Evaluation through quotation as a means of constructing authority in academic discourse

Academic texts are expected to show both critical thinking and originality of their authors. Quotation is one of the main textual devices through which the author creates a contrast between critical evaluation of previous solutions and his or her own originality. The proposed analysis, based on a corpus of research papers on linguistics, allows one to observe complex relations between two interrelated concepts: "author" and "authority". Ideally, the "author" is the source of "new", i.e. originality, expressed in his or her own words. The "authority", on the other side, is supposed to be the source of "known", signalled in the author's text through different ways of quotation and used as a rule in the textual persuasive strategies to construct the argument from authority. However, the goal of each author of an academic text is to gain also authority in his or her discipline. The above delineated simple relation between "author" and "authority" reveals thus to be far more complicated.

Each author within his or her text builds the authority-ethos in the rhetorical sense of "writer's credibility". The quotation, supposed to show author's knowledge of the discussed problems, capacity of critical evaluation of the previous ideas and observance of the academic writing standards, contributes to create author's academic credibility. Apart from authority-ethos, the authors aim also to display their own authority-expertise, based on the originality of the solutions they propose with respect to the previous scholarly discourse. The relation between others' words and author's words is crucial in the author's passage from others' expert authority to the construction of his or her own expert authority. The analysis of the corpus shows three main ways in which the use of quotation, or others' authority, contributes to the creation of author's authority-ethos and authority-expertise.

Since the studies in contrastive rhetoric show the differences among basic concepts of different argument cultures, the analysis begins with a brief outline of the concept of 'author' and 'authority' which influenced the Western standards of intellectual exchange.

I. First of all, the analysis reveals four main signals of implicit and explicit evaluation conveyed while quoting others' ideas in order construct authority-ethos and authority-expertise:
   1) the very fact of quotation:
      The quotation is one of the expected parameters of an academic text, thus contributes to the credibility of the author as a member of the academic reading community.
   2) the choice of quoted texts:
      The author displays his or her academic credibility in numerous ways, eg. through mention of the most significant contributions into the discipline (avoiding of being accused of clamorous
omissions), or, conversely, displaying the width of his or her knowledge by recalling unknown but revealing ideas. Incidentally, this practice contributes also to the creation of others' authority-expertise (formally registered by the so-called impact factor)

3) the choice of content of the quoted texts:
The choice of content of quotation is crucial to the creation of a clear contrast between the "known" and the "new". The choice is strictly connected with two persuasive strategies: a supportive strategy and a polemic strategy, based, respectively, on positive or negative evaluation of others' ideas (see below, II).

4) the length of quotation:
The imposed space limitations of a research paper and the author's desire to establish the most advantageous ratio between "known" and "new" motivate different implicit strategies of iconic evaluation of others' texts (where "more space" implies "more important")

II. Secondly, the quotations reveal to be a part of two main persuasive strategies within the academic argument culture:

1) a supportive strategy of quotation, connected with what in rhetoric is called "argument from authority". A supportive quotation presupposes a positive evaluation of the quoted idea: the author uses another author's already acknowledged authority to support his or her claims. This strategy is based on the substantial similarity between the author's ideas and the quoted ones.

2) a polemical strategy of quotation, connected with what in rhetoric is described as a part of the text called "refutatio". It presupposes a negative evaluation of the quoted ideas. The author uses the quotation in order to display his or her criticism and, by contrast, to underline his or her own originality. This strategy is connected with what Tannen (2002) describes as agonism in the academic discourse.

III. Thirdly, the both above presented strategies are often correlated with a high grade of author's intrusion in the others' words. The analysis of the metadiscourse used to comment on reported ideas allows one to distinguish different base concepts for the proposed axiological scales (such as "right - wrong", 'attractive - unattractive", "conventional - unconventional", "convincing - unconvincing", etc.). Besides, the metadiscoursive comment on quoted ideas permits to distinguish different classes of evaluative lexicon (e.g. commendatives, deservatives, favoritives, adversatives, etc.; see Aschenbrenner 1977).