



## Iraqi EFL college students' awareness of plagiarism

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### Abstract

The present study is an attempt to discover whether Iraqi EFL College Students are aware of research plagiarism or they are not. To manage this study the researchers set three questions, aims, and hypotheses. Thus they prepare a questionnaire (of five domains and 25 items) to be conducted on 116 male and female fourth year students from department of English/ College of Education/ University of Kerbala. The results show that they are unaware of plagiarism because they are not acquainted with the right way of avoiding plagiarism. A t-test has been use to show whether there are differences between males and females, and the result shows no statistical difference. Moreover, a set of conclusions such as students are not acquainted with the right way of documentation because the textbook is relatively old, they don't have enough practical training in writing research paper. Finally, recommendations have been presented such as: The instructors (whether professors or teachers) should focus on the ethical considerations in writing papers, the textbook should be updated occasionally to match the need of the new academic publishing requirements.

**Keywords:** Awareness; Plagiarism; Direct Plagiarism; Self Plagiarism; Cyber Plagiarism.

## 1. Introduction to The problem of the study

Writing is the most difficult skill among the language skills. It demands an organization to what to include and exclude, a support to your points of view, a unity and coherence of what to be presented. Unfortunately, some researchers (specially university students) face difficulties to make out their own writings so they tend to employ others thoughts even without paraphrasing which is in effect called plagiarism (Richards & Renandya, 2002, p.303). It is worth mentioning that most university students are not well prepared to choose research topics that match their needs and interest. This in effect sheds light on the importance of teaching them methods of research including ethical consideration (Tichapondwa, 2013: p.42).

According to McWhorter (2006: p.687) plagiarism means the utilization of others thoughts, writings, findings, or coordination without acknowledging or referring to the original source.

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McWhorter said that "plagiarism is intellectually dishonest and is considered a form of cheating because you are submitting someone else's work as your own. "Professional university professors can easily recognize plagiarism especially for those papers done by non-native speakers. Wallwork (2011: p.153) believes that one can identify plagiarism done by non-native researchers because they tend to commit grammatical, spelling and semantic mistakes then you surprisingly noticed a well written expression that arise suspicion to finally finding out that they are plagiarizing.

In academic writing, plagiarism is the most probable unethical slip that takes various forms. This paper tends to shed light on what is considered as plagiarism and its various types.

The present study tries to answer the following questions:

- 1- What are the various types of Plagiarism?
- 2- Are Iraqi EFL University Students aware of academic plagiarism?
- 3- -Are there gender differences( males and females) in terms of their awareness towards plagiarism?

### *The aims of the study*

This study aims at:

- 1- Identifying various types of plagiarism.
- 2- Finding out whether Iraqi EFL University Students aware of plagiarism.
- 3- Finding out whether there are differences of Iraqi EFL University Students awareness in terms of gender.

### *The hypotheses of the study*

It is hypothesized that:

- 1- There are various types of plagiarism.
- 2- Iraqi EFL University Students are not aware of plagiarism.
- 3- There are no differences of Iraqi EFL University Students awareness in terms of gender.

### *The limits of the study*

The study is limited to Iraqi EFL University Students at University of Kerbala/ Colleges of Education for Humanities Sciences /Department of English.

### *The Value of the Study*

This research is hopefully be beneficial to EFL University students in terms of shedding light on a quite critical and essential issue in academic writing which is avoiding plagiarism.

## **2. Literature Review**

### *Why This Research*

Plagiarism draws a huge attention recently in the most of the educational institution all around the world due to the use of digital information (Park, 2003: p.471). Sutherland-Smith (2008: p.20) reviewed previous literature about plagiarism especially those proposed by colleges and universities . All of which refer to unethical intention "lying, cheating, stealing, dishonesty and deception" which means that they refer to "academic cheating".

Plagiarism is a growing problem that negatively affect the educational word since the appearance of the world wide web because researchers can easily take the information directly without any reference to the original source (Batane,2010: p. 1). Onuoha and Ikonne (2013: p.102) explain that plagiarism is popular among researchers in the recent years because of the internet which easily provides information for them. Shahabuddin, (2009: p.353) stresses the seriousness of plagiarism and that most university professors and supervisors are not aware of the extent to which their students plagiarize. Moreover, Bahadori et al. (2012: p.5) state that "some media publish worrying news of plagiarism in scientific publications, including data manipulation by well-known scientists. The prevalence rate of plagiarism has been reported in different studies turns out to be different in various fields, countries, educational levels and times".

According to the abovementioned fact about the negative impact of plagiarism on researchers (especially EFL ones) the researchers of this paper recognize the importance of this issue in our universities to find out the problems and try to recommend remedies.

### *Plagiarism*

According to Bretag and Mahmud (2009: p. 50) plagiarism takes place when a researcher doesn't refer to the original source of the information he/ she offers. Winkler & McCuen-Metherell (2008: p. 88) assert that "Plagiarism is the act of passing off another's words and ideas as your own". Pechenik (2001: p.10) advices writers and researchers to use their own ideas in a different wording and that doesn't mean merely changing some words or rearranging their order. Pechenik comments that " plagiarism is one of the most serious crimes in academia". However, taking the accreditation of an author to employ his/ her own text doesn't mean that you are allowed to use the exact words unless you utilize a quotation marks. The only things that makes researchers avoid plagiarism are either to quote or to paraphrase properly (Booth et al, 1995: p.167).

McWhorter (2006: p.687) asserts that it is considered plagiarism if researchers have:

- 1- Entirely taken information utilizing no quotation marks.
- 2- Entirely taken information or a text without using quotation marks even though you refer to the source.
- 3- Paraphrased texts, ideas, or information without referring to the original source.
- 4- Borrowed someone else's structuring or series of thought.
- 5- Employed another person's visual materials such as pictures, charts, graphs, diagrams, etc.
- 6- Presented other students' efforts as your own.

### *Types of Plagiarism*

The following are some common types of plagiarism writers and researchers usually use whether intentionally or accidentally.

#### *1.Direct plagiarism*

Most professional writers and specialists in the field of scientific research agree that direct plagiarism is the act of copying text, words, thoughts, etc directly from a source without referring to the source or using the quotation marks (Bailey et al, 1981: p.88; Wallwork, 2011; and Northwestern University, 2016).

## 2. *Self Plagiarism*

This type of plagiarism means merely when someone tends to use his/ her own previous work in some journals or conferences for the second time (Price and Yorke 2015: p 6). Hexham (1991) argues that some people falsely think that taking things from oneself is not a robbery so it is possible to reuse your own works again, but according to law this is completely illegal. Moreover, Hexham adds "self-plagiarism occurs when the author attempts to deceive the reader. This happens when no indication is given that the work is being recycled or when an effort is made to disguise the original text. The issue once again is one of deception. Disguising a text occurs when an author makes cosmetic changes that make the same book or paper look different when it actually remains unchanged in its central argument"(ibid.)

## 3. *Cyber plagiarism*

This type of plagiarism is widely used nowadays because of the technology revolution. According to McWhorter (2006: p.688) cyber plagiarism occurs when a researcher adopts data from the internet without the approval of the original sources. It also simply means the copy- paste process of getting information without crediting the author of the source Batane, (2010: p. 1). Unfortunately, university students tend to frequently use this type of plagiarism.

## 4. *Mosaic Plagiarism*

This type of plagiarism takes place when a researcher use a text or words from a source without quotation or even changing the words of the original source by using synonyms but keeping the same format. This kind of plagiarism is also considered an academic dishonesty. Roka (2017: p.3) says that mosaic plagiarism "happens when a new author uses the previous article text by replacing, reordering or rephrasing the words or sentences to give it new look without acknowledging the original author".

## *Avoiding Plagiarism*

There are a number of procedures one should follow in order to avoid plagiarism.

### 1. *Citation*

All academic institution must follow certain style of citation. According to McWhorter (2006: p.706) there are certain styles that fit the humanities Sciences including English language such as: Modern Language Association (Henceforth MLA) style, The American Psychological Association (Henceforth APA), and The Council of Science Editors (Henceforth CSE). Lester and Lester (2015: p.318) mention another style which is The Chicago Manual of Style (Henceforth CMS). They assert that using any of the abovementioned citation will make readers to be acquainted with the original sources from which you cited. (ibid: p.5).

### 2. *Use of Quotation*

Quotation takes place when a researcher use the exact words of an original source and enclosed them with quotation marks. The use of these marks with a direct reference to the author will keep a researcher away from plagiarism. According to Bailey et al. (1981, p.78-9) it is preferable for a researcher not to use quotation unless there are rationale reasons for selecting this quotation. One of these reason is when the sentences written by the original source are well ordered with an excellent

style. Another reason for choosing quotation is when the researcher use a primary resource which in turn tend to use facts.

McWhorter (2006: p.708) states some conditions of using quotation as follows:

1- " use quotation sparingly". This means that researchers quote in order not to reveal ordinary facts and opinions. This in turn leads to a set of purposes for quotations such as "quote when the author wording is unusual, noteworthy and striking"; " quote when paraphrasing might alter the statement's meaning"; " quote when the original words express the exact point you want to make"; "quote when the statement is strong, opinionated, exaggerated, or disputed idea that you want to make clear is not your own".

2- The utilization of quotation should be in the case of supporting a researcher's idea.

3- "Use quotation that are self-explanatory".

The abovementioned information explain the reasons as well as the condition under which researcher can use quotation.

### 3. Taking Notes

Taking notes is another effective way of avoiding plagiarism. In this way researchers are advised to consult books and references and then write the important notes that may probably serve your paper. One may use different ways of note taking such as:

a- Note card. According to Bailey et al. (1981, p.53) it is easily utilized when a researcher is willing to use the main idea of a source but not the exact wording. This card takes the size of four by six inches or five by eight inches.

b- Computerized note taking. McWhorter (2006, p.682) explains that one may use the computer to create a note card. In this way researchers can easily access to these note that are kept in the computer.

c- Annotated copies of sources. This way is more suitable for short papers. Researchers can simply photocopy some pages from a resource and highlight and comment on the information he want to employ in his paper.

### 4. Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing takes place when a researcher transforms information from a given source into his/her own words with reference to the original author. To do this successfully, one must first understand his/her information. One recommended approach is to cover his /her original passage so that one can't see it and then write down the meaning of the passage into his/her own words. One must change the structure and the words of the original passage so that it is completely put into his/her own words. Lester and Lester (2015: p.141) mention that "paraphrasing requires you to restate, in your own words, the thought, meaning, and attitude of someone else".

McWhorter (2006: p.685) states some guidelines to the right paraphrasing as follows:

1- She advices researchers to read well for several times first then write.

2- If the researcher finds it necessary to use the same words of the author then he/she should enclosed these words by quotation marks.

3- It is better to paraphrase sentence by sentence using the researchers words.

4- The utilized synonyms should not change the original text's meaning.

5- It is preferable for the researcher to utilize their own structure of the sentences rather than using the author's one.

6- It is better for researcher to utilize short sentences rather than long ones.

### 5. Summarising

Summarizing gives the researchers the opportunity to have a holistic view of the summarized source as well as holding the gist of the material (Lester and Lester 2015: p.123). McWhorter (2006: p.42-3) proposes the follows guidelines for making summaries:

- 1- It is better for the researcher to read the whole text first before starting writing.
- 2- It is preferable to use annotation while reading.
- 3- It is preferable to write a summary during your second reading.
- 4- It is better to write a controlling sentence that explains the theme of the author's work by using your own words.
- 5- It is preferable to cover all the supporting ideas of the author.
- 6- It is preferable to make a revision to your summary to make sure you have covered the needed material.

### 6. Synthesizing

Researchers need to show that they have interpreted, understood and made connections between all these pieces of information. You will need to identify what information is the same, what is different and what is your interpretation of the information. According to Andrews and Harlen (2006: p.287) it is essential to look for "a structure for the synthesis at a more general level than that of the individual study. Synthesis in this context is not a technical matter; it requires professional judgment, experience and creativity".

## 3. The methodology of the study

### *Design of the Study*

This present study is a quantitative one based on a questionnaire. In this study a quantitative data were collected through the questionnaire, which aimed to identify students' awareness of academic plagiarism.

### *Population and Sample of the Study*

The population of the study consists of the students in the Department of English (the fourth stage), College of Education for Human Sciences, University of Kerbala for the academic year 2020-2021. The total number of the population is (304) students.

To achieve the aim of the study, the researchers have randomly selected about 40% from the fourth year students to represent the sample of the study subjects and as it explained in the following table.

**Table 1.** the population and sample of the study

	First year		
	Female	Male	
population	210	94	304
sampling	80	36	116

### *The Questionnaires*

Using questionnaires in a descriptive research study is one of the most commonly used techniques to collect data since they "can be objectively scored and analyzed" (Oxford, 1990: p. 199). In this

study, a questionnaire that consists of (25) items (with three options: yes, no, and not sure) is utilized. The questionnaire is divided into five domains the first one related to the students themselves, the second is related to their instructors (if they did not give students the ways of avoiding plagiarism), the third is related to the educational institution (the college), the fourth is related to the curriculum, and the fifth which is related to the help of the internet.

### *The Pilot Administration of the Questionnaires*

On the 19<sup>th</sup> of February 2021 a pilot administration of the questionnaire was carried out. The questionnaires were experimentally tried out on a sample of 40 students other than the ones selected as a sample. The reasons behind the pilot study were to estimate the time needed to complete the questionnaires, check the clarity of instruction, analyze the items in the light of students' responses to determine their effectiveness in terms of difficulty level and discriminatory power, and to calculate the reliability coefficient of the test.

It was found that the time needed to was fill in the questionnaire 20 minutes and the instructions were clear and stated in an adequate way. It was also found that the difficulty levels and the discriminatory powers were within the acceptable ranges.

### *The Validity and Reliability of the Study Instrument*

According to Coombe et al (2007, p.xxii), the validity of the test is the degree to which it measures what is supposed to measure and nothing else "test what you teach and how you teach it!". Some authors state that there are several types of validity such as: content validity, face validity, construct validity, and criterion-related validity (Mehrens and Lehmann, 1991: p.124). In order to ensure the face validity of the questionnaire, it was exposed to a jury of specialists in ELT, linguistics, and applied linguistics who agreed on the suitability and validity of the its items.

Reliability refers to the stability of the test scores. Alpha Cronbach method was used to estimate the test reliability in this study. The Alpha Cronbach method indicates how well a group of items together measure the traits of interest by estimating the proportion of test variance due to common factors among the items, whether the items are dichotomously scored or not (Davies et al., 1997: p.39).

The results showed that the reliability coefficient between 0.7 and 0.86 respectively are obtained. This means that the questionnaire has obtained an acceptable and adequate reliability since its coefficients are statistically significant.

### *The Scoring Scheme*

In this study the questionnaire (which consists of 25 items) has three options (no, yes, and not sure). Three points are awarded for the first option, two for the second, and one point for the last option.

## **4. The Discussion of Results, Conclusion, and Recommendation**

### *The Results*

The results show the mean score, the standard deviation, and the weighted percentage of each item in each domain. These results apparently show that the students are not aware of academic plagiarism and they ignorantly use various types of academic plagiarism due to many factors related to the fifth abovementioned domains. Thus we can say that the first and second aims are fulfilled and the first and second hypotheses are accepted. (see table 1)

**Table 1.** The mean score, standard deviation and the weighted percentages of the study subjects

The domain	The item	Mean	SD	Weighted percentages
The student domain	1	2.275862	0.772214	75.86207
	2	2.12931	0.688954	70.97701
	3	2.25	0.818693	75
	4	2.310345	0.724138	77.01149
	5	2.396552	0.667978	79.88506
	6	2.775862	0.474999	92.52874
	Total	2.356322	0.691163	78.54406
The instructor domain	7	2.293103	0.707317	76.43678
	8	2.456897	0.699658	81.89655
	9	2.362069	0.723933	78.73563
	10	2.517241	0.594265	83.90805
	11	2.568966	0.659469	85.63218
	12	2.758621	0.502077	91.95402
	Total	2.492816	0.647786	83.09387
The college domain	13	2.551724	0.723316	85.05747
	14	2.396552	0.641648	79.88506
	15	2.456897	0.687226	81.89655
	16	2.784483	0.469887	92.81609
	Total	2.547414	0.630519	84.91379
The curriculum Domain	17	2.413793	0.743581	80.45977
	18	2.482759	0.636298	82.75862
	19	2.387931	0.5689	79.5977
	20	2.534483	0.687713	84.48276
	21	2.37069	0.771588	79.02299
	Total	2.437931	0.681616	81.26437
The Internet Domain	22	2.284483	0.740527	76.14943
	23	2.146552	0.745727	71.55172
	24	2.37069	0.737308	79.02299
	25	2.801724	0.439824	93.3908
	Total	2.400862	0.665847	80.02874
The Total		2.443103	0.66509	81.43678

The t-test for two independent samples at 0.05 and 0.01 levels of significance and 114 degrees of freedom is also utilized to achieve the third aim (Finding out whether there are differences of Iraqi EFL University Students awareness in terms of gender). The result reveals that the computed t-value (1.53) is less than the table t-value (1.98) which means that there is no statistically significant difference is found between male and female. So the Third aim is fulfilled and the third hypothesis is accepted. (see table 2)

**Table 2.** t-test for two independent samples to show the difference in male and female use of academic Plagiarism

	No.	Mean	SD	Df	T. value	
					calculated	Table
Male	36	62.42	3.93	114	1.53	1.98
Female	80	60.48	7.11			

### *The Conclusions*

It is concluded that college students use various types of plagiarism like direct, cyber, and mosaic plagiarism for the following reasons:

- 1- They are not acquainted with the right way of documentation because the textbook is relatively old.
- 2- They don't have enough practical training in writing research paper.
- 3- They don't search the previous studies well which in turn affect their papers.
- 4- It seems that some instructors (as debate examiners and supervisors) do not check the students papers seriously because they are exhausted with the huge number of students under their supervision.
- 5- They think that using pictures and figures without any reference to the authors because they believe that there is no need to document except the texts.
- 6- The textbook they studied do not tackle different styles like MLA, APA etc.
- 7- Some students intentionally use plagiarism for they don't want to exert efforts in paraphrasing and writing their own.

### *Recommendations*

The following are the study's recommendations set by the researchers:

- 1- The educational institutions (universities, schools, institutions) should set rigid laws and instructions for the students who use plagiarism.
- 2- The instructors (whether professors or teachers) should focus on the ethical considerations in writing papers.
- 3- The textbook should be updated occasionally to match the need of the new academic publishing requirements.
- 4- The practical side of writing a research paper should be updated.
- 5- Writing reports and assignments should be focused in the early stages of the college.
- 6- The department should use a unified style of writing researches.

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