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International students' engagement with support in developing source use abilities: A longitudinal case study

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ABSTRACT

<p class = "Abstract" style = "margin: 18 pt 1 cm 15 pt 0 cm; line-height: 22px; font-size: 11 pt; font-family: "Times New Roman", serif; color: rgb (0, 0, 0); ">Source use is an important yet challenging feature of academic writing. Students may receive academic literacy support in their universities, but little research has focused on the support available on source use. This study addressed this gap by investigating two Chinese students' engagement with a range of support on source use in one UK university over one-year taught Master's programmes, namely, the link between input, student perception and their source use performance in writing. Text analysis, discourse-based interviews and semi-structured interviews were conducted with each participant at four stages over the year. It was found that different focuses of source use were addressed in different ways through add-on support courses, yearlong in-sessional EAP courses, subject lecturer's guidance and feedback. The two students varied in their ability to recall the input and the actions they took, resulting in differences in their source use practices in writing. Implications on providing international students with support on source use will be discussed.<o:p></o:p></p>

1. Introduction

Academic writing is a main means of assessment in many social science subjects in English-medium universities. Source use is a distinctive and fundamental feature of academic writing; with it, writers engage with subject content knowledge, achieve the requirement of criticality in academic writing, and construct an authorial voice. In particular, the voice and stance aspect of source use, i.e. how writers position themselves among the other voices by cited authors, strongly impacts the quality of writing (Wingate, 2012). Voice and stance in source use, together with the challenges of avoiding plagiarism, paraphrasing and managing mechanical conventions of referencing, can be difficult for new university students in general and L2 international students in particular (Davis, 2013). International students, even if experienced in general writing in English, may have had little experience of source-based writing before enrolling onto subject programmes in English-medium universities, thus facing disadvantages in this regard. This may particularly be the case for mainland Chinese students pursuing Master's programmes overseas. The type of English language education in mainland China at undergraduate level is often described as English for General Purposes (EGP) rather than for specific or academic ones, although there are

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recent calls for the latter (e.g. Cheng, 2016). Moreover, for full mastery of source use skills, a prolonged period of time and continual engagement with the academic discourse are required (Davis, 2013; Hirvela & Du, 2013). It is thus important to investigate how Chinese international students, as novice academic writers in English, acquire source use skills in the UK over a short period of a taught Master's programme (mostly one year). Further, the literacy support students receive from their university has an impact on their learning, which deserves more attention. Investigation of the role of institutional support in students' learning of source use skills can further provide important implications for improving support systems.

1.1. Dimensions of source use

This paper investigates students' source use abilities in response to pedagogical input in several aspects: Attribution, mechanical referencing conventions, and rhetorical source use for constructing authorial voice and stance. While there are additional issues to address regarding source use, including paraphrasing and quoting, we focus on the above because they are an essential part of core competencies in academic writing (e.g. Bailey, 2011). They are also features directly observable from the written texts, which would directly impact on the audience's perception of the quality of student writing.

Perhaps the most basic aspect of source use is its concept dimension, which entails understanding what are regarded as acceptable or unacceptable source use practices (Mott-Smith, Tomaš, & Kostka, 2017). One key concept in this dimension is *attribution:* The basic act of giving reference to a source in one's writing, which is an overt demonstration of the relationship between the writer and the ideas employed. Not acknowledging a source from which ideas have been retrieved can result in students appearing to claim ownership of others' ideas and can leave them open to accusations of plagiarism (Howard, 1995). Such acts have also been termed *unattributed voice* by Groom (2000), indicating unacceptable practices in many English academic contexts. A related problem is students failing to signpost ideas from sources clearly to the reader. Studies have reported the challenges experienced by many L2 writers in establishing clear boundaries between their own ideas and other sources' ideas, which makes it difficult for instructors to judge the quality of students' contributions (McCulloch, 2012; Thompson, Morton, & Storch, 2013; Wette, 2017). Part of the difficulty stems from the occluded nature of citations. Attribution to sources encodes several layers of information about the relationship between the source text and the writer's text, and then the reader needs to decode the attributions to tell exactly which part of the content comes from the cited source (Pecorari, 2013). Not having sufficient knowledge of the reader, students might assume that, for example, reader-markers can interpret such relationships unproblematically (McCulloch, 2012). Another difficulty is students' unfamiliarity with the syntactic management of attributions within sentences; they might not know about the range of ways to merge citations with their own texts, for example, the choice between integral and non-integral citation, or the range of reporting verbs available to them.

When attributing ideas to sources, students need to use the referencing styles required in their subject disciplines, such as using APA style in the social sciences and IEEE in engineering (e.g. Bailey, 2011). Careful alignment with the formatting rules as required is fundamental to good scholarship, as it embodies the Western academic culture of providing due acknowledgement to the authorship of ideas (Mott-Smith et al., 2017). As such, applying referencing conventions also belongs to the concept dimension, and there are clear criteria for judging what correct and incorrect use is. For learners new to such conventions, mechanical referencing formatting could be difficult to understand and it takes time to adhere to completely. For example, in Thompson, Morton and Storch's (2013) year-long study, many students at the beginning of the semester articulated difficulties and a lack of confidence in understanding and using referencing styles correctly even when provided with examples from learning guides. However, some of them became more confident in referencing as the year moved on. In many EAP or study skills textbooks, learning referencing styles appears to be a major focus for beginner academic writers (in e.g. Bailey, 2011; Creme & Lea, 2008).

A further, and more challenging aspect in an effective use of sources is its discourse dimension, i.e. interweaving different sources' ideas with the writer's own ideas, and in doing so constructing the writer's authorial stance and voice (Mott-Smith et al., 2017). The writer needs to skilfully integrate citations into their own writing in order to persuade the audience that the writer's own ideas are indeed convincing; hence, citations are in essence *rhetorical*, used for particular purposes in an interaction with the audience (Petrić, 2007). Construction of authorial stance and voice through citations can be achieved through several steps. Firstly, and most basically, the description of each piece of evidence from sources needs to be clear and accurate. The writer then needs to analyse the relationship between sources, i.e. how different sources build on or disqualify each other in relation to the writer's stance. Finally, the linguistic devices the writer employs need to demonstrate their analysis, synthesis and evaluation of different authors' ideas to the audience clearly. For novice student writers, even if they succeed in the first step, they often show weaknesses in the latter steps. The result is that the writing could appear descriptive or overly reliant on other voices, without adequate critical analysis by the writer (e.g. McCulloch, 2012). In sum, developing skills in both the basic concept dimension and the discourse dimension is a high-stakes undertaking for new students entering a Western academic discourse context.

1.2. Learner engagement with support

To understand how students acquire source use skills, we take a holistic approach. For the support on source use to take effect, students would need to recognize what is taught or addressed, and then attempt to apply it in their own writing. We hereby adopt the term 'learner engagement' (Kahu, 2013) to characterise the link between input (courses and other mediums

of learning), students' perception of the input, and their source use performance in written work. During this second phase, learners' internalisation of input, three interrelated aspects are involved: Those of behaviour, cognition and affect (Kahu, 2013). In this study, behaviour can be understood as the students' actions taken in learning source use inside and outside classrooms; cognition can be defined as the knowledge students gained from the support, and that can be articulated by the students; affect can include students' attitudes towards the usefulness of each area of support and towards their own abilities. Moreover, we are aware of the complex nature of learner engagement, and thus seek to analyse the three core elements of learner engagement in a context of other social-cultural, institutional and individual influences, such as the overall culture of learning, the position of international students in this university, and students' motivation to learn (Zepke, Leach, & Butler, 2010).

1.3. Impacts of pedagogical input on academic writing

A range of input support on academic writing has been found to be beneficial to learners across various university contexts. One established type of literacy support for international students is pre-sessional or in-sessional EAP (English for Academic Purposes) courses. Considering the rather wide availability of such courses across universities, a relatively small number of studies have investigated their instructional impacts. James' (2014) review of 41 such studies concluded that teaching EAP could lead to students gaining general and specific literacy knowledge as well as improvement in the quality of writing, which could occur in completing writing tasks similar or different to those used in the EAP classes. The extent and content of such learning transfer, however, varied greatly in different studies, depending on many factors including the nature, location and time of instruction.

Besides auxiliary literacy support, academic literacy development also takes place in subject content learning. Subject lecturers may attempt to explain coursework expectations explicitly, assign formative tasks or provide exemplars of previous students' texts (Gopee & Deane, 2013; Li & Hu, 2018). Students' literacy acquisition is further facilitated through formative and summative feedback (Poverjuc, 2011; Wingate, 2010), and individual supervisors' guidance (Dong, 1996; Harwood & Petrić, 2018). On the other hand, it is sometimes suggested that subject lecturers generally see their role as content teachers, and may expect that support staff work on teaching academic literacy skills (Hyland, 2013; Zhu, 2004). Indeed, as found in a few studies, feedback comments in disciplines mainly evaluate the content, and very rarely comment on writing (Gopee & Deane, 2013; Knoch, Rouhshad, & Storch, 2014). Thus, disciplinary support by subject experts, however desirable, is often lacking (Knoch et al., 2014; Wingate, 2015). That said, studies such as Hallett's (2013) found that academic staff may be facilitating students' acquisition of disciplinary academic literacy skills through feedback, tutorials and debates without a conscious awareness of such.

More specifically, support on source use, and the effects of that support, have been under-examined in the EAP literature. As reviewed by Cumming, Lai, and Cho (2016), 16 studies have reported the positive effects of literacy instruction on students' process of writing from sources and/or the quality of source use in writing. However, most of this instruction was designed for research purposes, and it is often unknown how source use is taught or addressed in naturalistic higher education settings, and particularly how learners perceive such support and the nature of their uptake from it. Limited evidence suggests that support on source use is lacking in subject programmes (Davis, 2013; McGowan, 2005), although individual subject lecturers may advise on the sources to be used, the formats of citations, and the need to use citations to support every claim (Harwood & Petrić, 2012; Wette, 2018). In contrast, a longitudinal study in the context of a US doctoral programme found that supervisors facilitated students' citation use for the purpose of building novel disciplinary claims over four to six years (Dong, 1996). Clearly, evidence of students' learning of source use from input support throughout a complete degree programme is necessary to truly understand the nature of such acquisition.

In sum, it is clear that a range of support, including EAP courses and subject learning, can assist students to improve their source-based writing. However, there is insufficient understanding of the effects of teaching particular aspects of source use in naturalistic settings. Further, little is known about how students, and Chinese international students in particular, perceive and use the support available, and how exactly it could impact their own source use in writing over an entire Master's programme. In light of the above, this study aims to explore how two students engaged with the source use support available in their institution.

2. Methodology

2.1. Site and participants

This paper reports data chosen from a larger dataset of 10 students' source use practices in a department of education at a research-intensive UK university. Only Chinese students were targeted because they represented the largest national group in the MA programmes in the department; TESOL was the largest subject group (113 out of a cohort of 166 students in 2016/17). They were overall advanced English language users (IELTS score 7 to 7.5), but they reported few experiences of writing from sources before enrolling on the Master's programmes. As per degree requirements, the participants wrote two source-based argumentative essays (around 4500 words) in Term 1 modules and one in Term 2 modules, and at the end of the year of study a dissertation reporting an empirical study that they had conducted; therefore, each student wrote four pieces of written coursework throughout the year, while other modules were assessed by exams.

For this paper, we purposefully selected two participants (from the MA TESOL programme) whose engagement styles represented contrasting cases. Naomi actively sought cues on effective source use from the support system available, while Isabel tended to superficially engage with knowledge input and made few attempts at checking her understanding. They also represented two different score groups. Naomi was an overall high-scorer with an average mark of 70.5 (distinction) for all written assessments, and she was one of the strongest students among the ten in the whole dataset; Isabel, in contrast, was a low-scorer with an average of 48.3 (marginal fail), being one of the weakest students in the group.

2.2. Research methods and data analysis

In line with a case study methodology (Yin, 2014), multiple methods were used at multiple data collection points to co-construct the phenomenon of learner engagement with support on source use. Semi-structured interviews (SSIs - each around 40 min) and discourse-based interviews (DBIs – each around 40 min) were conducted at four stages over the one-year programme, in Term 1, 2, 3 (hereafter T1, T2 and T3) and the dissertation stage (DS). In the SSIs, participants were asked to describe the input they received from any resources on source use, and their attitudes and perceptions about the support (see interview protocols in Appendix A). Prior to the interviews, students' written coursework texts were collected and analysed qualitatively for their source use, in terms of attribution, following referencing formats, and attempts at synthesising or evaluating sources. For the dissertation, we selected the Literature Review (LR) chapter as the main focus of analysis as it involves the most instances of source use. Further, the DBI, a technique originated by Odell, Goswami, and Herrington (1983), was used to elicit participants' rationale for making the specific discursive choices regarding citations in their writing, thereby contributing to an understanding of their tacit knowledge of source use. Participants answered questions (e.g. "Why did you use this citation in this way?") when presented with representative examples of their citation use in coursework texts (see Appendix A). As these were open-ended questions, participants could freely articulate any rationale that they had in mind. These answers could also provide evidence of students applying knowledge from input to their coursework performance. The interviews were audio-recorded and fully transcribed.

To triangulate with participants' self-reports, artefact data related to source use input were collected and analysed. These included materials used in an in-sessional EAP programme (provided by its coordinator); summative feedback reports on participants' written coursework by their subject lecturers at each stage; marginal feedback on dissertation drafts from their academic supervisors; materials used in other support courses; and the departmental student handbook and university referencing style guides from the university website. In each DBI, the students were also asked to comment on the feedback report they received. In relation to the EAP course provision, an additional SSI was conducted with an EAP programme leader in order to understand the nature of EAP courses that the participants took. We believe that these artefacts, together with the main data collected (i.e. SSIs, DBIs and coursework texts), can maintain a strong *chain of evidence* (Yin, 2014) on which the claims about the two participants' engagement styles are based.

Data were analysed inductively as in qualitative case analysis; this was also an on-going process, with analysis taking place throughout the year of data collection. During each stage of data collection in each term, we read through the interview transcripts, students' coursework writing and supplementary documents to identify what the students perceived to be prominent areas of source use, namely, the mechanics of citations, attribution and rhetorical source use. We then looked for evidence for the support received, students' perceptions, and their uptake from learning in these areas of source use at each stage across various data sources. The interview transcripts and artefact data were coded in NVivo (a qualitative data analysis software) using such terms in a chronological order, e.g. support on mechanical referencing in Term 1; evidence of Naomi's use of mechanical referencing in Term 1. This coding system facilitated the construction of a narrative sequence for writing up the case study report later. Where we felt more evidence was desirable, we asked the participants and the instructors on their programmes to provide further artefact data or commentary. Finally, we constructed the whole case of each student drawing on various pieces of evidence, which is then presented chronologically.

2.3. The source use support system in the research site

To help contextualise the participants' learning experiences in the MA TESOL programme, we provide a summarised description of the support resources available, with further details in Appendix B. This description of the particularities of the research site, a feature of case studies, aims to provide readers with background knowledge to interpret the participants' journeys more easily, and to relate to their own contexts.

Overall, a range of input resources were found, all of which are substantiated by artefact data.

2.3.1. One-off courses and self-study resources

Three one-off courses and handbooks for self-learning mainly focused on referencing formatting and using tools to self-check for plagiarism; searching and managing sources and paraphrasing were also mentioned briefly. Further contextualised support on rhetorical source use was evident in an extra-curricular workshop organised by an instructor in the department of education (See Appendix B, Section 1).

Table 1
EAP course (by CELT) materials on general aspects of source use and referencing.

Focus	Type of activity	Example task prompts	Coverage
Writing a reference list	Reading -Awareness raising	Study the example below and try to work out the APA style rules for writing a list of references. You should find at least ten rules	One page (A4 size)
Introduction to citations	Reading -Awareness raising	Look at text 1 and 2, pick out the key points: author's main viewpoint/idea; main ideas/points from the text	Half a page
	Group discussion	Why is it important to acknowledge sources?	Half a page
Summarising	Choose the appropriate	Read the original text, and read the two summaries. Which is a well-written summary, and which is an unacceptable summary?	One page
	List of tips	For your summary, read the source text and look at the structure: which parts of the text will be useful for identifying main ideas for a summary?	One-third of a page
Direct quotations	Reading -Awareness raising	Look at the example, what kind of information comes before and after the quotation?	One-third of a page
	List of tips	Select only direct quotes that make the most impact in your work	One-third of a page
Summarising and quoting	Writing in class	Write a paragraph for your mini-assignment, citing one of your sources, incorporating your summary (and direct quotation, if appropriate) into your paragraph	One-third of a page
Errors in referencing	Troubleshooting	What are the problems and how should these references be correctly presented? – e.g. As Mary points out, 'no state has yet opposed such legislation'.	Half a page

Note: Each row represents one task unit. Tasks of reading texts could occupy more pages than other activities.

2.3.2. *In-sessional EAP programme*

An in-sessional EAP course was delivered by the university's Centre of English Language Teaching (CELT) but organised within the department of Education, using texts from education-related subjects (e.g. psychology, citizenship education, and TESOL). It ran throughout three terms, with 2 h per week for eight weeks during Term 1 and 2, and five weeks in Term 3. In Term 1, an overall outcome was writing a mini source-based assignment task (500 words); however, such activities were not offered in later terms. The in-house course materials covered a range of source use topics. Activities on general aspects included mechanical referencing conventions, summarising and quoting, and tenses in reporting; this section totalled five pages (Table 1). Regarding rhetorical source use, there were activities on reporting phrases, integral and non-integral

Table 2
EAP course (by CELT) materials on rhetorical aspects of source use.

Focus	Type of activity	Example task prompts	Coverage
Integral and non-integral citations	Reading -Awareness raising	What is the difference between the two examples of source use, and what effect does each have? Read the following extract and comment on the use of the two approaches described above.	One page
Reporting verbs	Reading -Awareness raising	Look at the reporting verbs in your source texts … Which verbs are used? What are they used for?	One-fifth of a page
	Identify/ Categorise	What would you use the following verbs for? Match each verb with the category it belongs to. (e.g. reporting authors' ideas; reporting research evidence; reporting a claim)	One-third of a page
	Examples -Awareness raising	These structures are frequently used in academic writing: note the grammar and punctuation. (Jones (2012) states that … /As Jones (2012) states … / …. (Jones, 2012). Which of the three structures is often preferred, and why?	One-third of a page
Verb tenses in reporting	Examples -Awareness raising	In academic writing, the choice of verb and the choice of tense is used to signal currency and distance of ideas. Is the choice of tense significant in each example below? (Hint: think about the writer's intention)	Two pages
Synthesising sources	List of tips	Stages in synthesising sources. E.g., step 5: look for common points in texts. Use colours to highlight similarities. List any similarities you find on one piece of paper.	One page
	Practice task	Read the three passages below on preparing for a class or lecture. Highlight the parts in each passage that are similar in meaning.	One page
Synthesising sources in critical writing	Reading -Awareness raising	Analyse the following text, notice how citation of each source is integrated into the writer's argument. E.g., does the writer indicate agreement or disagreement with each source?	Two pages
LR: critical evaluation of sources	List of tips	Criteria for evaluating sources: e.g., Does the source compare well with others? If yes/no, then why?	One page
LR: organizing, evaluating and synthesising sources to support your argument	Reading – awareness raising	Look at this extract … how does the writer use sources to support his argument? Note any examples of useful phrases for: Evaluating/commenting on sources; summarising studies; noting/commenting on similarities/differences between studies	Three pages

citations, and strategies for synthesising and evaluating sources; this section totalled 11 pages (Table 2). Most activities aimed to raise students' awareness of citation features in short sentences or paragraphs, at the level of declarative knowledge gains (e.g. what something is). In contrast, fewer activities involved guided practice of using citations in particular writing tasks. Further, all of these activities occupied limited space in the handouts (one to three pages each).

2.3.3. Departmental support during subject learning

Source use was addressed in learning subject content in the department module courses. Some lecturers gave verbal advice in classes on how to use sources, or assigned formative tasks and commented on students' source use. Each student was assigned an academic supervisor and required to meet them in each term. Supervisors also advised on students' dissertation writing; they were required to give one iteration of feedback on students' drafts before submission.

In particular, written feedback on students' assessed coursework is a type of subject-specific support. To give a wider picture of what such feedback entailed, we analysed feedback reports on summative assignments from the whole group of 10 students (19 reports altogether, for assignments in T1 and T2) for their coverage of source use (Table 3), according to areas outlined in the departmental marking criteria. It was found that in every aspect, general reports (only pointing to an issue without referring to any particular section of student text) outnumbered specific ones (indicating where the issue took place by citing a page number or a quote from the student's text). This tendency of generality was even more salient in the area 'integration of sources', even though this was an explicit element of the marking criteria that was repeated in each score band. Regarding the topics addressed, superficial and describable issues such as source currency, range, and referencing formats were more often mentioned than challenging and abstract issues of criticality and integration of sources.

3. Results

To provide an overall picture of the support available, and the support salient to the students, we summarised the number of mentions of each type of support by the two participants (Table 4). To qualify for a 'mention', substantial details about the nature of the input need to be reported. The 'text-based input' in 'subject learning' in this table does not include participants' views on particular feedback comments in the essay reports they received, as these were asked separately in each interview.

At several stages over the year, the participants reported input from EAP courses, studying modules and supervisions in the department, and from academic sources and peers, while one-off courses tend to be reported only at the stage when they happened. This is unsurprising, as learning from long-lasting sustained support is more likely to be remembered for longer. On the other hand, the fact that informal input had similar numbers of mention as the formal ones (EAP courses and subject learning) was somehow unexpected, showing that informal input is a less visible, but still considerable aspect of source use acquisition.

Table 3
Analysis of summative feedback reports for assignments.

Topic of comment	Type of comment	Examples	Number of reports (Total = 19)
Amount and range of sources	General	An impressive list of sources is provided here. (Fiona T1)	15
	Specific	Relevant sources are included in your assignment. I would add the following: Oxford and Amerstorfer; Cohen and Macaro. (Fiona T2)	4
Use of referencing conventions	General	There is a good attempt to follow the APA referencing style. (Isabel T2)	8
	Specific	Some citations were not found in the reference list (e.g. Chen, 2008; MacDonald, 2008). (Olivia T1) Ideas in two full sections (Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, Linguistic determinism) come from unidentified earlier sources. (Isabel T1)	6
Integration of sources	General	Sources used were well-integrated in the argument. In various places of the essay, more attention is needed to in-text citations (Kim T2)	10
	Specific	You should focus more on themes for discussion rather than who said what. This is noticeable in your essay through the extensive use of reporting verbs (e.g. As X states/points out; According to Y). Although useful to a certain extent, they are neutral evaluative propositions which are used to substitute your own voice. (Jennifer T2)	3
Criticality vs description in source use	General	Continue reading widely so that you are in a better position to critically discuss various issues related to learning strategies. (Fiona T2)	5
	Specific	In explaining ideas, you occasionally rely too much on only one source (see p. 3). Reliance on a limited number of sources may lead to simplification and oversimplification. (Elsa T1) … the arguments lack perspective and sophistication. The majority of claims are replicas of imported ideas. Specific points: p.4 'certain effects on the way they think' - > underspecified. (Isabel T1)	2
Currency of sources	General	Think about currency of sources- the most up to date are the most convincing. (Olivia T1)	4
	Specific	Some sources related to description of IELTS are as old as 1999. (Kim T2)	3

Table 4
Number of mentions of each type of support over the year.

		End of T1	End of T2	End of T3	Dissertation Stage
One-off courses and self-study resources	Handbooks	0	N-2, I-1	0	0
	Turnitin workshop	0	N-1, I-1	0	0
	Study skills workshop	N-0, I-1	0	0	0
	Library IT workshop	N-0, I-1	N-0 I-1	0	0
	Source use workshop	0	0	N-1 I-0	0
In-sessional EAP courses	Declarative knowledge gains	N-1 I-0	N-2, I-1	N-2 I-0	0
	Contextualised practice	0	N-1 I-0	0	0
Subject learning in the department	General advice	N-0 I-1	N-3, I-1	N-1, I-2	N-2, I-1
	Text-based input	N-1 I-0	N-3, I-3	N-3 I-0	0
Other (informal) input	Learning from academic sources	0	N-1 I-0	N-1 I-0	0
	Peers	0	N-1, I-6	N-0, I-2	0
	Websites and other self-study materials	0	N-1 I-0	N-0, I-1	0

Note: N=Naomi, I=Isabel.

Overall, Naomi and Isabel made a similar total number of mentions, but as will be shown later, the quality of their recall and the focus of their learning differed drastically. Also notably, Isabel made far more mentions of support from peers than Naomi, especially in T2 and T3.

3.1. Naomi – a dedicated learner

Naomi completed her undergraduate study in a prestigious university in China. During that time, she was sometimes required to use sources, but the specifications on citations and referencing were limited. For example, in her undergraduate thesis, due to a lack of guidance, she simply compiled a bibliography list at the end of the text without any in-text citations. She was only informed of the Academic Integrity issue in missing citations at the examination stage.

During her MA study, she was a consistent high scorer in written assessments (61 and 64 in T1, 85 in T2 and 73 in dissertation). At all three stages, she used a large number of sources and citations: 30 sources in T1, 48 in T2 and 43 in LR; 65 citations in T1, 100 in T2 and 102 in LR. She made more use of each source at the latter two stages. For writing T2 assignment, for which she was awarded a high distinction mark (85), she reported to have put in extra hard work (one month in reading and writing) due to the expected difficulty of the task. She appeared to be a dedicated learner.

Naomi paid attention to various input on source use, both regarding the concept dimension and the discourse dimension. During Term 1, she developed her understanding of source quality, citation formats, the need to use sources as supporting evidence, and rhetorical differences in the various tenses for reporting sources, which she did not have from her previous education. These were learned mainly from a formative assignment in T1 and EAP courses. For example, she reported the formative feedback from her module lecturer:

> My reference was not according to the format- it wasn't in alphabetic order, I just randomly sequenced them. … Quite a lot of problems. I just didn't realize the requirement is so strict … At least the mistakes I made this time, I would not make them again next time. (T1 SSI)

This shows her uptake of citation formatting conventions, as well as her developing confidence in adhering to these conventions in subsequent tasks. Later on, in writing summative coursework, both sets of module feedback praised her use of referencing style, e.g. "APA referencing conventions are followed, with only some minor imprecisions in the list of references". She was able to apply such knowledge in her assignment writing.

Notably, Naomi also started to pay attention to the discourse dimension of source use in T1 and T2. One topic was the rhetorical differences between integral and non-integral citations, which she explained as: "about putting the citation at the end of sentence or the beginning … previously CELT mentioned it. It seems putting in the different position mean different things. I'm still a bit confused about this" (T2 SSI). This extract indicates some continued uncertainty about citation strategy. Another aspect related to bringing together a variety of sources. For example:

Naomi's T1 text	DBI
Hedge (2000) summarises writing process into generating ideas, … Similarly, **Nation (2008)** defines it as considering the goals of the writer, …	I wanted to combine different materials on the definition of writing process … I selected these two very common (definitions), which were both recommended in class by the teachers. During a meeting with my supervisor, I asked how not to write in descriptive ways and go deeper. He said you need to make comparisons and contrast. So I tried to put different peoples' (ideas) together.

Note: Citations are bolded; key phrases are underlined.

In this excerpt, Naomi combined the definitions by two important authors in the field, according to recommended texts in the module. This helped her to locate authoritative sources -by following more senior members' advice. The summative feedback report confirmed that "There is a strong reference list, drawing well on key sources from the module but showing evidence of wider reading". Further, she actively sought advice from her supervisor in meetings, and made attempts to juxtapose different sources and their positions.

At later stages, she continued to attentively observe, from her input resources, how sources could be connected into a network and integrated in writing. At one instance, she reported how her module lecturer demonstrated the process of identifying common points from two sources: "When the lecturer was analysing one article in class … she wrote its key points on the white board, and compared them with the points from another article. And then she showed us how to combine them" (Naomi T3 DBI). Naomi regarded this as a very important instance in her learning of source use, which she mentioned again in DS interview. During T3, she attended the source use workshop (see Appendix B section 1), and referred to her copy of a handout during the interview. Unlike other participants (from the bigger group) who reported to benefit from the citation functions being taught explicitly, Naomi seemed to have a deeper appreciation of the examples:

> … the functions in the first part (of the workshop), maybe I was also using them before, just that it wasn't taught. But the part teaching you how to integrate sources is more useful … You can put a single source about what somebody did … but if you put many studies together, your paragraph needs to have logic. It's very emphasised here the rigorous logic linking sentences. It's hard to find a point to link them altogether." (Naomi T3 SSI).

At this stage, instead of merely taking in the advice of synthesising sources, she focused more on how this was achieved in written example paragraphs provided by the lecturers. She acknowledged the difficulty in integrating sources, and observed the process necessary for achieving this, such as the steps of analysing sources that were demonstrated in the module class. She also reported the use of a note-taking strategy – categorising key points of each source in a table, which facilitated the process of building a network of sources (T3 SSI). The feedback on her essay confirmed her ability to synthesise various sources: "There is a strong and sustained argument, making many valid points and integrating the literature in an original and insightful way".

Naomi's understanding and practice of using integral and non-integral citations also developed further during Term 3; for example, when asked about her reasons for tending to use citations at the end of a paragraph in her writing in T3 DBI, she commented:

> At first, I always wrote 'somebody argues'. Later, in the CELT course the teacher said, if you always put the author's names upfront in your sentence, you don't have your own voice. To show your own ideas, just say the point and then summarise the authors. So later I changed a lot.

This shows a more certain understanding of the rhetorical effects of citation forms than previous stages, which she also confidently incorporated into her writing.

These tendencies continued into her literature review writing. She followed her supervisor's marginal feedback closely, and made efforts to revise her drafts. For example, when writing the literature background of her analytical framework, her final draft demonstrated a far stronger authoritative voice than the first draft:

Naomi LR first draft	Supervisor's marginal feedback
Adverbial connectors are often classified according to the broad classification criteria of discourse connectors and different criteria have different ways of classifications **(Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman,1999).** **Halliday and Hasan (1976)** classified conjunctions into four broad categories: … (four categories described, totalling 146 words) … **Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman (1999)** simplified Halliday and Hasan's classification and classified conjunctive adverbials into four types: … (58 words).	OK, so all you have done here is list different academics definitions of the terms- what we need is an indication of which are more useful/relevant/useable etc. you must comment/compare and position yourself in terms of these.
Naomi LR final draft: Logical connectors have been categorised into different classifications according to different scholars. The classifications of **Halliday and Hasan (1976)** … and **Celce- Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1983)** have been commonly adopted by several studies of logical connectors **(e.g. Bolton et. al, 2002; Field & Yip, 1992; Milton & Tsang, 1993; Tapper, 2005).** Logical connectors used in this study will be based on the synthesis of **Celce-Murcia and Larsen-**	

(*continued*)

Naomi LR first draft	Supervisor's marginal feedback
Freeman's (1983) models, which based on two reasons: one is that as **the classification of Halliday and Hasan** is detailed and complex, **Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman's simplified model** is clear and comprehensive enough for studies of logical connectors. Secondly, …	
DBI: So this feedback tells me to give reasons why I use this one instead of that one. If I just list their categories, that's just a simple description, without my own comments or evaluation. Only when I … say what are the benefits of it can I show that I've really thought about the classifications.	

Naomi understood from the feedback a need to position her own views, which was crucial for a literature review that functions to motivate an empirical study in master's dissertations. In her revision, she added more sources to support the frameworks to be adopted in her own study. She also added substantially more reasons after description as for why one framework was preferred over the other, using evaluative phrases such as "detailed and complex" and "clear and comprehensive". It is clear that Naomi engaged with the feedback comment at a deep level and attempted to position her own writer voice in the revised draft. Her final dissertation feedback report commented very positively on her ability to synthesise and evaluate sources in the literature review: "There was critical thinking present in the chapter and the student showed a good knowledge of the competing ideas in L2 writing."

To sum up, Naomi was attentive to various types of input on source use, and actively reacted to input in her writing. She managed the basic requirements of following referencing styles in Term 1 with the help of feedback, and she became aware of the discourse dimensions of source use from early on. From Term 2 onwards, she paid attention to how sources could be used rhetorically in specific examples, and actively conformed to the expectations in her writing. This was further made possible by her tactical use of source managing systems and her dedication to reading sources.

3.2. Isabel — seeking simple solutions

Isabel had received support on thesis writing during her undergraduate study in China, which mentioned citation styles and focused much on avoiding plagiarism. She appeared to lack confidence in succeeding in academic writing: "previously my teacher, who has studied abroad, said that I seldom go deeper into one point, that my language is always rather descriptive, and my use of persuasive language, like one in a debate, is very limited" (T1 SSI). This is a strong statement about not being analytical in writing, but this ability is crucial at the postgraduate stage. Throughout the MA programme, Isabel seemed to show limited development in this aspect and in source use in general due to her approach to engaging with the support available. Her marks were consistently low (45 and 54 in T1, 52 in T2 and 42 for dissertation). She increased the use of sources and citations from T1 to DS: 18 sources in T1, 26 in T2 and 52 in LR; 23 citations in T1, 41 in T2 and 63 in LR. However, increase in quantity was not related to improvement in quality, as will be shown below.

In Term 1, Isabel reported that she did not perceive the presence of much support on source use. She reported learning the APA citation formatting rules from a study skills workshop and consulting handbooks, and conversation with friends about the number of sources used in their assignments. In T1 assignment and its feedback, several issues emerged. Isabel admitted having spent only three days on writing it, which resulted in sketchy work in referencing formatting. This was pointed out in the feedback report: "A more careful work with references is necessary to reach a passable standard". Another problem was the unclear boundary between source content and her own ideas, resulting in ambiguous attribution to sources: "Direct quotations are not indicated, which is a serious problem because it is impossible to assess where the author's ideas start and end" (T1 feedback report). A further, more severe issue was a limited understanding of the sources cited, for example:

Lecturer's feedback comment on Isabel T1 text	DBI
The main issue with this assignment is its failure to demonstrate sufficient understanding of the ideas it includes … the arguments lack perspective and sophistication. The majority of claims are replicas of imported ideas. (followed by detailed examples from Isabel's text and explanations)	Yes because at many places I just put the sources there. I feel I don't have my own understanding or explanation. And I don't have much argument … And the next sentence is about the same thing, that I don't have discussion and analysis.

This feedback comment suggests Isabel's superficial understanding of the sources, including their rhetorical functions, and a lack of critical engagement with the ideas cited. While the feedback report used specific examples from her text, Isabel in the interview simply repeated what was said in the report. There was no real evidence that she truly understood how to report sources' ideas more accurately or to critically engage with the ideas.

In later terms, Isabel was more careful with citation formatting, as the feedback report commented "a good attempt to follow the APA referencing style" (T2). Regarding acknowledgement of sources, Isabel reported understanding from a conversation with a senior student that "where I thought doesn't require citations actually does" (T3 SSI). Isabel's solution to this issue, however, was to use a citation within bracket at the end of the paragraph to avoid any potential suspicions of plagiarism, which was a frequent pattern in her writing since T2:

Isabel T2 text	DBI

(*continued on next page*)

(*continued*)

Isabel T2 text	DBI
Auditory priming is defined as … For example, when listening to and comprehending a language, listeners … The listeners could then process the details more rapidly and accurately afterwards **(Church & Fisher, 1998)**.	If I put this citation at the beginning of the paragraph, that would impede what I was thinking. Since I put all the citations into brackets, I wouldn't need to think about inserting the author's name when I write that sentence.

This indicated her focus on writer convenience instead of readability, and a tendency to seek simple solutions in acknowledging sources. From a reader's perspective, it is still difficult to clearly identify the individual authors in Isabel's writing. Similarly, her approach to addressing the issue of lack of analysis was rather superficial. In T2 essay, she reported to have "followed the ideas in those sources, even following the sequence of their ideas", because she regarded this to be "safer" (T3 SSI). However, in relation to this writing, the feedback report stated "most of your discussion is stated, rather than argued". Isabel seemed to make an attempt in engaging with sources based on T1 feedback comment, but she was only able to focus on the superficial requirement of understanding sources correctly, not really attempting to address the lack of critical analysis of sources that was also implied in T1 feedback. Interestingly, she attended the same module as Naomi (see above), which partially addressed source use synthesis, but tellingly Isabel made no mention of this.

At DS, the issues of ambiguous citations and lack of analysis in source use were still pervasive in Isabel's writing. For example:

LR text	DBI
ICT is a useful tool that can …. For example, Vicky conducted a successful practice of ICT in the form of digital storytelling in Argentina …. The project was developed with the insert of digital multimedia such as audios, videos and images into the story telling process **(Robin, 2006)**.	Isabel: This part about ICT is also what the teacher said in class, so here I also just wrote according to what he (the teacher) said and his PowerPoint slides. He said a lot so it was very helpful for my literature searching. Interviewer: Here you put the citation in brackets at the end, not at the beginning of any sentence. Why is that? Isabel: There's no reason. I just want it that way so I did it.

This seems to be a citation about *Vicky's* practice, but it is unclear from the format of citation; a reader would likely struggle to interpret the relationship between *Vicky* and the source given. In the interview, Isabel was not concerned about this, and again she simply used the citation according to her personal preference. Isabel reported to have used some content input of sources provided by her module lecturer, but she did not use it purposefully in her dissertation. As in her Term 2 essay, she still simply described the source without considering its role in her writing. Indeed, reflecting on her progress over the year, Isabel reported her improvement over formatting citations as the only major achievement in the use of sources.

To sum up, Isabel's source use and academic writing in general were problematic. She struggled with the referencing style in T1, perhaps because of her limited time devoted to writing. With feedback from teachers and reminders from peers, she showed improvement on this aspect in later stages. For the other problems that were more difficult to address, she seems to have opted for easy solutions to 'fix them'. Isabel put citations at the end of paragraphs but avoided the effort needed in distinguishing her ideas from other sources, which perhaps also stemmed from her lack of appreciation or understanding of the need to express an evaluative stance towards the cited material. She continued to demonstrate a descriptive approach to using sources by simply using the content input from subject lecturers and textbooks in her writing without her own analysis.

4. Discussion and conclusion

Naomi and Isabel's engagement with support differed greatly, and their source use practice also differed. Before the MA programme, their English language proficiency and the amount of previous experience of source-based writing were similar, with Isabel having received slightly more support on avoiding plagiarism. During the programme, however, Naomi quickly improved her citation formatting through errors in a formative task in T1 which was corrected by the module teacher; in contrast, Isabel showed improvement in this aspect at a later stage in T2. By the end of T1, Naomi had shifted her attention from the basic concept dimension of source use to the discourse dimensions of analysing and synthesising sources as a part of creating space for her own evaluative stance. She was not only aware of the need to be analytical, but also actively sought strategies to develop analytical source use skills from the support available, and she observed their application in written texts. In contrast, it was unclear whether Isabel really understood the need for analytical source use, and clearly she did not apply the knowledge learned from the support available (such as her feedback report comments) or act upon it.

This case study demonstrated two different types of learner engagement with the support available, which can be interpreted using Kahu's (2013) model of learner engagement. Naomi appeared to be seeking cues, actively looking for instructors' requirements for source use (behaviour) and applied them in her own contexts (cognitive transfer). Isabel, on the other hand, was content with the input readily available (behaviour), and focused more on the straightforward rules of referencing formats, seemingly unable to make the intellectual jump to rhetorical aspects of source use (insufficient cognitive transfer). She made no attempt to clarify instructors' expectations with further support seeking (behaviour), suggesting a lack of confidence and the persistence necessary to be successful. She also seems to have relied more on interaction with peers

than the official departmental support (behaviour), which may have accounted for her narrow focus on referencing formatting.

Regarding the support on source use available at the institution investigated, there appeared to be ample opportunities for learning about source use in the EAP course, additional courses and subject learning. In the case of Naomi, the more engaged student, such support did help her develop her source use abilities in not only the basic aspects of mechanics and attribution but also the rhetorical aspects of using sources to construct voice. This finding is in line with Wette's (2019) study on how dedicated support on source-based writing and raising students' awareness of rhetorical features of citations could impact on their learning of a range of source use skills, including referencing, paraphrasing and discipline-specific source use norms. Notably, apart from dedication and strong motivation, Naomi's success was also related to her frequent interaction with her academic supervisor who appeared attentive to source use and literacy skills. It was also subject to Naomi's ability to apply what seemed rather abstract verbal advice as well as particular examples of source use from the courses in her own writing. This is not always guaranteed among students.

While individual students' motivation and ability are key to their uptake, several implications can be proposed for supporting international students' academic literacy development. First, to effectively demonstrate rather than explain source use expectations, substantial example extracts of source use in specific texts are needed, together with instructors' scaffolding and awareness raising (McCulloch, 2012; Wingate, 2012). In other words, expectations of writing can be made explicit to students through the use of exemplars (Li & Hu, 2018). Second, the process of writing from sources deserves as much attention as the final products (Dovey, 2010). Further to teaching reading and writing skills, scaffolded activities are necessary to guide students through the entire process of transforming ideas from reading materials into the final products. Third, in order for awareness raising to have a real impact, students need more opportunities to practise source use in writing shorter and longer tasks (Wingate, 2006). The one-year programme appears deficient in this regard, where students are often expected to jump from limited practice in the EAP courses to writing long disciplinary assignments. Fourth, feedback on student writing should aim for clearer, more detailed, and more constructive comments; formal meetings can also be assigned to encourage students to seek clarification of the feedback comments. These four aspects can be tackled together in ongoing support to enhance students' source use acquisition.

While it represents an in-depth attempt at investigating students' engagement with support on the particular aspect of source use in academic writing, this study has several limitations. Firstly, while the students commented on a range of source use topics, this was still limited by their understanding of 'source use' and the particular prompts used in the interviews. This may have impacted the data obtained and the conclusions reached. Secondly, due to ethical concerns, the interviews were taken after students received grades and feedback on their coursework writing, which is not timely in terms of showing their perceptions at the point of receiving the input. To address this limitation, learning journals taken during the academic terms might generate a larger amount of timely data on their perceptions and intake, particularly towards the support that took place during the terms. These alternative approaches can be considered in future case studies on students' perceptions and intake of academic writing support.

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The second author provided support on theoretical and empirical reviews, and checked data analysis and the draft.

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Data statement

The full data cannot be provided due to confidentiality concerns.

Informed consent

The participants signed informed consent forms before the study began.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Qingyang Sun: Conceptualization, Methodology, Investigation, Formal analysis, Writing – original draft. **Bill Soden:** Conceptualization, Supervision, Writing – review & editing.

Declaration of competing interest

There was no conflict of interest.

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Appendix A. Interview protocols

Term 1 Baseline interview (semi-structured).

Thank you for taking part in this study. I would like to know how you learned about source use during this semester. I'll ask you some questions, and you can talk about anything related to those topics.

1. Have you written any academic texts in English before you started this Master's degree? How often? What were the requirements?
2. Have you used references in any of your previous writing? (including in Chinese) How? (whether in the format of bibliography or proper reference list, what kind of sources they used, how was it supervised/checked upon)
3. Now, what is your understanding of academic writing? (What features does it have, what is its difference from other types, what is its purpose)
4. What is your understanding of source use? Where does such understanding comes from?
5. Turning to this semester, have you written any formative task for your subject module courses? What type of task was it? What was its requirement of source use?
6. During this semester, what have your learned about source use? How did you learn it?

Term 2, Term 3 and DS semi-structured interviews.

1. Since the last interview, what new things have you known/mastered/learned about source use?

optional probes:

Where was the knowledge from? Who told you that? How did you learn it? What's its influence on you?

2. Now what's your view on citing sources, in relation to the last interview?

Term 2, Term 3 and DS Discourse-based questions.

1. (Representative examples of citation use were highlighted in students' texts beforehand).

Why did you use this citation in this way? Please comment on any considerations you had except for the content of the citation.

Probe 1 (if they don't know what to say):

Why did you choose to cite in this way instead of another? What kind of message did you want to convey apart from the content? How would citing in this way be different from putting a bracket at the end, for example?

Probe 2 (optional):

Where did you get this perception from? How did you master this type of citation? What do you think of this type of citation?

2. (Comments related to source use in participants' feedback reports were highlighted beforehand).

What's your view on this?

Probes:

What do you think this comment talks about? Do you think it's a fair comment? Related to this, would you change anything next time?/How would you use this feedback?

Appendix B. Details of the support available

(1) One-off courses and self-study resources

Firstly, a university booklet (eight A4 pages) and a departmental guide to assignments and dissertations (four A4 pages on referencing) gave guidance and examples on the APA referencing conventions. The departmental guide further provided advice on effective source use, including avoiding plagiarism, using quotes sparingly, and how to use reporting phrases appropriately (one and a half pages in total). Secondly, in addition to written guidance, the education department also organised a study skills workshop for international students at the beginning of Term 1, which covered referencing and the appropriateness of sources. The students were given error-correction exercises of reference lists and in-text citations. Thirdly, the university's academic support office organised a 1-h workshop on using Turnitin for all new students in Term 1. The workshop explained the nature of this text matching software and how to interpret instances of text matching in the originality reports. Definitions of paraphrasing, summarising and synthesising sources were also briefly covered. After the workshop, students were expected to use the software for self-checking before submitting their coursework. Finally, the university information services offered optional workshops on using the library system to search subject-related sources, and using referencing management software.

In Term 3 before the dissertation stage, a lecturer in the education department, with particular interest and expertise in academic writing, designed an optional workshop on rhetorical functions of citations in dissertation writing (based on Petrić, 2007). Each function was explained first, followed by exercises of matching functions with sample sentences from previous

students' coursework writing in the department. One successful and one less successful paragraph of source synthesis were also discussed.

(2) EAP courses

The three-term support course was only available to international students in the education department, and most other departments only had EAP courses for one term (interview with tutor A).

The programme leader (Tutor A) commented that the courses intended to teach source use as an integrated skill, but this teaching was also confined by the hours available:

> It's only one session out of eight in Term 1, we spend about the entire lesson talking about citing sources, use evidence to support points in arguments … they are all interconnected … We tend to do that in follow-up sessions as well. We only have students for 2 h a week, and students are very busy doing other things. I think we have to be realistic about what we can achieve. But I feel confident that we are giving the students … the right information.

Tutor A also appreciated the support and resources from the Education department in the development of the course materials, which was in part related to his close connection with an MA subject programme leader. He also acknowledged that this was not always the case for other departments, whose academics could sometimes be "oblivious (to support the needs of their students), and less than helpful".

3) Departmental support

Written feedback on students' assessed coursework is a particular type of subject-embedded support. Most modules in T1 assigned formative tasks mid-term, and the lecturers gave feedback on these. As a result, three participants reported knowledge gains in managing technical referencing styles, while only one reported understanding the specific requirements of the task. In T2, however, few modules employed formative tasks or provided feedback.

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