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Plagiarism in EFL Academic Writing: Students self-reported reasons for internet plagiarism

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ABSTRACT

Studies show that students who cheat at certain levels of education are more likely to do so at work or at later levels of education. One form of academic fraud is plagiarism. Some researchers claim that students deliberately plagiarize, while others plagiarize because they do not understand how to properly cite, paraphrase, or refer to sources. Therefore, this study aims to understand English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students' self-reported reason for internet plagiarism in Academic Writing class, as understanding the causes of student plagiarism is essential to properly addressing the problem. To obtain the data, a survey of respondents' reason for plagiarize was distributed to second, fourth and sixth trimester students of the Department of English in a private university. A total of 85 students participated in the survey. As a result, we found that some people, despite having a high level of understanding of plagiarism, admitted to intentionally plagiarizing for various reasons. Additionally, research shows that people do not understand that claiming work from a source as their own without acknowledging the source is part of plagiarism.

1. Introduction

The study of academic integrity is of great interest to researchers and educators. Various studies have shown that students who misbehave at a particular level of education tend to exhibit the same behavior at subsequent levels of education, even in the workplace (Nonis & Swift, 2001), which can lead to corruption in the workplace (Qudsyi et al., 2018).

Academic fraud is a persistent problem at all educational levels, including the university level (Jurdi et al., 2011). At the varsity level, younger students are more likely to cheat than at other levels (Jurdi et al., 2011; Nonis & Swift, 2001). Various motives have also been reported as reasons for student misbehavior (Al Darwish & Sadeqi, 2016).

One of the many forms of academic misconduct is plagiarism (Pino & Smith, 2003). Park (2003) explains that plagiarism involves copying (in whole or in part) someone else's words or ideas, stealing them, and claiming them as your own without acknowledging their origin. In addition, dealing with plagiarism is might complex, uncomfortable and burdensome. Thus, research suggests that it is easier to set up anti-plagiarism programs (Elander et al., 2010).

In relation to students' motives for doing plagiarism, research shows a variety of reasons, such as to achieve better grades (Al Darwish & Sadeqi, 2016; Robles et al., 2020), to pass the class, or simply that they are lazy and have a poor time management (Batane, 2010). Additionally, a plethora studies mentioned the possible factors behind students' plagiarism, such as lack of confidence (Al Darwish & Sadeqi, 2016), insufficient understanding of how to quote properly (Park, 2003), and inadequate rules or procedures to prevent plagiarism (Bennett, 2005).

According to one survey, most students still do not understand when they have plagiarized (Ballantine & Larres, 2012). Park (2003) states that plagiarism includes a variety of actions, including taking the entire content as one's own, copying portions of the material but omitting citations, or paraphrasing without proper citation. It is described as included. However, this study points out that most students still do not understand when they are plagiarizing (Ballantine & Larres, 2012). This ignorance can therefore lead to unintentional plagiarism (Park, 2003). Plagiarism, on the other hand, is considered unethical. This is because it is intellectual property theft that hinders the creation of innovation, reduces ingenuity, and can undermine the integrity and reputation of institutions (Ballantine et al., 2015).

In addition, the role of internet in contributing to large-scale plagiarism has been pointed out in many studies (e.g. Batane, 2010; and Jones, 2011). Research to understand the phenomenon of institutional plagiarism is therefore necessary to provide evidence on the subject. For this reason, and especially given the lack of research on the subject in Second Language Writing context, this study aimed to analyze students' self-reported reason for plagiarize.

2. Method

Researchers distributed questionnaires to reveal students' conceptualizations and perceptions of plagiarism. The questionnaire consisted of open and closed questions. A web questionnaire was used to distribute the questionnaire, and a total of 85 students, 61 female (71.8%) and 24 male (28.2%), participated in the questionnaire. Participants in this study were second semester (n=19, 22.4%), fourth semester (n=26, 30.6%) and sixth semester (n=40, 47%) students of English Department at a private university. Table 1 shows the demographic information of the participants.

Additionally, in collecting the data, the researchers did not collect participants' names, thus, students are free to express their perception in the study. To provide more deep analysis, five student interview segments were conducted synchronously via the Zoom application. The data were then transcribed and analyzed the item ratio of the private questionnaire and obtained the data. Finally, NVivo was used to analyze open issues.

Table 1. Participants' demographic information

Variable		F	%
Age:	17	1	1.2
	19	15	17.6
	20	28	32.9
	21	24	28.2
	22	14	16.5
	23	1	1.2
	24	2	2.4
Gender:	Female	61	71.8
	Male	24	28.2
Semester:	2nd	19	22.4
	4th	26	30.6
	6th	40	47

3.   Results and discussion

3.1.   The Result of the Close-ended Questionnaire

As shown in Table 2, most students know what plagiarism is (n=84, 98.8%) and understand that it is illegal (n=76, 89.4%). showed. Furthermore, when asked about their experiences in class, students affirmed that their teachers had already talked about plagiarism in class (n = 71, 83.5). However, only 33 students (38.8%) reported that their teachers used plagiarism tools to check student submissions. Additionally, only 31 students (36.5%) were aware of the plagiarism tools teachers use to check student submissions.

Table 2. Students' conceptualization of plagiarism

Item	Proportion	
	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
Know what plagiarism is	84	98.8
Know that plagiarism is illegal	76	89.4
Teachers pay attention to plagiarism in student work by talking about it in class	71	83.5
Teachers pay attention to plagiarism in student work by using plagiarism tools to check students' work	33	38.8
Know plagiarism tools used in faculty	31	36.5

Table 3 shows the results of participants' confessions to plagiarism and cheating in the classroom. In general, the results showed that most participants (n=31, 36.5%) admitted that they sometimes copied from the Internet without credit. Thirty students said they rarely did this (35.3%), while 13 students (15.3%) and 11 students (12.9%) said they could copy from the internet without specifying credit. I said often or not copy at all. Regarding photocopies of books, "never" (n=30, 35.3%) was the highest, followed by "sometimes" (n=25, 29.4%), "rarely" (n=23, 27.1%), and "often." (n=7, 8.2%). Furthermore, the majority of students (n=51, 60%) admitted that they had never

cheated on a classmate's work. On the other hand, copying from others occurs infrequently (n=21, 24.7%), occasionally (n=12, 14.1%), and frequently (n=1, 1.2%).

Table 3. Students' cheating and plagiarism assertion

Item	Often		Sometimes		Rare		Never	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Copying from the internet without giving credits	13	15.3	31	36.5	30	35.3	11	12.9
Copying from books without correctly quoting	7	8.2	25	29.4	23	27.1	30	35.3
Cheating other students' work	1	1.2	12	14.1	21	24.7	51	60

3.2. The Result of the Open-ended Questionnaire and Interview

The interview data were thematically analyzed using NVivo software to encode repeated semantic patterns in the transcription, linking each code and grouping them under the same theme. The first question aims to clarify whether you are familiar with the plagiarism tools used in your department. Of the 31 students who answered yes, 10 (32.3%) answered incorrectly and 21 (67.7%) answered correctly.

A second open question was why students could copy and paste books from the Internet without writing the source. The first and most frequent reason is simply that you are too lazy to do the task. So they plagiarize. Therefore, 34 references were coded. The second most common reason is limited time to complete a task with 19 coded references. The third and fourth most frequently cited reason is a lack of understanding and knowledge of the material on how to properly cite 15 and 12 coded sources, respectively. Secondly, the accessibility of information from the Internet contributes to seven coded references. On the other hand, other reasons that students cite for plagiarism are to get higher scores and to do their work easier and faster, and that there are no penalties for doing so, and each category has his 5 references are coded. Finally, the least obvious reason is the lack of student creativity.

To clarify the results, we conducted semi-s tructured interviews with five participants. The same question asked me to state the reason for the copy without citing the source. Student 1 explained:

I do not understand the material presented by the lecturer, so I take it from other sources to answer the questions. Besides that, I can find the answer on the internet, which I can access easily. (Student 1)

On the other hand, Student 2 mentioned:

For me, there are two reasons for plagiarism. First, because of time constraints. When I must quickly submit assignments, I took the answers from the internet. Second, because of my lack of

knowledge, taking from other sources without mentioning the reference is plagiarism. I just found out that. (Student 2)

Surprisingly, Student 2 was not aware that he/she plagiarized. Similarly, Student 3 also stated:

I copy and paste from the internet to make me easier to answer the questions. I think it's not plagiarism. Because I didn't take the whole explanation, I just took some ideas related to my assignment. (Student 3)

Besides, students also mentioned that lack of creativity and laziness as motives for plagiarism. Other than that, there is no punishment for doing so; making students do repeated plagiarism. Student 4 credited his/her reason:

Because I don't have creativity and I'm lazy, I end up just copying and pasting, either from the internet, books, or friends' work. Also, the lecturer has no consequences for copying, so I'm not afraid to do that. (Student 4)

Lastly, Student 5 clai med that he/she needed to achieve a higher degree, so he/she plagiarized. Below is the statement:

Because the sources I get, such as research journals and books, have accurate and reliable information, I chose to copy from there. It can increase the score of my assignments. After all, I have to get high marks. (Student 5)

3.3. Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine students' perceptions and understanding of plagiarism. In general, the findings indicated that students claimed to know what plagiarism was and agreed that the practice was illegal. Participants also said that their teachers were concerned about mentioning plagiarism in class. However, less than half of the participants said their instructors provided plagiarism tools in their courses. Teacher ignorance, as expressed in open questions and interviews, leads to the fact that students underestimate the topic of plagiarism in the classroom. Khathayut and Walker-Gleaves (2021) argue that the more seriously teachers take plagiarism, the better students understand it. However, in this study, students said they received no penalties for plagiarism from their instructors.

Most of the students claimed to know what plagiarism is, but the results of her interview sessions showed otherwise. Participants did not fully understand the concept of plagiarism. This study states that a lack of knowledge about plagiarism leads to unintentional plagiarism (Ng & Yip, 2019; Park, 2003). A number of studies have therefore suggested intervention designs to reduce plagiarism (e.g. see Elander et al., 2010; Obeid & Hill, 2017; Walker, 2008).

Furthermore, the findings also revealed that students copied more from Internet sources than from books or the work of friends. This result is consistent with previous studies. In particular, the growth and availability of the Internet has been identified as a factor in the increase in plagiarism

(Howard, 2007; Ison, 2015). Studies, therefore, argue that using plagiarism detection software is a strategy to reduce plagiarism (Batane, 2010; Buckley & Cowap, 2013; Howard, 2007).

The result of this study also revealed that students cited various reasons for plagiarism, including laziness and lack of understanding of correct citations. This finding is consistent with the work of Batane (2010) that students plagiarize because they are lazy. Bretag (2016) found that negative situations such as laziness and poor time management can affect students' academic integrity.

This current study has limitations. First, when analyzing the data, we did not examine whether demographic variables such as gender, age, and level of education influence study results. Therefore, future research should examine the impact of these variables on student perceptions. Second, when examining students' perceptions of plagiarism, data were collected only from surveys. Indeed, it is necessary to test students' understanding of plagiarism in order to obtain empirical data to support research findings. Finally, it is also necessary to observe lecturers' awareness and understanding of plagiarism for further research.

4. Conclusion

In summary, this study, which included EFL students as participants, explored students' conceptualizations and perceptions of plagiarism in Academic Writing classroom. Although the students claimed to understand the concept of plagiarism, a thorough analysis of the interviews proved they were unaware they were plagiarizing. Various motivations for plagiarism discovered in this study include laziness, limited time to complete the task, lack of understanding of proper citations, and lack of student creativity. The results of this study suggest the importance of classroom intervention design in raising student awareness of plagiarism. Thus, it is suggested for further study to develop a design of intervention to reduce students' plagiarism level.

5. Acknowledgements

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