Strategies for improving students' awareness of plagiarism

Nguyen Thi Dan Tam

Faculty of Global Languages and Cultures

Hong Bang International University, Vietnam

Abstract

Plagiarism is a serious issue for all educational institutions. Therefore, providing students with proper knowledge and skills to avoid plagiarism is essential. This study reports a project which demonstrates strategies to help university students improve their awareness of plagiarism. It was conducted at a private university in Ho Chi Minh City. The project had 277 participants who were students of English majors. This was a mix-method study. Results show that strategies applied in the project were effective.

*Key words: plagiarism, strategies

1. Introduction

Helgesson & Eriksson (2015) suggested that plagiarism means using someone else's intellectual product. Moreover, plagiarism can be changing the semantics of texts or adopting critical ideas and contributions of others (Alzahrani, Salim, & Abraham, 2011). Anderson, and Steneck (2011) added that plagiarism is the misrepresentation of someone's work, without proper acknowledgement of the original authors.

Ramzan, Munir, Siddique, & Asif (2012) reported that a significant number of students in Pakistan admitted that they plagiarized intentionally. Ehrich, Howard, Mu, & Bokosmaty (2016) claim that plagiarism among students has been increasing in Australia and around the world. For example, 80% of university students in Australia plagiarized (Shang, 2019). In Nigeria, a study showed that plagiarism was growing in the scholarly communities (Olutola, 2016). The situation of plagiarism is an alert when it has been reported in many countries including Hong Kong (Li, 2015), China (Hu & Shen, 2020;

James, Miller, & Wyckoff, 2019), Iraq (Ismail, 2018), New Zealand (Adam, Anderson, & Spronken-Smith, 2017), South Africa (Mahabeer, & Pirtheepal, 2019) and Indonesia (Santosa, Paramartha, & Absari, 2019).

Many studies reported various strategies of avoiding plagiarism for students. Landau, Druen, and Arcuri (2002) provided students with skills for paraphrasing. Similarly, Jackson (2006) applied an interactive Web-based tutorial to train 2,829 students to avoid plagiarism. Teaching proper citation was applied for 19 postgraduate and 34 graduate students in a study conducted by Fazilatfar, Elhambakhsh and Allami (2018). Hidayat, Suhartoyo, and Fikri (2020) trained students how to use direct quotation technique correctly. In Taiwan, an online writing tutorial namely *DWright* system was implemented (Liu, Lu, Lin, & Hsu, 2018). Kettel and DeFauw (2018) used RRLC strategies (read, reread, list, compose) to equip students with skills to paraphrase without plagiarism.

In addition to training students to avoid plagiarism, strategies to detect plagiarism using software among students also reported (Nirmala & Jayaraman, 2020). The majority of studies stated that Turnitin was an effective software in avoiding plagiarism (Stander, 2020; Alrabaiah, & Zaitoun, 2019; Meo, & Talha, 2019; Shang, 2019; Daoud, Nova & Utami, 2018). In other studies, iThenticate was used (Aceron, Perez, & Gequinto, 2021; Soltani, & Jalilifar, 2020). Not using available software, Kolhar and Alameen (2020) designed an anti-plagiarism software to detect plagiarism.

2. Research Methods

This is a mixed-method research which was conducted in the first semester at a private university in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam in 2020. This study has two phases: investigating students' understandings, attitudes, and experiences on plagiarism; and training skills for students to avoid plagiarism. 120 students participated in phase One of the study and 277 students participated in phase Two of the study.

In phase One, questionnaires were sent to students to collect data. In Phase two, the procedure of improving students' awareness of plagiarism was divided into two stages: training writing skills including using software for students and organizing seminars for larger groups of students. Paired Samples Tests were used to evaluate the effectiveness of using software and training skills in improving students' understanding of plagiarism. T-test in SPSS was employed to analyse collected data.

Two strategies were applied to improve students' awareness of plagiarism: training using anti-plagiarism software and writing skills; and organizing seminars. These two strategies were acted as follows:

2.1 Training using anti-plagiarism software and writing skills

There were two groups in this section: group 1(n=24), and group 2 (n=31). The training procedure for these two groups had four steps:

Step 1: Students in two groups were assigned to have a semi-controlled writing task. The topic was about 'the mid-autumn festival'. Students were requested to write a paragraph in 20 minutes without the word limitation.

Step 2: After 20 minutes, students were asked to visit the website smallseotools.com and upload their work for checking plagiarism. Students then were requested to send the reports of percentage of similarity to the lecturer (also the researcher).

Step 3: Students were taught about citing, and paraphrasing techniques for three weeks (nine hours).

Step 4: Students were asked to revise the paragraph about the Mid-Autumn Festival they had written before, using citing and paraphrasing techniques; then, uploading their works to the website smallseotools.com to check for plagiarism again, and compare the difference.

2.2 Organizing seminars

277 students were divided into four groups to attend four seminars. In each seminar, students were equipped a comprehensive understanding of concepts of plagiarism as well as ways to avoid plagiarism. To measure the effectiveness of the seminars, before each seminar, students in every group were invited to answer nine key questions about plagiarism via Kahoot game. After the seminar, students were asked to answer the nine questions again to compare the improvement of their awareness.

3. Results

3.1 Training using anti-plagiarism software and writing skills

This section compares the effectiveness of training using anti-plagiarism software and writing skills on two groups of students.

Figure 1. Group 1: Pre-test and Post-test Results

Paired Samples Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	GROUP1B4TRAINING	31.13	24	18.475	3.771
	GROUP1AFTERTRAINING	39.96	24	22.338	4.560

Paired Samples Correlations

		N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1	GROUP1B4TRAINING & GROUP1AFTERTRAINING	24	.941	<.001

Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference Lower	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference Upper			
Pair 1	GROUP1B4TRAINING - GROUP1AFTERTRAINING	-8.833	7.960	1.625	-12.195	-5.472	-5.436	23	<.001

As seen in Figure 1, the mean of Group 1 before training (Pre-test) is 31.13 while the mean of Group 1 after training (Post-test) is 39.96. The difference between two means is -8.833, which means the mean of Post-test is higher than that of Pre-test. In addition, the

Sig. (2-tailed) is 0.001<5%, which means the paired differences are meaningful. Therefore, we can conclude that the training in this section for Group 1 is effective.

Similarly, as seen in Figure 2, the mean of Group 2 before training (Pre-test) is 21.84 while the mean of Group 1 after training (Post-test) is 27.45. The difference between two means is -5.613, which means the mean of Post-test is higher than that of Pre-test. In addition, the Sig. (2-tailed) is 0.001<5%, which means the paired differences are meaningful. Therefore, we can conclude that the training in this section for Group 2 is effective, too.

Figure 2. Group 2: Pre-test and Post-test Results

Paired Samples Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	GROUP2B4TRAINING	21.84	31	14.337	2.575
	GROUP2AFTERTRAINING	27.45	31	17.376	3.121

Paired Samples Correlations

		N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1	GROUP2B4TRAINING & GROUP2AFTERTRAINING	31	.873	<.001

Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences							
					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pair 1	GROUP2B4TRAINING - GROUP2AFTERTRAINING	-5.613	8.523	1.531	-8.739	-2.487	-3.667	30	<.001

3.2 Organizing seminars

This section compares the effectiveness of organizing seminars on four groups of students.

Figure 3. Four groups: Pre-test and Post-test Results

Paired Samples Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	GROUP1B4SEMINAR	36.00	9	9.447	3.149
	GROUP1AFTERSEMINAR	48.33	9	8.261	2.754
Pair 2	GROUP2B4SEMINAR	37.89	9	8.824	2.941
	GROUP2AFTERSEMINAR	46.22	9	9.589	3.196
Pair 3	GROUP3B4SEMINAR	40.44	9	9.761	3.254
	GROUP3AFTERSEMINAR	46.11	9	8.007	2.669
Pair 4	GROUP4B4SEMINAR	39.33	9	9.566	3.189
	GROUP4AFTERSEMINAR	50.67	9	7.382	2.461

Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences							
					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pair 1	GROUP1B4SEMINAR - GROUP1AFTERSEMINAR	-12.333	4.472	1.491	-15.771	-8.896	-8.273	8	<.001
Pair 2	GROUP2B4SEMINAR - GROUP2AFTERSEMINAR	-8.333	5.220	1.740	-12.346	-4.321	-4.789	8	.001
Pair 3	GROUP3B4SEMINAR - GROUP3AFTERSEMINAR	-5.667	6.384	2.128	-10.574	-.760	-2.663	8	.029
Pair 4	GROUP4B4SEMINAR - GROUP4AFTERSEMINAR	-11.333	9.083	3.028	-18.315	-4.352	-3.743	8	.006

As seen in Figure 3, the mean of Group 1 before seminar (Pre-test) is 36.00 while the mean of Group 1 after seminar (Post-test) is 48.33. The difference between two means is -12.333, which means the mean of Post-test is higher than that of Pre-test. In addition, the Sig. (2-tailed) is 0.001<5%, which means the paired differences are meaningful. Therefore, we can conclude that the seminar in this section for Group 1 is effective.

As seen in Figure 3, the mean of Group 2 before seminar (Pre-test) is 37.89 while the mean of Group 2 after seminar (Post-test) is 46.22. The difference between two means is -8.333, which means the mean of Post-test is higher than that of Pre-test. In addition, the

Sig. (2-tailed) is 0.001<5%, which means the paired differences are meaningful. Therefore, we can conclude that the seminar in this section for Group 2 is effective.

As seen in Figure 3, the mean of Group 3 before seminar (Pre-test) is 40.44 while the mean of Group 3 after seminar (Post-test) is 46.11. The difference between two means is -5.667, which means the mean of Post-test is higher than that of Pre-test. In addition, the Sig. (2-tailed) is 0.029<5%, which means the paired differences are meaningful. Therefore, we can conclude that the seminar in this section for Group 3 is effective.

As seen in Figure 3, the mean of Group 4 before seminar (Pre-test) is 39.33 while the mean of Group 3 after seminar (Post-test) is 50.67. The difference between two means is -11.333, which means the mean of Post-test is higher than that of Pre-test. In addition, the Sig. (2-tailed) is 0.006<5%, which means the paired differences are meaningful. Therefore, we can conclude that the seminar in this section for Group 4 is effective.

4. Discussions and conclusion

Three results in this project align with many previous studies. First, the study found that before training, there was a high percentage of plagiarism among students. This finding is similar with other studies including (Bokosmaty, 2016; Olutola, 2016; Shang, 2019). Second, this study proved that providing students with writing skills for paphrasing and proper citations was effective to avoid plagiarism. This result supports Druen, and Arcuri (2002), Fazilatfar, Elhambakhsh and Allami, (2018), Hidayat, Suhartoyo, and Fikri (2020). Third, the study discovered that training students on how to use anti-plagiarism software would help them reduce the similarities in their writing. This result is supported by (Nirmala & Jayaraman, 2020). Finally, this study added a new result that by organizing seminars would improve students' understanding of plagiarism.

Acknowledgment

References

Aceron, R. M., Perez, L. G., & Gequinto, A. C. (2021). Filipino Teachers' Perspectives on the Effectiveness of Online Grammar Checkers and Plagiarism Detectors. Solid State Technology, 64(2), 1637-1641.

Adam, L., Anderson, V., & Spronken-Smith, R. (2017). 'It's not fair': policy discourses and students' understandings of plagiarism in a New Zealand university. Higher Education, 74(1), 17-32.

Adhikari, S. (2018). Beyond culture: Helping international students avoid plagiarism. Journal of International Students, 8(1), 375-388.

Alzahrani, S. M., Salim, N., & Abraham, A. (2011). Understanding plagiarism linguistic patterns, textual features, and detection methods. IEEE Transactions on Systems, Man, and Cybernetics, Part C (Applications and Reviews), 42(2), 133-149.

Anderson, M. S., & Steneck, N. H. (2011, January). The problem of plagiarism. In Urologic Oncology: Seminars and Original Investigations (Vol. 29, No. 1, pp. 90-94). Elsevier.

Arce Espinoza, L., & Monge Nájera, J. (2015). How to correct teaching methods that favour plagiarism: recommendations from teachers and students in a Spanish language distance education university. Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education, 40(8), 1070-1078.

Babaii, E., & Nejadghanbar, H. (2017). Plagiarism among Iranian graduate students of language studies: Perspectives and causes. Ethics & behavior, 27(3), 240-258.

Daoud, S., Alrabaiah, H., & Zaitoun, E. (2019, December). Technology for promoting academic integrity: The impact of using turnitin on reducing plagiarism. In 2019 International Arab Conference on Information Technology (ACIT) (pp. 178-181). IEEE.

Ehrich, J., Howard, S. J., Mu, C., & Bokosmaty, S. (2016). A comparison of Chinese and Australian university students' attitudes towards plagiarism. Studies in Higher Education, 41(2), 231-246.

Fazilatfar, A. M., Elhambakhsh, S. E., & Allami, H. (2018). An investigation of the effects of citation instruction to avoid plagiarism in EFL academic writing assignments. Sage open, 8(2), 2158244018769958.

Hayati, K. R., Zawawi, Z., & Sholihatin, E. (2020). Critical Literacy Model On Students In Preparing Final Assignments To Avoid Plagiarism. International Journal for Educational and Vocational Studies, 2(1).

Helgesson, G., & Eriksson, S. (2015). Plagiarism in research. Medicine, Health Care and Philosophy,

18(1), 91-101.

Hidayat, A., Suhartoyo, E., & Fikri, D. (2020). STUDENTS'PERSPECTIVE ON REFERENCE AND WRITING STRATEGIES IN AVOIDING PLAGIARISM. Jurnal Penelitian, Pendidikan, dan Pembelajaran, 15(28).

Hu, G., & Shen, Y. (2020). Chinese university teachers' perceptions and practices regarding plagiarism: knowledge, stance, and intertextual competence. Ethics & Behavior, 1-18.

Ismail, K. H. (2018). Perceptions of plagiarism among medical and nursing students in Erbil, Iraq. Sultan Qaboos University Medical Journal, 18(2), e196.

Jackson, P. A. (2006). Plagiarism instruction online: Assessing undergraduate students' ability to avoid plagiarism. College & Research Libraries, 67(5), 418-428.

James, M. X., Miller, G. J., & Wyckoff, T. W. (2019). Comprehending the cultural causes of English writing plagiarism in Chinese students at a Western-style university. Journal of Business Ethics, 154(3), 631-642.

Kayaoğlu, M. N., Erbay, Ş., Flitner, C., & Saltaş, D. (2016). Examining students' perceptions of plagiarism: A cross-cultural study at tertiary level. Journal of Further and Higher Education, 40(5), 682-705.

Kettel, R. P., & DeFauw, D. L. (2018). Paraphrase without plagiarism: Use RRLC (read, reread, list, compose). The Reading Teacher, 72(2), 245-255.

Kolhar, M., & Alameen, A. (2020). University learning with anti-plagiarism systems. Accountability in Research, 1-21.

Landau, J. D., Druen, P. B., & Arcuri, J. A. (2002). Methods for helping students avoid plagiarism. Teaching of Psychology, 29(2), 112-115.

Li, Y. (2015). Academic staff's perspectives upon student plagiarism: a case study at a university in Hong Kong. Asia Pacific Journal of Education, 35(1), 14-26.

Liu, G. Z., Lu, H. C., Lin, V., & Hsu, W. C. (2018). Cultivating undergraduates' plagiarism avoidance knowledge and skills with an online tutorial system. Journal of Computer Assisted Learning, 34(2), 150-161.

Mahabeer, P., & Pirtheepal, T. (2019). Assessment, plagiarism and its effect on academic integrity: Experiences of academics at a university in South Africa. South African Journal of Science, 115(11-12), 1-8.

Mahmud, S., Bretag, T., & Foltýnek, T. (2019). Students' perceptions of plagiarism policy in higher education: A comparison of the United Kingdom, Czechia, Poland and Romania. Journal of Academic Ethics, 17(3), 271-289.

McGrail, E., & McGrail, J. P. (2015). Exploring web-based university policy statements on plagiarism by research-intensive higher education institutions. Journal of Academic Ethics, 13(2), 167-196.

Meo, S. A., & Talha, M. (2019). Turnitin: Is it a text matching or plagiarism detection tool?. Saudi journal of anaesthesia, 13(Suppl 1), S48.

Nimasari, E. P. (2018). How do Undergraduate Students avoid Plagiarism?. Senior Editor: Paul Robertson, 261.

Nirmala, S., & Jayaraman, R. (2020). Plagiarism: Types and Checking Tools. Biotica Research Today, 2(6), 515-518.

Nova, M., & Utami, W. (2018). EFL STUDENTS'PERCEPTION OF TURNITIN FOR DETECTING PLAGIARISM ON ACADEMIC WRITING. International Journal of Education, 10(2), 141-148.

Olutola, F. O. (2016). Towards a more enduring prevention of scholarly plagiarism among university students in Nigeria. African Journal of Criminology and Justice Studies, 9(1), 83-97.

Ramzan, M., Munir, M. A., Siddique, N., & Asif, M. (2012). Awareness about plagiarism amongst university students in Pakistan. Higher education, 64(1), 73-84.

Roka, Y. B. (2017). Plagiarism: Types, Causes and How to Avoid This Worldwide Problem. Nepal Journal of Neuroscience, 14(3), 2-6.

Rovere, D. A. (2020). Reducing plagiarism and improving writing: A lesson from Chinese painting. Canadian Perspectives on Academic Integrity, 3(2), 57-62.

Santosa, M. H., Paramartha, A. G. Y., & Absari, R. M. (2019). Indonesian English University Students' Perception on Plagiarism in an Online World. Journal of ELT Research: The Academic Journal of Studies in English Language Teaching and Learning, 100-114.

Shala, S., Leka, D., & Morganella, T. (2018). Plagiarism in Kosovo: a case study of two public universities. International Journal for Educational Integrity, 14(1), 1-15.

Shang, H. F. (2019). An investigation of plagiarism software use and awareness training on English as a foreign language (EFL) students. Journal of Computing in Higher Education, 31(1), 105-120.

Soltani, P., & Jalilifar, A. (2020). Source misuse in applied linguistics articles: Exploring proficient and novice English writers' perceptions of plagiarism. International Journal of Applied Linguistics, 30(1), 158-174.

Sowell, J. (2018). Beyond the Plagiarism Checker: Helping Nonnative English Speakers (NNESs) Avoid Plagiarism. In English teaching forum (Vol. 56, No. 2, pp. 2-15). US Department of State. Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, Office of English Language Programs, SA-5, 2200 C Street NW 4th Floor, Washington, DC 20037.

Stander, M. (2020). Strategies to help university students avoid plagiarism: A focus on translation as an

intervention strategy. Journal of Further and Higher Education, 44(2), 156-169.

Taerungruang, S., & Aroonmanakun, W. (2018). Constructing an academic Thai plagiarism corpus for benchmarking plagiarism detection systems. GEMA Online® Journal of Language Studies, 18(3).