the words, phrases, and sentences labeled significant phenomena. Here, the phenomena were about different citation issues mentioned in the narratives. The second stage is axial coding in which the categories and codes are related together. In the axial coding, the main categories, along with their subcategories, were identified based on citation practices in participants' published papers and the narratives of the participants. Finally, selective coding was applied to the narratives. Through selective coding, the main themes of the narratives emerged.

Findings

In this section, the findings of narrative analyses will be indicated. First, code matrix browsers, which is a tool in MAXQDA 20 to show the codes, were used to determine which factors were used more across levels. Figure 1 indicates the results of code matrix browsers: interdisciplinary citations, sources of citations, quality of papers, journals, and authors were identified as the five main influential factors in terms of citation practices of the subjects of study in this research.

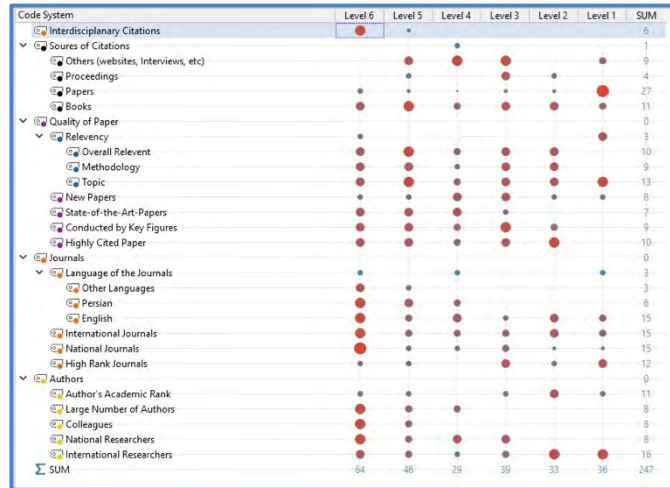


Figure 1: Code matrix browsers across research ability levels of applied linguists

Level 1

Figure 1 shows four main factors in citation practices of Level 1 participants, as outlined below. Sources of citations should be papers, the topic of the sources to be cited should be relevant to their research, citations should be from high-rank journals, and they should be done by international researchers. To establish the relationships between these four main factors, the Code Relations Browser, which shows the relations among the observed codes, was used. These relations were obtained based on the intersections existing among the concepts stated in the narratives authored by these participants. For instance, when there is a relationship between high-ranking journals and papers (Figure 2), it means that the two factors were detected in the participants' narratives. Moreover, the more frequently they used the factor, the bigger the circle and the stronger the relationships.

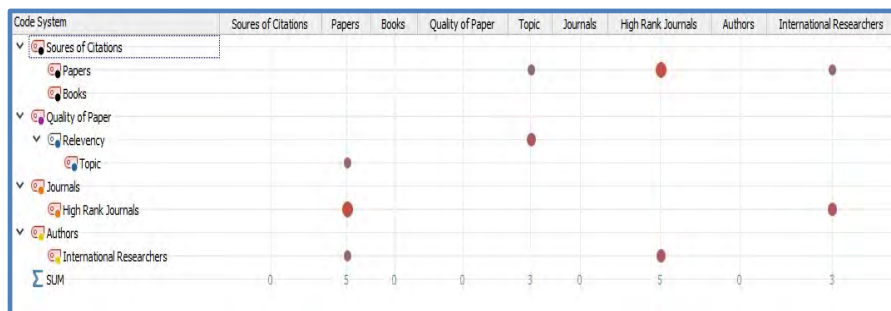


Figure 2: Code relations browser for applied linguists at Level 1

Figure 2 shows the results of the Code Relations Browser for the participants in Level 1, that is, the relationship between the factors in citation practices in Level 1 participants. First, a link between papers and high-rank journals was found. The data collected demonstrated that Level 1 participants tended to cite papers published in high-ranking journals, as expressed by Ali: .

Extract 1

... I try to review the papers which are published in the journals that are well-known in our field ... those which have significant indexes ...

Second, a relationship can be seen between high-rank journals and international researchers, showing that participants at Level 1 cite papers whose researchers were international and publishing in high-rank journals. Third, the relationship between topic relevancy and papers shows that they used papers whose topics were

similar to their own. Overall, it can be argued from the data collected that these participants tried to cite papers authored by international researchers and published in high-rank journals in the field.

Level 2

The analyses of narratives produced by Level 2 participants yielded nine important factors in their citation practices (Figure 1). The factors are as follows: using books as the sources of citation, evaluating the overall relevancy of the papers, addressing methodology relevancy, topic relevancy, using highly-cited papers, having English language as the language of the papers, being published in international journals, having authors with high academic rank, and having international researchers.

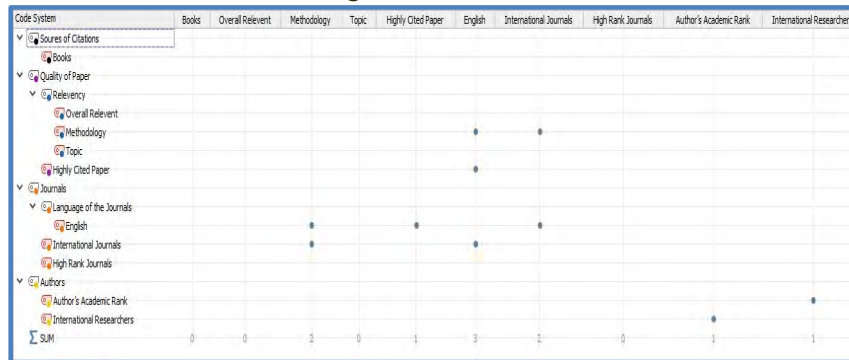


Figure 3: Relations among the influential factors in citation practices of applied linguists at Level 2

As aforementioned, a code relations browser was run to better understand the relations between factors. Figure 3 shows the relations between the influential factors in the citation practices of applied linguists at Level 2. Figure 3 reveals an important issue: Although nine factors were identified to be important, strong relations between factors are not maintained. This shows that these factors are within the same category, so they are practiced by the participants together, meaning that these factors are used together by the applied linguists at Level 2. There is a relation between methodology relevance, English language journals, and international journals. This relation shows that the applied linguists who were part of this study and who belonged to Level 2, preferred to use English sources in which their methodologies were relevant to the methodology of their study and were published in international journals. Furthermore, the highly cited papers were regarded important by these applied linguists at Level 2. Moreover, it was revealed that the academic rank of the authors (assistant professor, associate professor, etc.) was important for the participants of this level when selecting a citation to be incorporated in their paper. In summary, the participants had knowledge about highly cited papers, the academic rank of the authors, and books as reliable sources of citation. Extract 2, part of Hamed's narrative, shows these issues.

Extract 2

... we need to cite papers that have already been cited many times by other papers ... books published by top professors of the universities and published by international publishers ...

Level 3

The analysis of the narratives authored by applied linguists at Level 3 showed that 15 aspects were considered important factors in their citation practices. These factors include using other sources, utilizing books and conference proceedings, considering overall, methodological, and topic relevance, reading and citing newly published papers, using sources authored by key figures of the field, using highly cited English papers authored by international and national writers. To address the relations between the factors, as displayed in Figure 4, a code relations browser was performed. As can be seen from Figure 4, there is a strong relationship between the authors' academic rank and the citation of international research. Applied linguists at Level 3 preferred to cite international researchers with high academic ranks, as Extract 3 by Mohammad shows.

Extract 3

... when I searched in the international journals to see what international researchers had done related to my topic, I was keen on their affiliations [here he means their academic ranks]

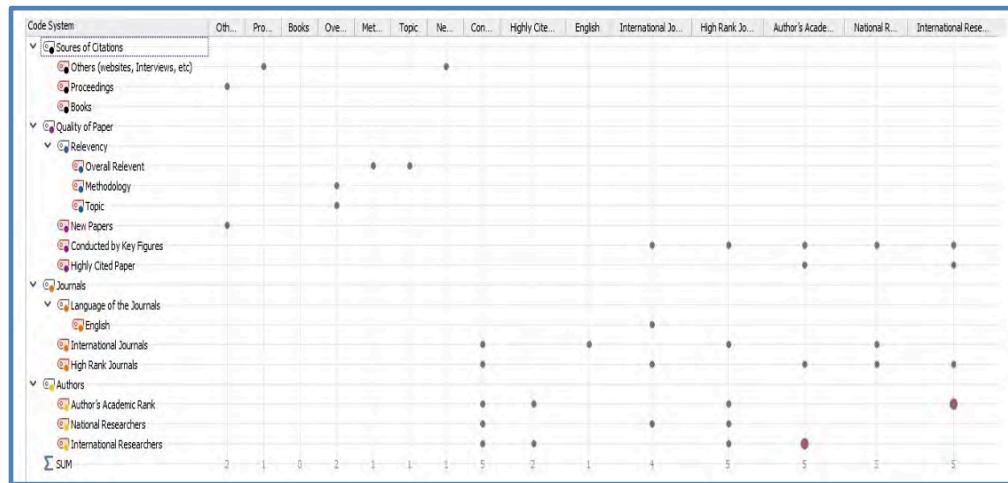


Figure 4: Relations among the influential factors in citation practices of applied linguists in Level 3

Many other relations can be perceived from Figure 4. For instance, sources obtained from the international key figures of the field published in international high-rank journals were preferable for the applied linguists at this level.

Level 4

As Figure 1 shows, 15 factors were important in helping Naser to use citations in his publications. These factors were using different sources of citation such as conference proceedings and books, overall importance methodological, and topic relevance, citing newly published sources and state-of-the-art sources conducted by key figures of the field, using highly cited papers, using both Persian and English sources published in international and national journals, utilizing papers with a large number of authors, and sources with international researchers. A code relations browser was run to find relations existing between these factors. Figure 5 illustrates the relations between factors in citation practices at level 4. The strongest relation amongst these factors shows that Naser tends to cite papers he finds on a websites and interviews published in a journal. However, Figure 5 shows that he needs reliable sources in order to cite these papers. Extract 4, authored by Naser, shows this issue.

Extract 4

...I think the numerous websites on research can provide us with resources if those resources have a relevant method, theoretical underpinnings, ideology, ...

Naser also liked to select sources that had a large number of national and international authors who reported their research studies in Persian or English. Other relations, such as using new state-of-the-art papers, and other paper formats, published in national journals with a large number of authors, were found to be used by this participant.

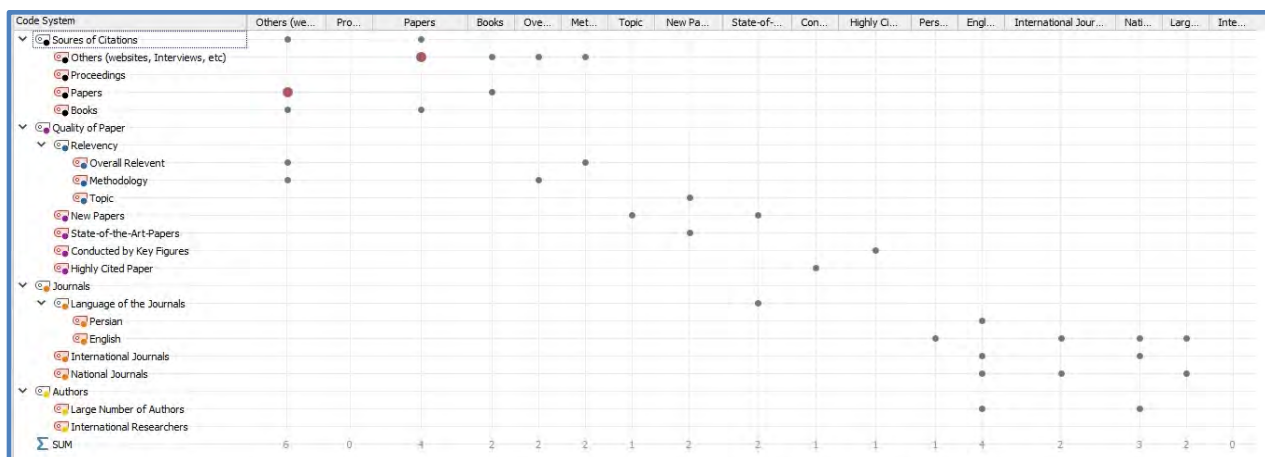


Figure 5: Relations among the influential factors in citation practices of applied linguists in Level 4

Level 5

Level 5 included applied linguists who were assistant professors at the university and who had supervised M.A. theses. Twenty-three factors such as using conference proceedings and books as sources for citation, overall importance, methodology and topic relevance, selecting newly published papers and state-of-the-art resources conducted by key figures for citations, utilizing highly cited papers, using sources published in English, Persian, and other languages in the national and international journals conducted by international and national researchers, and using research resources by their colleagues and resources with a large number of audiences. To examine the relations between these factors, another code relations browser was run (Figure 6).

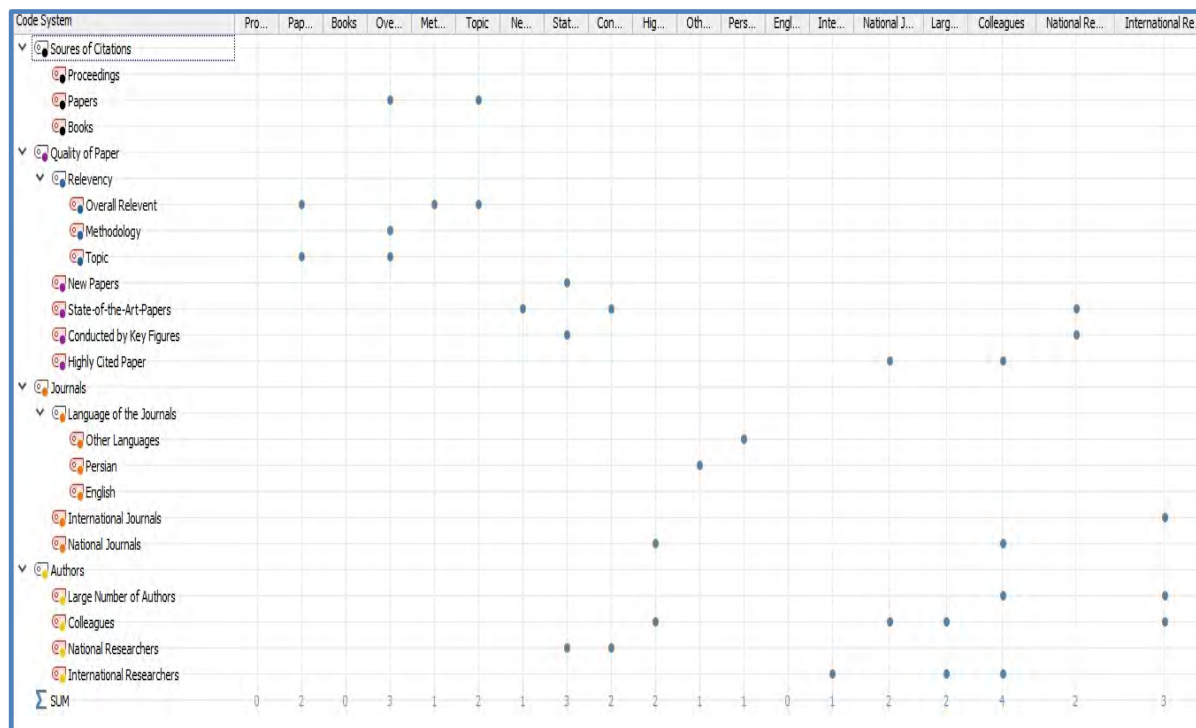


Figure 6: Relations among the influential factors in citation practices of applied linguists at Level 5

Different relations can be spotted in Figure 6. One issue which did not happen in the previous levels is that of research sources reported by colleagues. The applied linguists at Level 5 preferred to cite their colleagues' highly cited research, published in national journals, and research authored by multiple international researchers. Moreover, these applied linguists preferred to cite state-of-the-art papers by national researchers and research conducted by their colleagues rather than international researchers. Extract 5 is part of the narrative authored by Akbar in this regard.

Extract 5

... I have many experienced colleagues in different universities around the country who published excellent papers in national and international journals ... our colleagues will publish with international researchers can be good sources to be cited ...

Level 6

Like Level 5, twenty-three factors were also considered important in guiding applied linguists at Level 6 to use citations. These factors include using interdisciplinary citation, citing books and papers, overall importance, methodology, and topic relevance, utilizing highly cited papers, state-of-art-papers and research reports by key figures of the field as the source of citation, using research resources in English, Persian, and other languages in their citations, and resources published in high-rank national and international journals by national and international researchers and colleagues who had top academic rank. Moreover, research resources with a large number of authors were preferable for citation practices by the applied linguists at this level.

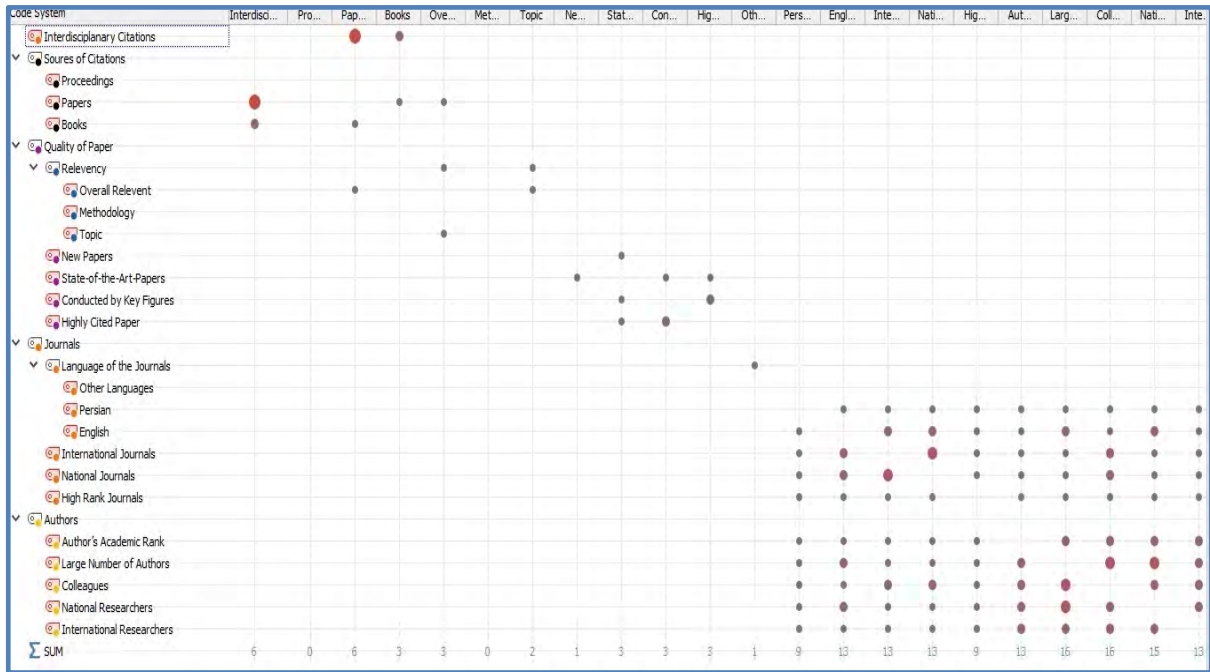


Figure 7: Relations among the influential factors in citation practices of applied linguists in Level 6

Figure 7 indicates that the applied linguists who participated in this research preferred to use interdisciplinary research recourses whose relevancy was guaranteed. Only applied linguists at this level referred to this factor, as can be confirmed in Extract 6 by Mahnaz.

Extract 6

...the field of applied linguistics is an interdisciplinary one asking us to use the related disciplines as our citations provide that those resources will be relevant ...

Moreover, they liked to use sources produced by national and international researchers and multiple-authored publications by their colleagues in their colleagues published in high-rank national and international journals.

Discussion

This study described the citation practices of Iranian applied linguists with different research abilities. The findings indicated some differences and similarities in citation practices among the applied linguists with different research abilities (see Figure 1 above and Table 2 in Appendix). While, for instance, using interdisciplinary research sources for citation was very important for the applied linguists with high research ability, it was not considered important by the applied linguists with lower research ability. However, using research from English journals was considered important for both applied linguists with low and high research abilities.

The findings of the current study also showed that applied linguists with high levels of research ability referred to more factors, such as the preferences of their citation practices, compared to the applied linguists with low research abilities. Citation practices are rhetorical practices (Hyland & Jiang, 2019) which are achieved through experience. This means that the more experienced researchers are, the more competent they are to use different sources.

In terms of similarities spotted in the citation practices of applied linguists with different research abilities, the data collected in this study demonstrate that factors such as using academic papers as the sources of citation are the primary research practices learned during the research methodology and research writing courses, and participants continued to use them in their own research publications. To learn some of the factors, however, applied linguists needed to get involved in actual research. For instance, higher-level academic reading is necessary for higher-level academic writing (Shaw & Pecorari, 2012), which makes it possible for applied linguists with a high level of research ability to use interdisciplinary sources as citations in their studies.

This research also concludes that applied linguists may not have a clear picture of the factors affecting the use of citations. For instance, it was revealed through the findings that using state-of-the-art-research and highly cited papers as the sources of citation were the least important factors for the applied linguists at Level 1, partly because applied linguists at this level may not have much experience with them or they may not be aware of them (Jalilifar & Dabbi, 2012) so, they do not regard these factors as important as other factors such as using sources from international researchers. From a dialogic perspective (Bakhtin, 1982), the decision of which factors to be used in citation practices is formed through the interactions of researchers in different social matrixes. The applied linguists who do not tend to interact with other researchers and limit themselves to particular sources for citations, may not find some of the factors important in their citation practices.

The differences detected in practicing some of the factors, such as using interdisciplinary citations which need higher-order skills like critical thinking skills, help conclude that the low-ability researchers use options in their citation practices that do not require the use of critical thinking skills such as using topic-related papers in their research. However, using interdisciplinary citations which need critical thinking of the researchers, helps high-ability researchers not only to concentrate on given information (Thompson & Yiyun, 1991), but also to be able to widen the scope of their studies.

Conclusion and Implications

This study identified the factors that influence the citation practices of Iranian applied linguists with different research abilities. The findings of this study, and the discussion following the findings conclude that citation practices can be related to the experience of applied linguists. This suggests that high-ability applied linguistics researchers may have more options in citing relevant research. Consequently, applied linguists who have high research abilities have more opportunities to actively engage in the construction and reconstruction of their disciplinary knowledge through interaction (Hyland, 1999). This allows them to be familiarized with more varied types of gatekeepers of the field, prompting them to use more options for their citation practices.

The findings of the study may carry implications for curriculum development. The factors examined in this research can be addressed in research methodology and research writing courses of M.A. and Ph.D. students of applied linguistics to make them aware of them. The important point to be considered is that these factors should be instructed through practice-based techniques in order to be internalized by the applied linguists with low research abilities. Moreover, university instructors can use the findings of this study to reflect and analyze on the most leading factors affecting the citation practices of applied linguists, hence use them as the materials for their courses. Second, these leading factors themselves can be the subjects of teaching, meaning that university instructors can include these issues in their programs.

Limitations of this study can be addressed by future researchers. The current study was conducted in an Iranian context. Whether citation practice is a cultural, cognitive, and psychological concept is yet to be examined. Researchers in the future may consider examining citation practices using cross-cultural, psychological, and cognitive theories to understand how they function across genres, disciplines, and contexts of publications. Moreover, the findings of this qualitative study can be addressed in other quantitative studies so that a clearer picture of the citation practices of the field can be depicted. On top of these, further research can be done to clarify how decision-makers can address the factors affecting the citation practices of the applied linguists to maximize their research productivity.

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Appendix

Table 2: *The Distributions of Important Factors in Citation Practices of Applied Linguists*

Factors	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6
Interdisciplinary citation	Least important	Least important	Least important	Least important	Important	Very important
Proceedings as the source of citation	Least important	Important	Very important	Least important	Important	Least important
Papers as the source of citation	Very important	Important	Important	Important	Important	Important
Books as a source of citation	Important	Very important	Very important	Very important	Very important	Very important
Using other sources: websites, interviews, etc.	Very important	Least important	Very important	Very important	Very important	Least important
Overall relevancy	Least important	Very important	Very important	Very important	Very important	Very important
Methodology relevancy	Least important	Very important	Very important	Very important	Very important	Very important
Topic relevancy	Very important	Very important	Very important	Very important	Very important	Very important
Using newly published papers, etc.	Important	Important	Very important	Very important	Important	Important
Using state-of-the-art papers, etc.	Least important	Least important	Important	Very important	Very important	Very important
Using highly cited papers	Least important	Very important	Very important	Very important	Very important	Very important
Using resources conducted by key figures	Least important	Very important	Very important	Very important	Very important	Very important
Using Persian journals	Least important	Least important	Least important	Very important	Very important	Very important
Using English journals	Important	Very important	Important	Very important	Important	Very important
Using other languages journals	Least important	Least important	Least important	Very important	Important	Very important
International journals	Important	Very important	Important	Important	Important	Very important
National journals	Important	Important	Important	Important	Important	Very important
High-rank journals	Very important	Important	Very important	Least important	Important	Important
Authors' academic ranks	Important	Very important	Important	Least important	Important	Important
A large number of authors	Least important	Least important	Least important	Important	Important	Very important
Colleague researchers	Least important	Least important	Least important	Least important	Important	Very important
National researchers	Least important	Least important	Important	Important	Important	Very important