

Citation Project Research Studies:

Writing from Sentences

I. Description of the Research

Data Set

Papers and cited sources collected from first-year students at one university in the United States. Collected, 2008.

Date of Study

2008

Principal Investigators

Rebecca Moore Howard, Tanya K. Rodrigue, and Tricia C. Serviss.

Description

This single-site, naturalistic study conducted intertextual analysis of the ways in which 18 students incorporated sources into their research projects.

II. Findings

None of the eighteen student research texts studied included summary of a source, raising questions about the students' critical reading practices. Instead of summary, which is highly valued in academic writing and is promoted in composition textbooks, the students paraphrased, copied from, or patchwrote from individual sentences in their sources. Writing from individual sentences places writers in constant jeopardy of working too closely with the language of the source and thus inadvertently plagiarizing; and it also does not compel the writer to understand the source.

III. Conclusions

Instead of focusing on students' citation of sources, educators should attend to the more fundamental question of how well students understand their sources and whether they are able to write about them without appropriating language from the source.

IV. Related Publications:

Report and Analysis of Findings

Howard, Rebecca Moore, Tanya K. Rodrigue, and Tricia C. Serviss. **“Writing from Sources, Writing from Sentences.”** *Writing and Pedagogy* 2.2 (Fall 2010): 177-192.

Abstract: This study of the researched papers produced by eighteen students at a US university found instances of patchwriting in all of the papers, but no instances of summary. Although the ability to summarize extended passages of text is expected of academic writers and is promoted in composition textbooks, the students in the study paraphrased, copied from, or patchwrote from individual sentences in their sources. Writing from individual sentences places writers in constant jeopardy of working too closely with the language of the source and thus inadvertently plagiarizing; and it also does not compel the writer to understand the source.

Application and Relevance of Findings

Jamieson, Sandra. **“The Evolution of the Citation Project: Lessons learned from a multi-year, multi-site study.”** In *Points of Departure: Rethinking Student Source Use and Writing Studies Research Methods*. Ed. Tricia Serviss & Sandra Jamieson. Utah State University Press, 2018. 33-61. DOI: 10.7330/9781607326250.c001

Abstract: This chapter traces the evolution of the Citation Project from its origins in a graduate seminar to the publication of pilot data and the development of a transcontextual, multisite research project with internationally reported and replicated data. Based on interviews with principal and participating researchers and coders, analysis of research and coding notebooks, two blogs and various shared Google Docs, and emails as well as shared personal experiences, this chapter offers a historical account of methodological development that reveals the complexity and messiness of multisite research as well as the necessary adjustments that allow pilot research to be scaled to multisite projects. By being willing to expose not only their methods but also the false starts, challenges, and lessons they learned, Citation Project researchers hope to ease the transition to data-driven research and thereby increase the frequency of information-based policies and pedagogies.