

Source Text Borrowing in Summary of Integrated Writing

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Integrated writing tasks, requiring writers to summarize source content and integrate their ideas or experience with those in the source text, are widely used in standardized tests of English proficiency. Integrated writing adds an element not found in traditional independent writing: the use of source text material. Recently, concern has been raised that over-reliance on source texts in integrated writing may lead to plagiarism as well as inaccurate assessment which calls for further investigation. Research on L2 students' writing using sources has broadened its focus from transgressive citing practices to stages of skill development in this complicated literacy, the successive challenges students face, and how instruction might be of benefit. Previous literature mainly focused on source use in academic writing and seldom considered summary writing in standardized tests, while summary strategy is particularly important in standardized tests, in which summary accounts for a significant part of the assessment criteria. Given that a series of previous literature have indicated that source text use, source texts, and prompts are associated with the quality of summary writing, this article reviews the source text borrowing in the summary of integrated writing to further explore the relationship between some variables and the quality of summary writing and therefore finds some research gaps in this field.

Keywords: summary writing, source text borrowing, integrated writing, paraphrasing

Integrated Writing and Summary Writing

Integrated writing, which involves combining information from two or more sources into a single essay, is a common writing task. As the field of second language writing embraces the authenticity and meaningfulness of connecting writing with other skills (Hinkel, 2006; Hirvela, 2004), language teachers and testers require a greater understanding of how writers respond to as well as compose for integrated tasks.

Summary writing is an important part of integrated writing. In the past, the literature review on summary writing mainly focused on its teaching methods and teaching effects. Publications explore the effectiveness of different teaching methods, including teaching based on metacognitive strategies, teaching based on standardized templates, and interdisciplinary teaching. Research has found that metacognitive strategies are one of the most effective ways to improve summary writing skills because they are applicable to different types of text. Standard template teaching is also a teaching method that is often adopted because it helps to develop student's awareness of the structure of writing and improve their writing skills.

Existing Problems in Summary Writing and Source Text Borrowing

A review of the ongoing difficulties that undergraduate writers face on the way to achieving proficiency helps to remind us of the range and extent of some challenges and may guide us in setting priorities in L2 writing courses. Researchers have found that English learners are often not good at integrating original text information properly into their writing, probably because of their poor reading comprehension (Esmaeili, 2002; Plakans, 2009) and limited vocabulary (Baba, 2009).

A further challenge in scoring integrated writing tasks concerns textual borrowing (Shi, 2004). For human raters of compositions, this problem involves first distinguishing, in the written texts produced for such tasks, phrases that derive verbatim from source texts (which may or may not be cited appropriately) from phrases that are the original language of test takers and then, second, judging their appropriateness.

Relationship between Some Factors and Summary Writing Quality

A series of studies have indicated that source text use, source texts, prompts, and integrated task response features are associated with the quality of summary writing (Storch, 2012; Thompson, 2013; Wette, 2010; Zhang, 2013).

Source Texts

Several studies have looked at how specific aspects of the source text affect student writing. For example, Keck (2014) showed that expository texts, more than narrative texts, tend to generate greater textual borrowing among both L1 and L2 students, resulting in more texts that mirror the sequence of ideas in the source text. Yu (2009) found that several aspects of source texts—including macro-organization, frequency of unfamiliar words, topic familiarity, and length of source texts—affected students' ability to summarize the source text. Another form of intertextuality common in higher education is writing in response to prompts. Much of the research on prompts has considered their role in language tests (e.g., Hamp-Lyons & Mathias, 1994; Hinkel, 2002) with less attention to the use of prompts in classroom writing assignments or how they affect student writing (Oliver, 1995; Reid & Kroll, 1995).

Prompts

The concept of uptake has also been applied to the relationship between prompts and student writing. Building on Freadman (2002), Bawarshi and Reiff (2010) argue that “the assignment prompt creates the conditions for the student essay”, inviting students to take up specific positions in their writing. Although prompts may provide room for alternative positions, student uptakes of prompts that differ from the desired uptake are often seen as failures (Bawarshi, 2003).

Source Text Use

Essential elements of source-based writing are an understanding of scholarly theory, research, and/or primary sources (e.g. literature, film and television, historical documents), and an ability to integrate this understanding with the writer's ideas and propositions. The relationship between automated indices of source text use and holistic quality scores has been investigated by Kyle (2020). The results indicate that several indices related to content word overlap and n-gram overlap explained a substantial portion of the variance in holistic

scores. The researchers hypothesized that low-proficiency writers were not able to understand the source text well enough to use it even for direct copying.

Summary Writing in Domestic Language Standard Tests

In China, junior English majors are a large group of English learners, and they often have to face the integrated writing task in the language standard test, both in the classroom and in the exam environment, because they will face two important language level tests in the college stage, TEM-4, and TEM-8, which respectively contain an integrated reading to the writing task.

The basic requirements of TEM-4 summary writing are to be able to write an English article of about 200 words with full content, smooth language, appropriate words, and proper expression according to the given composition title, outline, charts, and data materials. Since the 2016 Test for English Majors-Band 8 (TEM8) question type reform, the composition part has changed from the original topic composition to the material composition, requiring candidates to first give a summary of the content of the material, and then express their views on the topic. To complete the rewriting, conversion, and reorganization of the key information in the source materials has become the key and difficult point in the study and teaching of summary writing. However, from the perspective of students' composition completion, there are still many problems in summary writing, such as an incomplete summary of the key information of the materials, unfaithful to the original text, redundant language, copying of the language of the raw materials, and unable to clearly express the views of the original text. If students can discover and master the internal conversion rules of the English language, it will have an important guiding role for students' summary writing.

Coding Scheme

Coding is a necessary process to analyze text features in most research on second-language writing. Methodologically, there are two broad approaches when studying surface features of texts that contain source text ideas and/or language. Some researchers (Cumming, 2005; Hyland, 2009) use a computer program to identify phrases verbatim from the source text that appears in student writing. The advantage of this approach is that a larger sample of student writing can be analyzed quickly, and borrowed strings can be automatically and objectively identified. One limitation of this approach, however, is that most of the use of source text material is not word-for-word reproduction of continuous text, but rather the use of more or less modified source text. For this reason, some researchers (Campbell, 1990; Keck, 2006; Shi, 2004) Choose hand-coded text. The advantage of manual coding is that different degrees of text modification can be analyzed, from word-for-word copying to modifying words or sentence structures in student text. Specifically, the usual coding mode is that parts of the text that can reflect different features of the source text will be underlined or highlighted differently. Turnitin Original report and Google search engine can be used to find text matches between student writing and the original material to check paraphrasing and attribution and to determine which original texts the writer used.

The prominence of a systematic and scientific coding scheme as base for coding process has significance for coding the features of text or certain variables involved in the research. Three-point coding system (i.e., 2 = accurate reflection of the source text, 1 = somewhat accurate reflection of the source text, 0 = misrepresents the text). A binary coding scheme can be used to allow for the inclusion of a categorical variable into a linear

regression model to conduct quantitative analysis. Besides, to measure the quality and result of language tests scientifically, there are certain standards created by those experts and scholars. For example, CAEL Writing Performance Scales consider three predictor variables: the number of source ideas used, the degree of linguistic modification to source information, and the content accuracy of source information so that it can provide a detailed description for each degree of band score to guarantee the authenticity of the measurement.

Research Gap

Firstly, in the literature review on summary writing in integrated writing tasks, especially in reading for writing tasks, there are some research gaps. Although many studies have explored the importance and application of summary writing in academic writing, no consensus has been reached on the specific skills and strategies of summary writing. Summary writing is regarded as one of the necessary skills for students in academic writing, there are still some problems in the teaching of summary writing in educational practice.

Secondly, research on integrated writing in a second language context is relatively scarce. While there is some research on integrated writing assessment, particularly about standardized language tests, there is limited investigation into the implementation of integrated writing instruction in language classrooms. Further, most research in this area has been conducted in English language teaching contexts. Thus, there is a need for more studies that explore the effectiveness of integrated writing instruction in other second-language contexts.

Thirdly, regarding source text borrowing, there are several research gaps: Firstly, there are still some gray areas when information can be borrowed or plagiarized. Therefore, in the study of source text borrowing, it is still necessary to discuss the critical point of source text borrowing. The second one is the education issue. Academic integrity has become a growing concern for governments and educational institutions around the world, however, there is still much work to be done in the field of education research. Especially in higher education, how to raise students' awareness of source text borrowing and avoid plagiarism still needs to be discussed. Thirdly, challenges brought by technology: With the development of the Internet, information acquisition becomes easier, which also brings greater challenges to source text borrowing.

Conclusion

In conclusion, summary writing accounts for a significant part in the assessment criteria of integrated writing, while previous studies mainly focused on source use in academic writing and seldom considered the summary writing in standardized tests. The chief problems in summary writing and source text borrowing is that English learners are often not good at integrating original text information properly into their writing. There exists close relationship between some factors and summary writing quality. Future studies are expected to focus on summary writing in domestic language standard tests from the perspective of these factors including source text, prompt and source text use.

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