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Teachers' and Students' Perception of Plagiarism

Dr. ALIOUCHOUCHE Fadhila*

University of Bejaia, LESMS Laboratory

(Algeria) fadhila.aliouchouche@univ-bejaia.dz

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* corresponding author

Abstract

The aim of this study is to explore teachers' and students' perception of plagiarism at the department of English, Bejaia University. The participants consisted of eighty Master one students and six teachers. For the data collection tools, the researcher opted for questionnaires designed for both teachers and students. The results indicate that both teachers and students agree on the unethical aspect of plagiarism. Additionally, the findings highlight some of the reasons behind this phenomenon. The study ends with some recommendations to overcome the problem of plagiarism in higher education.

Keywords: ethics; plagiarism; teachers' and students' perception

1. Introduction

Conducting research is not an easy endeavor; it requires from the researcher efforts, time, energy, and respect of ethical issues such as intellectual property or copyright. Nowadays, easy access to information through the internet has paved the way for plagiarism. Indeed, copy and paste is the most adopted solution by some students to save time and energy. The aim of the present study is to shed light on teachers' and students' perception of plagiarism.

2. Literature Review

Etymologically, the word PLAGIAT (plagiarism) comes from Greek: Plagios, which means "sneaky." Considered a major problem for research, plagiarism is defined by the Oxford Dictionary of Education (2015) as "the act of appropriating someone else's idea or work and passing it off as one's own." Therefore, plagiarism is considered as an unethical practice that should be banished from universities. In this context, Larkham and Manns (2002) state that most academic institutions consider plagiarism as kind of cheating. In other words, this practice is considered academic dishonesty. In the same vein, Fishman defines plagiarism as:

Plagiarism occurs when someone uses words, ideas, or work product attributable to another identifiable person or source, without attributing the work to the source from which it was obtained, [and] in a situation in which there is a legitimate expectation of original authorship in order to obtain some benefit, credit, or gain, which need not be monetary. (2001:28)

The study

The aim of the study

The purpose of the study is to investigate teachers' and students' perception of plagiarism. To reach these aims, the research questions of the present study are:

1. To what extent are the master one students of the department of English knowledgeable about plagiarism?
2. What are the reasons that lead students to plagiarize?
3. What are the measures that should be taken to eradicate plagiarism in higher education?

Research methodology

Population and Sample

The participants are teachers and Master one students at the department of English, at Bejaia University.

The sample

The participants are:

Eighty Master One students enrolled for the academic year 2021-2022

Six teachers at the department of English, Bejaia University

Data Collection Tools

The main purpose of the present study is to investigate teachers' and students' perception of plagiarism. Therefore, a questionnaire was designed to collect the necessary data. The choice of this research instrument is considered as the most appropriate means when investigating perceptions. In this context, it is stated that questionnaires "are used mostly to collect data on phenomena which

are not easily observed, such as attitudes, motivation, and self-concepts" (Seliger and Shohamy, 2011: 172).

Before the administration of the students' questionnaire, a pilot study was conducted so as to ensure its quality. Dornyei (2003) considers that:

Piloting the questionnaire at various stages of its development on a sample of people who are similar to the target sample the instrument has been designed for. These trial runs allow the researcher to collect feedback about how the instrument works and whether it performs the job it has been designed for. Based on this information, we can make alterations and fine-tune the final version of the questionnaire. (Dornyei, 2003, p.63)

Therefore, based on the participants' observations, some modifications were brought to the questionnaire as reformulating and omitting some questions to avoid misunderstanding and redundancy.

The researcher relied on both qualitative and quantitative methods to analyze the obtained results.

Analysis of the results

Students' questionnaire

The respondents are eighty Master one students: 74 females and 6 males

According to their field of study they are distributed as follows;

26 students in Didactics of English

30 students in Linguistics

24 students in Literature

All the students share the same view concerning the definition of plagiarism. They agree on the fact that it is an immoral and unethical act. They generally use the verb « to steal» to refer to plagiarism.

Concerning the reasons behind plagiarism, the participants advocated different reasons. We have tried to summarize them in the following points:

Ignorance of the laws related to plagiarism, limited knowledge, lack of productivity, lack of motivation, time constraints, easy access to information through internet, and laziness.

The results also indicate that master one students have already received some courses concerning this issue (plagiarism), but these were more pieces of advice than a complete course.

Concerning the fourth question about the frequency of plagiarism among students, the results revealed that:

Option	Number	Percentage
Always	06	7.5
Very often	08	10
Often	47	58.75
Never	11	13.75
Rarely	02	2.5
No answer	06	7.5
Total	80	100

Table 1: Frequency of plagiarism among students

The results displayed in the above table, indicate that a majority of students 58.75% admit that they often plagiarize, 10% of them said that they do it very often, for 2.5% of the participants it is rarely and finally 13.75% said that they never resort to plagiarism.

Since plagiarism is considered a very important issue, mainly in higher education, teachers are aware that it should be banished from universities. This is well reflected in the students' answers to question five, since they all declared that their teachers always remind them of the dangerous consequences of plagiarism.

For the fifth question about what Master one students consider plagiarism, we have recorded the following answers:

Option	Number	Percentage
Using someone's ideas without acknowledging the source	64	80
Using data from other researches	15	18.75
Using sentences/phrases/expressions from someone's work without referencing	56	70
Copy and paste a whole paragraph	36	45
Submitting a document as someone's work	32	40

Table 2: Students' views about plagiarism.

The results illustrated in table 2, indicate that Master students are knowledgeable about plagiarism. Their answers reflect their awareness about what plagiarism is and what are its different forms.

As far as the last section is concerned, we have recorded the following suggestions from the students' answers:

- We need more guidance from our teachers when conducting research so as to avoid the trick of plagiarism.
- There should be an awareness-raising among students concerning the dangers of plagiarism.
- This issue i.e. plagiarism, should be introduced in the first year B.A.
- Teach students to rely on themselves and be more confident.
-

Analysis of the results: The teachers' questionnaire

Only nine teachers accepted to answer our questionnaire, and the obtained results are:

Concerning the first question, the participants consider as plagiarism:

All that is not students' words, other's words, teachers' words, and even peers' words.

Someone's ideas or words reported intentionally or unintentionally without providing the source.

Transcribing word-for- word what is found on the different web sites

Regarding the reasons for plagiarism, the participants advocated: time pressure, lack of self-confidence, to save time and efforts, lack of motivation, ignorance of paraphrasing techniques and skills, nonexistence of punishment, poor research potential, poor language mastery, lack of writing practice, and no respect of moral values.

For the third question, only two teachers declared that they have already received special training concerning this issue, and this may be due to the fact that nowadays, when teachers start their careers, they have to undergo certain training where plagiarism is included. There are different ways to detect plagiarism in students' works, and here are those mentioned by the participants:

- Shift in style
- The language used
- The structures of their paragraphs
- References to some difficult concepts and notions
- Using software (available online)
- The form and the content of the work are neither reviewed nor adapted to the research norms
- Compare between the students' answers and those we can find on the internet
- Copies free from mistakes

All the teachers declared that they remind their students about the negative consequences of plagiarism.

Concerning the measures to prevent plagiarism, the participants suggested the following points:

- Teach how to write references and how to paraphrase.
- Explain the consequences of plagiarism.
- Develop students' self-esteem and self-reliance.
- Warning the students at first and sanctioning in the case of a second offense
- Punishment
- Emphasis on read because by reading, students can improve their writing, develop their ideas and knowledge in general.

Discussion of the results

The aim of this study is to explore students' and teachers' perception about plagiarism. The following section is devoted to the discussion of the results on the basis of the research questions.

For the first question about student' knowledge about plagiarism, the results indicate that they consider plagiarism unethical and immoral. They declared that it is an academic dishonesty. This implies that master students are aware of the seriousness of the problem. However, despite their awareness, an overwhelming majority of the students (58.75%) admitted that they often plagiarize. Concerning the different forms of plagiarism, students' answers included: copy and paste, using others' ideas without acknowledging the source, copying sentences, phrases and expressions etc.

These results are in line with previous studies. In this context, Wan et al., (2011) divides plagiarism in five types, namely- direct text copying, “patchwork”, paraphrasing, truncation, excision etc. Some other types are- self-plagiarism. For their teachers, plagiarism is reflected in the students’ papers. They can detect plagiarism in their students’ copies when the answers are written in a very good style, free of mistakes, and referring to complex concepts.

Concerning the second research question about the reasons behind this phenomenon, the results obtained from the respondents’ answers are in line with previous studies (Aryani 2013, Park 2003). They advocated some reasons such: ignorance of the sanctions related to plagiarism, limited knowledge in some fields, poor time management, laziness, easy access to information through internet, and lack of motivation. Based on the teachers’ answers, plagiarism is due to different causes such: lack of time, lack of self-confidence, lack of motivation, ignorance of paraphrasing techniques and skills, nonexistence of punishment, poor research potential, poor language mastery, lack of writing practice, and no respect of moral values. To prevent their students from plagiarism, they revealed that they often remind them about the negative consequences of plagiarism.

The third research question is related to strategies to avoid and fight plagiarism in higher education. The results indicate that a wide array of measures should be taken to overcome this form of cheating in Higher Education. In this context, Atkinson & Yeoh (2008) suggest some aspect to be taken into account for plagiarism prevention: teaching and preventing, applying measures for plagiarism detection and applying penalties for plagiarism. According to the findings, the suggested measures are summarized in the following points: Explain for students the negatives effects of plagiarism and its impact on research thought the organization of seminars and study days. More importance should be given to methodology courses with a particular emphasis on teaching students citing, paraphrasing and referencing. The use of anti-plagiarism software as barriers for the spread plagiarism

It is also important to underline that the Algerian Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research has taken legal measures to fight this phenomenon in the order n° 1082 of 2020 related to the rules relating to the prevention and fight against plagiarism. Hence, these rules should be applied in all Algerian universities. Furthermore, students should be aware of these rules and the sanctions imposed in case of violating them.

Because prevention may be the best cure, a culture of academic honesty should be implemented among the academic community in general and students in particular.

Limitation of the study

A significant limitation of this study is related to the sample. Thus, the findings from this study cannot be generalized because they are based on a relatively limited number of participants. Therefore, incorporating additional participants may provide more insight into the issue of plagiarism in Higher Education. A further limitation is related to the reliance on only a questionnaire as a data collection instruments. For more reliability, future researchers may

consider exploring students' and teachers' perception of plagiarism relying on more than one research tools.

Conclusion and pedagogical recommendations

On the basis of the above findings, some recommendations can be made: According to Petrovecki (2001), "the best approach to prevent plagiarism is to educate students and point out the importance of honesty in science and professional work." Therefore, teachers are required to communicate with their students about this issue and explain the repercussions that may result from it. In order to prevent plagiarism, students should be equipped with the necessary tools that can help them avoid falling into this trap, such as teaching them how to paraphrase, summarize ideas, and cite sources and references in the correct way. Besides, the use of plagiarism checkers should be generalized to all universities. Finally, disciplinary measures and sanctions should be taken against the author of such practices, and this might discourage others from cheating.

From the results of this study, we can state that despite the fact that students are aware of the unethical aspect of plagiarism, as well as its consequences in scientific research, this phenomenon is widely spread in higher education. Teachers are becoming more and more uncompromising concerning this issue. They all agree on the fact that serious measures should be taken so as to get rid of plagiarism.

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