

AN UNDERSTANDING OF PLAGIARISM; ITS FORMS AND PREVENTION STRATEGIES FOR ESL LEARNERS TO IMPROVE THEIR ACADEMIC WRITING

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Abstract

Effective academic writing skills provide basis for integrated and coherent text. The coherency and integrity depends on the accurate utilization of proper academic skills without copying or buying piece of writing to present for evaluation by learners. This study is empirical in nature and has employed mixed method research to gauge the intended results with better understanding. The data collection instruments are questionnaire and semi-structured interviews from the learners and academics respectively. The data has been analyzed through SPSS and described with the help of simple percentage. The study reveals that plagiarism can be avoided to great extent with the help of corresponding strategies.

Key words: Academic writing skills, plagiarism, forms of plagiarism, prevention strategies, ESL learners and educators.

Introduction

A number of researchers have defined academic writing and integrity in different ways, as Fishman (2016, p.8) stated that academic writing is any piece of writing for the purpose of education and academics so as the academic integrity is writing with values and standard morals in harmony for ethical learning and teaching. Therefore plagiarism is considered as the crucial misconduct of scholars with harms the positive productivity of researchers as well as learners. A number of tutorials and lectures are being offered by academic circles to explicate plagiarism, its types and how it can be avoided in academic papers. Plagiarism can be defined in a number of ways but the most common disruption is intellectual theft, academic dishonesty, cheating or using someone's ideas without referring the acknowledgement of reference to the original author (Gibaldi, 1999). Furthermore, Janowski (2002) specified plagiarism as buying and downloading any piece of writing and offering it as one's own without rephrasing and acknowledgment, and giving notions without proper documentation (p. 26). Plagiarism is not a new term, its history lies back in old Rome as they used "plagiarius" for plunderer or kidnapper, 5.500 years ago.

The process of plagiarism is multi-causal as it involves the issues of development of technology: manipulation of information, distribution, access and involves social setting issues and choices and characteristics as motivation, beliefs, and values (Sureda, Comas & Urbina, 2005; Sureda, Comas & Morey, 2009). Thus, it is worth noting that plagiarism can harm morals and morals of future researchers and intellectual writings of authors. According to Mazzeo (2007), plagiarism has been identified as developmental feature and definite form of language. Yeo states that academia is the major source of plagiarism and has been noticed widely in the domain of education (Yeo 2007). The act of plagiarism has been identified at all levels of education among

learners of all levels but learners of Foreign and Second language have high percentage with interesting and different reasons. Ison (2012) specified plagiarism as language-learning process and linguistic in nature which is responsible for competence and proficiency in particular language. Plagiarism is considered a fundamental and contributing factor in second language learners. The major differences in cultures and problems related with academic are due to writing of L2 which are supposed as explanations. However, developmental skills are even needed in the L1 along with discourse skills, so the factors due to language usage also contribute to plagiarism (Villalva 2006; Howard, Serviss & Rodrigue 2010).

The disparity in expectations and confusions is the major cause ESL learners to commit plagiarism to great extent. According to Hall (2005, p.12), expectations from L2 learners, confusions and misconception cause plagiarism. Furthermore, substandard writing skills and language are the major causes of plagiarism in ESL learners. Thus, it can be noted that the learners are more inclined to copy the work of competent language users and natives due to the diminutive competence of English language and inadequate language skills. This study is intended to explore possible causes to commit plagiarism and strategies to prevent plagiarism on the end of learners and teachers respectively.

Literature Review

This particular section is subjected to situate the area of research from broader perspective on the basis of related knowledge from literature in academic domains about the issues of plagiarism in ESL context. It has been noticed that the act of plagiarism is subjected to increase in reported cases and in academic circles more rapidly (Price, J. & Price, R., 2005). It has been observed in a research at Ohio University by Broeckelman and Pollock in the year 2005 about the perceptions and attitudes of learners and instructors towards academic dishonesty, and according to those outcomes a huge number of learners had admitted that they had been involved in numerous activities of dishonesty related to their academic writing (Broeckelman, 2006). According to Sheard, Markham, & Dick, (2003), lack of awareness is also another major reason of doing plagiarism in academic writing by learners. Gullifer and Tyson's (2014) specified that 3405 learners in Australian university commit plagiarism due to misperception, confusion and lack of awareness still having read the policy of plagiarism. Scanlon and Neumann (2002) stated that they conducted a survey on in 700 students from nine colleges on doing plagiarism on internet and revealed that 30% of the defendants replicate or copy text without providing references and citations.

A number of scholars have studied the phenomenon of plagiarism and suggested strategies for the eradication of plagiarism. Gururajan and Roberts (2005) conducted a research to observe attitudes and perceptions of learners towards this ethical and moral dishonesty. According to the results, the learners and teachers justified their act of dishonesty by accusing workload as the major reason. Even authors of research, instructors and teachers, other academic staff and supervisors are subjected to plagiarism (Gokmenoglu, 2017). A qualitative study had been carried out by Ochoa & Cueva (2016) to explore academic, personal and social reasons responsible for plagiarism, which explores that absence of supplement, lack of attention, time constraints, vocational disorientation and lack of time in the process of writing and implementing strategies to motivate and inspire learner lead learners to plagiarism.

Forms and types of plagiarism

A number of forms of plagiarism have been committed by learners of different levels. According to a survey with the help of Turnitin to check plagiarism administered 879 secondary and higher educators which helped to identify 10 forms of plagiarism according to "The Plagiarism

Spectrum” as; Aggregator, Recycle, Remix, Hybrid, Re-tweet CTRL-C, 404 Error, Find-Replace, Mashup and Clone. CTRL-C plagiarism (8.9), Mashup plagiarism (9.1) and Clone (9.5 out of 10) are the groups with most recurrent detected case. Turnitin’s most perplexing identifiers are Clone, Mashup and CTRL-C. Clone is submitting and stealing someone’s work, Mashup is the mixing of different papers without proper citations and CTRL-C is taking substantial part of someone’s work without giving due credit and making any changes (Turnitin, 2017). Thus it has been notified in accordance to researches that learners tend to steal and use someone’s work for academic activities, research papers and assignments (Bretag, T., & Mahmud, S. 2009).

Strategies to avoid plagiarism

A number of strategies can be employed to avoid the act of plagiarism in academic writing which can have positive impact on the avoidance of plagiarism (Carroll 2002).

No quick fix

1. Academic writing skills and plagiarism prevention must be taught at all levels of education as these require a huge amount of time to enhance writing skills and preventing plagiarism.
2. The basic strategy is to create awareness among learners about the act and constituents of plagiarism as it is difficult to illustrate exact identification of plagiarism.
3. The educators are required to teach learner about avoidance of plagiarism by writing their piece of academic writing with proper sources as in the form of references and citation.
4. Summarizing, paraphrasing, note taking skills and citation techniques with proper feedback helps learners to improve their writing and helps to avoid plagiarism.
5. The specific instructions about the topic helps learner to be limited to one topic and there are less chances of plagiarism (Harris 2001, 49).
6. The course which is intended to be taught and have assignment on it must be fresh by slight changes with different assignments and material.

Research question

This study is intended to answer certain questions as:

- Are the learners knowledgeable about plagiarism for academic writing?
- Why do learners commit plagiarism in their academic writing?
- Are plagiarism prevention strategies affective in academic writing?

Research design and methodology

The data has been collected from the learners and academics from the Islamia University of Bahawalpur with the help of purposive sampling technique. This research has been carried out on the basis of mixed method approach as close ended questionnaire by using Likert scale and semi-structured interviews have used to collect data from learners and academics respectively. The sample size consists of 50 students and 13 academics have been chosen for data collection. The results have been analyzed with the help of SPSS. The data from spread sheets has been used to draw tables for better understanding.

Demographic profiling

Table 1

Qualification	Numbers	Percentage
Learners		
PhD	6	12
M.S	25	50
Master	13	26
B. S Hons	6	12
Academics		
AP	5	38.5
Lecturer	8	61.5

Findings and Discussions

On the basis of data collection tool and their analysis, the researchers have found a number of aspects which provide basis to understand the phenomenon of plagiarism and related strategies to prevent it in academic writing. This particular study has revealed the lack of teaching of academic skills and the related techniques to avoid plagiarism as the teachers have viewed the perspective of teaching these skills at the very early stage of leaning at university level. The university learners are of different backgrounds and have studies differently so they have not been exposed to effective academic writing skills along with the best ways to cite and reference particular piece of writing which cause the production of plagiarized writing. It has been observed that learners are required to be trained fully for effective writing as social cognitive learning theory emphasizes the need for complete guide which helps to adapt competencies, social practices, mores and transmission of language (Bandura 1999).

Are the learners knowledgeable about plagiarism for academic writing?

On the basis of provided literature review, the learners are able to define plagiarism accordingly which leads to the unclear definition of plagiarism. Thus, the results have revealed that a huge percentage off students was referring the knowledge of plagiarism as “Using data without referring to original author” and their percentage is 78. “Copy and paste without citing sources” as from internet sources and books has been agreed by 50% learners when they have been subjected to identify the true nature of plagiarism. The respondents have been agreed to “Using words without referring to original author” by 82%. On the other hand 70% learners agreed for “Utilizing ability to summarize, paraphrase, reference and cite information sources”. These finding identify that a huge number of students is able to utilize ability to summarize, paraphrase, reference and cite information sources according to the prescribed referencing styles of their department.

Table 2

Components	Numbers	Percentage
Using data without referring to original author	39	78
Copy and paste without citing sources	25	50
Using words without referring to original author	41	82
Utilizing ability to summarize, paraphrase, reference and cite information sources	35	70
Unable to use software for referencing and citing.	34	68

On the other hand, the academics have been interviewed for the corresponding knowledge of the plagiarism who have identified that the students are mostly unable to recognize the terms and are

not good at summarize, paraphrase, reference and cite information sources and have found a number of their academic writings as in the form of thesis, articles, proposals and synopsis. It has been observed that a number of students as 68% learners are unable to use software to tackle referencing and citing.

Why do learners commit plagiarism in their academic writings?

This particular study has observed that there are a number of reasons for committing plagiarism in academic writing by learners and educators. The research has also observed that the learners tend to plagiarize although they were aware about the offensive nature of plagiarism. Almost 70% learners agreed for plagiarizing due to the lack of awareness of the offensive nature of plagiarism. The learners were subjected to commit plagiarism by 46% due to lack of proper orientation. The study has also revealed that 60% learners were subjected to plagiarism due to poor time management regarding the preparation of their assignments, papers and academic writing. Similarly, the study find out that 68% learner commit plagiarism due to the lack of proper academic writing skills.

Table 3

Components	Numbers	Percentage
Lack of awareness of the offensive nature of plagiarism	35	70
Lack of proper orientation leads learners toward plagiarism	23	46
Poor time management leads learners toward plagiarism	30	60
Lack of proper academic writing skills leads learners toward plagiarism	34	68

On the other hand, the result from interviews revealed that students were subjected to commit plagiarism due to the inefficiency of academics to detect act of plagiarism by learners. It has also been observed that academics were unable to attend learners properly due to workload as the educators have to handle a number of students with a number of different tasks. So if the academics and educators can develop an environment to detect and punish students properly only then plagiarism can be avoided at this level.

Are plagiarism prevention strategies affective in academic writing?

This particular research question has been analyzed with the help of findings from the semi-structured interview. Almost all teachers have agreed on the usage of utilizing all the corresponding strategies for the prevention of plagiarism.1. Academic writing skills and plagiarism prevention must be taught at all levels of education as these require a huge amount of time to enhance writing skills and preventing plagiarism. The basic strategy is to create awareness among learners about the act and constituents of plagiarism to prevent plagiarism. Additionally it has been observed that the educators are required to teach learner about avoidance of plagiarism by writing their piece of academic writing with proper sources as in the form of references and citation. A number of educators have focused on summarizing, paraphrasing, note taking skills and citation techniques to avoid plagiarism.

Thus it has been observed from the gathered data that specific instructions about the topic helps learner to be limited to one topic and there are less chances of plagiarism and it is also noticed to keep course fresh by slight changes with different assignments and material.

Conclusions

This particular study has identified that learner possess related awareness of plagiarism and they commit plagiarism in their academic writing intentionally and unintentionally and a number of

strategies have been employed for the prevention of plagiarism. This study helps to find that there are number of forms of plagiarism and among all CTRL-C plagiarism (8.9), Mashup plagiarism (9.1) and Clone (9.5 out of 10) are the groups with most recurrent detected cases. Moreover, students have been observed committing plagiarism in paraphrasing, summarizing and direct quotation without using quotation marks. Lack of awareness of the offensive nature of plagiarism, lack of proper orientation, poor time management and lack of proper academic writing skills leads learners toward plagiarism. Thus on the basis of findings, it can be concluded that due to different rhetorical traditions, values and perceptions learners need to be trained well at every level of education to prevent plagiarism to improve academic writing. This study has been done in accordance to the study titled "Beyond the Plagiarism Checker: Helping Nonnative English Speakers (NNESs) Avoid Plagiarism" by Sowell J. (2018) which helps to provide sound basis to check the idea of plagiarism, its forms and strategies to prevent plagiarism in academic writing.

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