Credibility in Academic and Journalistic Writing and Beyond[1]

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Abstract

This contribution discusses the key concept of the international collaboration project between German and South-Eastern European partners, "credibility". It sketches credibility in its wider semantic field, where it is related to "honesty" or "ethics" in general and to the linguistic features signalling "politeness". It compares credibility in academic and in journalistic writing and introduces various relative concepts of credibility and truth. Then it discusses types of evidence and thus credible sources in academic writing and in modern media, before drawing on the case of plagiarism to show how writers can use intertextuality to increase their credibility instead of destroying it. Finally, the contribution argues that credibility constitutes an under-researched concept in many wider academic areas.

Keywords: credibility, honesty, ethics, politeness, academic writing, journalistic writing

1. Introduction

This contribution discusses a few concepts (e.g. creditability) that lie at the heart of the political cooperation between Germany and the South Eastern European countries, which are all recent or future member states of the European Union. This applies to the current cooperation in general and to the current project in particular. It uses modern discourse and corpus-linguistic approaches (e.g. Machin & Mayr 2012, McEnery & Hardie 2012) and distinguishes between academic and journalistic writing and between teacher and student perspectives in so far as the endeavour to achieve credibility influences the text production. The concept of credibility is based on the Chemnitz Research Group experience with academic writing, as scholars or as students, and similar approaches published in textbooks (e.g. Pérez-Llantada 2012 or Hyland 2015) and in general handbooks (e.g. Swales & Feak 2012) and language-specific handbooks (for German or Dutch writers, like Siepmann et al. 2011 and Hannay & Mackenzie 2017, respectively). Scholars are challenged and supported in their writing by the modern double-blind peer review procedures. Students practise to gain credibility

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This article continues the previous argumentation published in the companion volume last year (Schmied/van der Bom (Eds.) 2017). Whereas previous articles focussed on *fake*, esp. *fake news*, this one focusses on *credibility* and *truth*.

and thus establish themselves as academic writers, as a valuable member of a research community. The same should be true for journalists. This contribution focusses on as many different aspects of credibility as possible in academic and in journalistic writing, although the concept can be applied to other fields of academic research; only in the final outlook will we broaden the perspective again to put our key concept "credibility" in a wider perspective.

1.1. The Concept of Credibility

A quick analysis in Standard English reference works reveals the near synonyms of *credibility*: *believability, plausibility, reliability, trustworthiness, validity,* etc. In on-line collocations dictionaries, we find the following collocates: *evidence, source(s), threat, integrity, witness(es), elections, reputation* and *legitimacy* as nouns, *lose, lack, gain, build, establish, lend, restore, destroy,* and *undermine* as verbs and *scientific, zero* and *transparent* as adjectives – with some interesting historical and regional variation, as a quick search in the BYU corpora shows (cf. Schmied 2017). For students, many concrete text passages provide valuable discussion points from a practical language perspective, but also from a critical language perspective as a special case of writer – reader interaction, often in particularly sensitive argumentative contexts of national or regional politics (e.g. Đorđević 2018, Mitić 2018, Lazarevska-Stanchevska 2017, Kostadinovska-Stojchevska 2017).

From a teacher's perspective, many influential writers have discussed the issue of credibility since Aristotle, for whom credibility was part of *ethos*, an appeal to the presenter's authority, in contrast to *pathos*, the appeal to the reader's emotions, and *logos*, the appeal to logic and argumentation. All three are related however, e.g. good evidence in *logos* enhances a writer's *ethos*, information makes a presenter look knowledgeable and prepared in the eyes of the audience.

In recent academic books, we find credibility used in different conceptual contexts. In his best-selling book, Kahnemann (2011) has pointed out the relation of credibility with familiarity (62) and strength and truthfulness (91). For linguists, it is particularly relevant that he even related credibility to language (63) by referring to an empirical study by Oppenheimer (2006) with the telling title "Consequences of erudite vernacular utilized irrespective of necessity: problems with using long words needlessly".

From a journalistic perspective, Perrin (2013: 60) focusses on the related reliability instead of credibility when he defines it as "the same answers are obtained when someone else repeats an investigation following the same procedure", emphasizes that it "requires precise work based on carefully considered, transparent rules" and distinguishes it from validity when "similar answers are obtained when the same research question is investigated with another procedure". Later in the same book, Perrin (2013: 61) elaborates on the differences between "dependability" ("the explicit reflection on how the research stings and contexts affected the findings"), credibility ("research participants

have good reason to trust the results"), confirmability ("the degree to which other researchers can confirm the results") and transferability ("the extent to which the results can be transferred to other contexts").

Barclay (2018: 10) introduces a "credibility spectrum": "For the purposes of evaluating information, it is vital to understand that credibility exists on a continuum rather than in separate spheres of true and false information. Indeed, those who approach the evaluation of information with a binary mind-set—"It's either true or it's false, no middle ground"—are setting themselves up for failure." Hence, he concludes:

> The challenge facing anyone evaluating information is not, in most cases, deciding between true or false, but rather where on the credibility continuum a piece of information lies and, in the end, deciding when any given piece of information is credible enough to fulfil a given information need. (ibid)

If credibility in a wide sense is variable and can be constructed, writers have to pay special attention to it and work consciously on the issue of credibility for their own assessment of "facts" and on their readers'. To increase credibility, academic and journalistic investigators may have to triangulate research methods, e.g. combine statistical data with expert or participant interviews – but that depends on the options available in a particular research and writing context.

1.2. Credibility in the Wider Field of Concepts

In this article and the related project, credibility is perceived in a wide field of concepts that are important in academic and journalistic writing (Table 1).

	in Academic	and Journalistic Writing
Credibility	evaluation peer review	fake news (truth) (documentary) evidence
Honesty	plagiarism	govt. & commercial interference (watchdog)
Ethics	(data) evidence significance	citizen journalism
Politeness	hedging	hate speech

Table 1: Credibility, honesty, ethics, and politeness in academic and journalistic writing

This includes the honesty to avoid plagiarism, i.e. copying from previous, other people's texts without referencing, i.e. acknowledging intellectual debts (cf. p. 10 below). From the perspective of young academics, it has to be emphasised here that the usual threat of considering plagiarism a crime has not been very fruitful in the past. "Similar" text passages should rather be considered as an opportunity, as academic support for both sides, the current student writer as well as the previous established writer referred to. Thus, intertextuality in academic discourse is neither a crime nor a problem for students, who often think that they cannot write anything of their own and overlook that finding suitable references

and integrating them into their own argumentation is a major achievement; such supporting references must be clearly marked, because they add to the credibility and argumentation value of a text in discourse. From a student's perspective, it seems of little relevance whether the student had the idea first and cites a previous writer found later as support, or whether the student writer acknowledges the inspiration and relevance of previous writers for his or her own work and thinking.

The concept of ethics seems to have relatively little relevance for young academics, because they are usually not so fixed on their data to forge them consciously (a problem that is taken seriously by national funding agencies today). However, (over-)ambitious students may be disappointed when their analyses simply confirm "the usual" (or not even that) or they may not be experienced enough in judging whether the evidence that is provided by their data is significant enough to draw wide-ranging conclusions. In any case, a diligent data analysis must be considered enough for a good academic text, even if it does not provide surprising or even expected results.

The concept of politeness is important in many different fields of academic writing. The idea of a hard and fair discourse underlies all critical and self-critical aspects of writing. For crucial passages of the text, it is important that writers make it clear to what extent they attribute truth value to their writing. This is conventionally signalled by hedging, which indicate that even contradiction or counter-evidence are possible and not taken as an impolite attack. This concept is so important in academic writing that the secondary literature on it is extensive (Swales & Feak 2012, Hyland 2012 and 2015). It is clear that all four concepts are culture-specific.

If we transfer the concepts briefly outlined here from academic to journalistic writing, we see that some of the issues become even more dramatic, because they do not concern the relatively small group of an academic discourse community, but possibly the society at large.

The language of newspapers is also covered in accessible publications: from the introductory Reah (2002) to the more ambitious Perrin (2013). Reah (2002) focuses only on five issues, headlines, audience, lexis, syntax, and discourse and the (re-)writing of the journalistic end product. It includes some very attractive (British) examples and helpful exercises for advanced language learners on "how the headline writer reorganises language" (20) and how to avoid "making monsters" (73) in syntax. Perrin (2013) focusses on the production and process and "the metalinguistic mindset" (passim). His main chapters "A Challenge: Providing added value by applying linguistics" (Perrin 2013: 1), including "situating newswriting" (ibid: 2), "B Procedure: Adding value by re-contextualising problems" (ibid: 43), including "Triangulating newswriting research methods" (ibid: 56), "C Solution: Identifying the metalinguistic mindset" (ibid: 69), "D Consequence: Shaping the mindset in knowledge formation projects" (ibid: 153), including "Raising awareness across stakeholders' realities", and "E Dissemination: Fostering knowledge

transformation through open databases" (ibid: 253) are very much in line with our current projects and deserve much more detailed discussion (cf. Schmied fc.).

A special and fundamental issue in journalism is the (re-)emergence of fake news, which has attracted a great deal of attention from the wider public and in the last few years also in scientific circles (Schmied 2017, Barclay 2018). From the perspective of this project, credibility in journalistic writing is a matter of scrutiny (not "high ideals" like ethics or honesty) and can be seen parallel to the credibility of sources in academic writing. The consumer of news always has to assess whether he finds the documentary evidence provided convincing enough. It is not the issue whether personal experience has coloured the report, it is rather the issue whether all personal experience that has contributed to the report is documented honestly in the text or in the frame accompanying the text. "Topic framing" has also attracted considerable attention: on the linguistic side, Halliday (1998: 186) e.g. has argued for "metafunctional framing" to include his ideational, interpersonal and textual functions in one system. Likewise, on the journalistic side, the framing or reframing of a story in a very general sense plays an overwhelming part in the interpretation in its divergence (e.g. Perrin 2013: 33). It is therefore a rare opportunity that we can include in this collection of papers the view from a legal journalistic perspective (Blagojevic 2018).

In journalistic writing, the issue of possible political or economic influence is obvious. This became evident to all conference participants during the visit to the television studio in Ohrid in 2017 and the visit by the Croatian journalist at the summer school in Split 2018: in both cases, the journalistic practitioners were clearly aware of the dangers and accusations that were already prominent in South Eastern European countries before they became prominent in Germany (cf. Ebermann 2018).

Whereas the necessity of an objective "watchdog", a neutral organisation that tries to document governmental and commercial interference, seems accepted and unproblematic in Germany (with only occasional problems caused by a very popular "broadsheet"), this is still an issue in the public discourse in countries like Serbia or Macedonia, especially in the context of the recent accession negotiations to the European Union. In countries where the government has changed or become fragile under the influence of wide-spread mass protest, epitomised by the famous colourful revolution in Macedonia in 2016, the phenomenon of citizen journalism has been discussed extensively. It is obviously an attractive idea that anyone can be their own journalist and in many cases important evidence has been posted more or less immediately in the usual social networks, so that the documentation of a "truthful perspective" has become possible for immediate participants.

In the context of electronic, in particular social media, however, the relatively new phenomenon of hate speech must be included in any serious discussion. Whereas traditionally the response of the readership to journalistic texts has been minimal and monitored (e.g. in letters-to-the-editor), today any opposing, conflicting and even insulting views to journalistic writing can become "virulent"

and get out of hand, so that the relationship between the initial text and resulting so-called social media "discourse" may be minimal. Media discourses may be initiated by a journalist, but continued overwhelmingly in the electronic media, from readers' comments into the general social media. In many cases, the responses on newspaper webpages, which are a logical continuation of letters-to-the-editor, have to be closely monitored and restricted, because newspaper agencies find it difficult to contain the discourse within the legally or the ethically acceptable limits – this raises the question of censorship: in serious newspapers, readers can directly track when outside posts have been removed, the related comments suggest why and remind persons wishing to submit contributions to stick to the topic and the rules.

1.3. Truth as Relative Credibility

To many students it comes as a surprise that even "the truth" may not be categorical, but relative, like the credibility spectrum quoted above (in 1.1). This does not mean that anyone can negotiate truth in essential categories like human rights; however, even principles of the Geneva Conventions and other legal frames related to political refugees, which have long been taken for granted in European countries, are nowadays disputed. In our discourse, the concept of truth is not construed as categorical, but refers to various theoretical differences in what is perceived as truth, in correspondence and coherence theories, for instance. The main differences are obvious: Correspondence theory focusses on the relationship of a statement and its correspondence to the outside world, whether it accurately describes that world and whether these descriptions are shared by the people affected. Coherence theory by contrast focusses on whether a statement fits logically into the cognition of the receiver; what is coherent is considered as true, because it is desirable for human beings to interpret the world as a logical and convincing mosaic.

Yet another perspective is how truth is created as a conventional agreement in the wide discourse community. Few people are aware of constructivist theories that emphasise that truth is constructed by social processes which are historically and culturally determined (Macdonald 2018) and thus shaped through struggles within the community. This is related to discourse theories, which hold that truth has to be negotiated in discourse and agreed upon. This may ideally imply the entire community, but more and more it only refers to some specified group. The discussion of whether "the" or "a" truth is acknowledged only by a subset of the population and whether the silent majority may favour "a different truth" is prominent in many European societies today. In the end, modern philosophers like Peirce or Dewey have emphasized that sometimes the truth can only be determined by putting it into practice and seeing whether future results support the truth hypotheses. This is related to what Barclay (2018: 94) calls confirmation bias, "the (very human) tendency to focus only on information that supports what you already believe while ignoring information that contradicts your beliefs".

For academic writing, this means that each sentence is modalised with degree of truth, allowing more or less scope for counter claims. Thus "the truth value of a text lies in the accumulation of probabilistic statements of evidence, leading to a conclusion that is acceptable to the writer's professional community" (Rose 1998: 264). In modern grammars (e.g. Quirk et al. 1985, Huddleston & Pullum 2002), this has been expressed in different ways. Halliday and Matthiesen (2014: 146) seem to prefer the term *validity*, as in

> … the Subject specifies the 'responsible' element; but in a proposition this means the one on which the **validity** of the information is made to rest. (It is important to express it in these terms rather than in terms of true or false. The relevant concept is that of exchangeability, setting something up so that it can be caught, returned, smashed, lobbed back, etc. Semantics has nothing to do with truth; it is concerned with consensus about validity, and consensus is negotiated in dialogue.)

However, the linguistic signalling of truth, credibility and trustworthiness is not unambiguous, as in the case of some stance adverbials (cf. Biber et al. 1999: 858):

> Sometimes, items that appear to be stance adverbials limiting the truth of propositions could alternatively be interpreted either as adverbials of extent or of time frequency. In the following, *mainly* and *largely* could be interpreted to mean 'to a great extent' or even 'usually' in addition to being epistemic stance adverbials:
> *Any reciprocal learning will depend mainly on what Japanese companies choose to make available.* (NEWS)
> *The great scholars also are largely ignored for their craft skills*. (ACAD)

In news reporting, Barclay (2018: 86) links truth to familiarity and simple repetition:

> For several decades now, social scientists have acknowledged the validity of a phenomenon known as the truth effect. In essence, the truth effect holds that the more something is repeated, the more likely people are to believe that it is true. Because of the ease with which digital information can be copied and distributed, the online environment makes it easier than ever before for a piece of information to gain credibility through repetition. Many conspiracy theories, for example, gain credibility through sheer repetition.

A famous case of "linguistic truth" through repetition (and misunderstanding the work of Franz Boas) is the great number of words for snow in Eskimo languages like Inuit, which had been taken as evidence for linguistic relativity until Pullum (2013) argued very strongly against the "Great Eskimo Vocabulary Hoax". Some truths appear simply so clear or so "self-evident" that only really sophisticated science can convince us. This is a topic that goes far beyond applied linguistics, but it is so important that it deserves intensive consideration in a separate project (Schmied fc.).

2. Credibility and Evidence in Linguistic Perspectives

2.1. Credibility of Sources in Academic Writing

For many students, the appropriate choice of sources in their literature review and in their key concepts seems to be difficult, because they cannot distinguish

between academic genres according to their credibility and the reliability of information provided. It is a common mistake by students of English to use their monolingual learner’s dictionary as only source of academic concepts. The practical usefulness of dictionaries is limited as they only provide an entry point into the meaning of the word, even if the word is a technical term.

The most controversial source for academic terms today is Wikipedia. Many university teachers oppose the use of Wikipedia completely, whereas others hold that it may be used as a jump page but under no circumstances as a primary source, as it usually is a tertiary source, in which even writers can contribute whose credibility has not been proven.

Much more respected than Wikipedia is, of course, an encyclopaedia because articles or entries are written by specialists: the general or managing director usually asks a subject specialist, an acknowledged authority in the field, to make a contribution. Nowadays, encyclopaedias can be found online, and the mother of all encyclopaedias is still the Encyclopaedia Britannica.

Among the traditional books, a textbook is still the most frequent source of study for young students. However, they should bear in mind that textbooks are introductory writings that usually cover a wide area so that one author is easily able to produce a readable overview, yet in many cases he or she may not be the ultimate authority on all key concepts described. In the author's view, the purpose of a textbook is to summarise and adapt disciplinary knowledge to introductory classes. In the student's view, however, nearly any book that is released by an academic publishing company is considered a reliable reference. Since students are cautioned against citing websites, any book seems a safe choice to start an assignment with. The assumed universality of books makes it challenging for students to assess the purpose and application of textbooks.

A textbook is quite different from a handbook, which is again commissioned by a managing editor to recognise authorities in the field: editor, author of a contribution and publisher usually take full responsibility that the articles are recognised as state of the art – at least at the time of writing.

Finally, the most prominent academic genre in our times is certainly the research article, which allows a relatively reliable discussion of current topics, relatively reliable since the generally practised double-blind peer review system – although cumbersome – is the acknowledged way to guarantee a certain level of quality.

This brief summary of sources in academic writing has made it clear that each of the listed text types has advantages: the learner’s dictionary may be an initial starting point and convenient because of its limited vocabulary. The Wikipedia entry can theoretically be written by any volunteer and this theoretically produces a consensus in the area after a certain time, although in practical terms this is not always guaranteed when one looks at how few changes are made even if the content appears rather dubious and some of it is even flagged by the Wiki administrators as unsupported by (enough) evident or simply too short, a “stub”.

The most important source for state-of-the-art information "from the research front" is the research article, which is produced relatively quickly – and frequently, since it is the most important career requirement for young scientists. Thus, finding relevant research articles in the ever-increasing flood of electronic journals may – not only – be a challenge to young scholars.

2.2. Media Credibility: first Journalists' Doubts, then Readers' Doubts

Although media discourse has changed over the last decades, especially the multimodal design (Kress & Van Leeuwen 1996 and 2001, Ludwig & Gilmore 2005, Smith & Bell 2015), some fundamental problems remain the same: The credibility of web information for journalistic writing has been analysed for a long time. The studies by Metzger and others (e.g. Metzger & Flanagin 2013) have shown that for journalists, traditional information sources like participant interviews have had priority and that they have been suspicious of internet sources in general. Credibility here has two perspectives: journalists need to trust some sources as a basis for truthful argumentations when producing their texts ("source credibility") and readers need to be persuaded to believe some news texts and their producers ("journalistic credibility"). Evaluation for both sides is not easy and has greatly changed over the last two decades, but especially in the last few years with the advent of the debate on fake news. This is a problem not only for the consumers but also for the professionals (Schmied 2017, Barclay 2018). But all this is not easy (Barclay 2018: 182):

> One of the truths about journalism is that checking facts costs money, and as a result the failure to fully check facts is often more attributable to financial considerations than it is to bias or incompetence.

The World Factbook is the perfect example of an almanac-style reference resource, however critical journalists have always questioned its objectivity and credibility bearing in mind that it is "funded by the US Central Intelligence Agency—an organization with a long history of playing fast and loose with the truth" (Barclay 2018: 191).

Today it is not that much easier, when we think that webpages can be used to verify information: What does it mean for its credibility and impartiality that Fact Checker is part of the Washington Post, owned by Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos (www.washingtonpost.com/news/fact-checker), in contrast to Fact Check funded by the Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania (www.factcheck.org)?

Source credibility is of crucial importance for writers of journalistic texts and also has an effect on how much credibility users accord by to journalistic texts. Journalistic credibility has been seriously doubted in the last couple of years. In Germany e.g., right-wing groups attack main-stream journalism by referring to it as *Lügenpresse* ("the lying press"). In other parts of the world, for instance in South Eastern Europe, traditional as well as internet media had probably never managed to gain a credence level that until recently was characteristic of the

German quality press. Thus, Đorđević (2018) has set up credibility criteria and applied them to the Serbian press. She sees credibility from the reader's perspective and not from a journalist's perspective.

2.3. Researcher's Evidence in Linguistic Analysis

Credibility also plays an important role in the analysis of empirical linguistic projects. For some qualitative work, the evidence may be enough if quotations can be found as real language examples; this is an old principle in historical linguistics (cf. Hickey ed. 2010). But then of course it depends on the credibility of the database, and corpus-linguistic compilations always have to find a compromise between convenience sampling and academically-based stratified sampling.

In a more quantitative analysis, the type of statistics used depends to a great extent on the availability of data and the research questions. Thus, in many cases simply descriptive statistics may be satisfactory, in particular at lower levels of academic writing. In other cases, standard analytical statistics should be aimed for, if authors would like to generalise from a dataset that has to be kept as small as possible. Today, students of English (socio- and corpus-)linguistics are well aware of this, they know that two factors determine the credibility of any statistical sample: its size and its representativeness. The big problem of representativeness should neither be taken light-heartedly by young writers of academic or journalistic texts, nor stop the research completely. In many cases, it is very difficult to draw a real random sample and only a stratified collection of the database can be achieved. If researchers indicate as objectively as possible how their database is collected and rather restrict their variation to variables that can be controlled, then the reader can decide for himself or herself how valid the database is for a particular analysis – and the necessary size of the database depends of course on the type of variable and the type of analysis envisaged. For some small applied study, a small do-it-yourself (DIY) corpus may be doable, manageable and even entertaining (Friginal 2018: 114ff).

Despite all our support for a hard statistical analysis wherever possible, we must bear two aspects in mind:

First, a correlation between independent variables will never be perfect (r=1 for positive and r=-1 for negative correlations), so anyone will be able to find counter-examples, but they do not refute basic statements of correlation: PhD theses in sociolinguistics include a correlation of language and social variables. Articles in the popular press include more boosters than articles on the same subject in academic journals. Calculating correlations is always a good basis for a sophisticated discussion even if the correlation is not significant or strong. A careful application of sophisticated methods is already an achievement and it is not the researcher's fault if correlations are not as clear as expected, it is rather a good basis for a new research cycle, from a careful collection of the data, to a diligent application of appropriate statistical tests, and a thoughtful interpretation of the results. In the end, a good description of the data is an acceptable scientific

step, if a good explanation is possible on the basis of clear research hypotheses or research questions, this is already a success. It will be possible only in few cases to go even one step further in our research, a prediction of further developments. Although it is desirable in linguistic research to achieve all three goals and to apply the appropriate statistical procedures for each step, this is neither possible nor desirable in all academic projects.

Second, it is extremely important for a thoughtful interpretation to be aware of fallacies and bear in mind that a correlation is not the same as causation, it is only a necessary condition, but not a sufficient one. So, writers should not jump to conclusions, they can lose their credibility easily. Gries (2013: 245f) gives some striking examples of possible misinterpretations:

- There is a positive correlation between the number of firefighters trying to extinguish a fire and the amount of damage that is caused at the site where the fire was fought. This does of course not mean that the firefighters arrive at the site and destroy as much as they can – the correlation results from a third, confounding variable, the size of the fire: the larger the fire, the more firefighters are called to help extinguish it *and* the more damage the fire causes.
- There is a negative correlation between the amount of hair men have and their income which is unfortunately only due to the effect of a third variable: the men's age.
- There is a positive correlation such that the more likely a drug addict was to go to therapy to get off of his addiction, the more likely he was to die. This is not because the therapy leads to death – the confounding variable in the background correlated with both is the severity of the addiction: the more severely addicted addicts were, the more likely they were to go to therapy, but also the more likely they already were to die.

2.4. A Special Case of Credibility: Intertextuality and Plagiarism

Finally, the much-debated issue of plagiarism is used here to illustrate that credibility can be converted from a negative to a positive force. Traditionally, plagiarism has been viewed as a serious case of "loss of credibility", writers who take over passages from other texts without acknowledging this clearly, discredit themselves and can no longer be regarded as serious, honest writers. However good intertextuality in the sense of using appropriate sources, diligent referencing and careful evaluation can be seen as a way of gaining credibility.

Well before the global availability of the internet, when plagiarism was more difficult and more difficult to detect, Pennycook (1996) argued that "borrowing others' words" should not be directly connected to threats or admonitions, as in most Western traditions, and regarded as a challenge to the moral foundations on which student-teacher relationships are built. He pleaded for accepting patch-writing "as positive and non-transgressive because it is an attempt on the part of

the writer to engage with the linguistic and discursive forms of particular disciplinary fields, as opposed to wholesale copying of entire paragraphs or texts without modification" (Chandrasoma, Thompson & Pennycook 2004: 176). Here, copying is actually seen as an important means of learning, adapting and "digesting" valuable information.

In this line of thinking, many cases of such intertextuality can be interpreted as lack of conscious editing or digesting of information in a text, and this is the task of the writer at the local, micro-level. At this level, writers have to decide whether excerpts from previous texts are so important in their argumentation that they have to be cited literally or whether it is enough to summarise them and integrate them into a new argumentation structure. Intertextuality can then be seen as something positive in a wider academic discourse which writers use in order to add more weight to their arguments (cf. Schmied 2018). This "appropriate way" has to be discussed and practised intensively in writing classes (cf. Buckingham 2016: 128–132), where some young scholars tend to think that after changing a few phrases, the original passages cannot be detected or the reference can be omitted because it is common knowledge.

3. Conclusion: Credibility beyond Academic Writing and Journalism

This contribution tried to show the usefulness of the concept of credibility in academic and in journalistic writing.

From a linguistic perspective, credibility may be an under-researched concept, although it is very important in many studies. In the socio-linguistic tradition, a trustworthy data collection phase is necessary to ensure that the entire research project is carried out on a sound methodological basis and this is why on the one hand, the researcher must constantly work on his/her own credibility and on the other hand, the reader must believe in the credibility of the researcher.

From a formal language-learning perspective, it is important that a learner accepts a teacher as a credible source of information and knowledge. The impact of teacher source credibility on affective and cognitive learning has been studied intensively (e.g. McCroskey, Valencic & Richmond 2009). Finn et al. (2009: 532) provide an "empirical summary of the teacher credibility literature", covering 51 studies on the impact of teacher behaviour on teacher credibility and the influence of teacher credibility on student outcome such as motivation, affective and cognitive learning, communication, etc. As a consequence, modern computer-based language learning, in particular in human–humanoid interaction, must gain credibility with the communicators and learners through appearance and output (e.g. their language). Users must not be daunted or discouraged by machines, they must be made comfortable in order to avoid reactions like "I do not want to talk to a robot" or "I cannot learn serious stuff from a machine". The humanoid communicators of the future must be able to react flexibly to the expectations of the human users, so that they are treated as serious partners, whether learning peers or teaching experts – this kind of credibility is the only solid basis for good machine–human learning.

In general, the commercial metaphor of "credit" has been used in previous writing (e.g. Hyland 2015: 7), where the scholarly publication cycle is presented as a series of moves that is designed to maximise credibility. From a successful publication, researchers may gain "credit", which they may "convert" into more time and equipment for further research and thus progressively increase their "credibility". Of course, there is always the danger of losing or even destroying credibility, if researchers are not sufficiently aware of this credibility and the necessity to increase it constantly through conscientious and careful work – and this applies to novices as well as established writers. As Blommaert (2005) has emphasised, research is located in a matrix which requires uptake by readers if the status and value of a publication depends on what is included in further research, thus influencing or even stimulating the research discourse.

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