Investigating Some Main Causes and Reasons of Writing Plagiarism in an EFL Context

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Abstract

The present study aimed at exploring the causes and reasons of the EFL learners' plagiarism. To this end, 150 females and males TEFL students from State and Azad universities in Iran, participated the study. A questionnaire developed by Rezanejad and Rezaeibased (2013) and a semi-structured interview which were piloted on a similar sample before administering were used as the instruments of the study. To triangulate the findings, for the qualitative part of the study, a semi-structured interview including 16 questions was run with 10 learners to collect the quantitative data at the end of the study. Based on the findings of this study, it was revealed that most of the students were aware of the concept of plagiarism and had the same definition of it. Moreover, their professors used the Internet and search engines to detect plagiarism and warned them about plagiarism continuously. The students claimed inadequate information about how not to plagiarize and less command over English language to be the main reason of plagiarism. They heard of it from their university professors, then in workshops or seminars on plagiarism, and finally from their high school teachers. Moreover, they got familiar with the concept of plagiarism through university professors, friends or family members, newspapers and magazines, Internet, TV, and radio. The implications are discussed in terms of raising learners' awareness about plagiarism in EFL contexts.

Keywords: Academic dishonesty, EFL learners, Plagiarism, Writing

1. Introduction

There is no doubt that writing as one of the second language skills is really tricky (Ghasemi, 2013). Richards and Renandya (2002) believe that the difficulty originates both from generating and organizing ideas and translating these ideas into readable text. Writing is one of the most authentic ways of conveying information and ideas to others. According to Halliday (1994), writing requires great judgment and being able to express one"s ideas in writing accurately in another language is a great success. It is a skill that even many native speakers of English never can completely master it (Celce- Murcia, 2001).

Writing is usually considered to be a difficult demanding skill. This reflective activity needs sufficient time to think about the topic and to analyze and classify any existing background knowledge (Rassouli & Abbasvandi, 2013). Wall (1981) states "it ranges from mechanical control to creativity, with good grammar, knowledge of subject matter, awareness of stylistic convention and various mysterious factors in between" (p. 53) all of which add to its complex characteristic. Writing is considered an act of communication and a useful way of addressing an audience. However, in academic area, writing is regarded more than just a means of communication; therefore, the ability to express meaning clearly in written texts is an important skill for academic success. In fact, college students' writing skills are the best indicators of their academic success (Geiser & Studley, 2001), and also outside the academic context, writing skills are important predictors of professional competence (Light, 2001). However, for many students writing activities are among the least enjoyable or interesting ones (Spratt, 2001) and whenever they get involved in writing activities, for example, articles or dissertations, they often may resort plagiarism (Eret & Gokmenoglu, 2010; Jensen, Arnett, Feldman, & Cauffman, 2002).

Plagiarism which is defined in the Concise Oxford English Dictionary as taking " (the work or an idea of someone else) and pass it off as one's own," is a serious problem that is getting worse and worse. Plagiarism originated from the Latin word plagiarism which means the theft of words as well as slaves (Howard, 1995). According to Howard (1995), "the very etymology of the word plagiarism demonstrates the antiquity of the concept" (p. 790). Students may plagiarize for a variety of reasons including lack of understanding of how to cite the sources correctly and the pressure and stress of completing tasks (Eret & Gokmenoglu, 2010). Not only won't this problem go away (Paldy, 1996) but plagiarism is

also a problem that is getting worse and worse. There is a large amount of evidence that students plagiarizing is becoming more common and more widespread (Park, 2003). Alschuler and Blimling (1995, as cited in Park 2003) call plagiarism 'epidemic cheating'.

The concept of plagiarism has drawn the attention of numerous researchers for various reasons (Mahdavi Zarafghandi, Khoshroo & Barkat, 2012). Plagiarism is against the goals of academic integrity (Loutzenhiser, Pita, & Reed, 2006; Walker, 1998), and according to Kolich (1983), "plagiarism is the worm of reason that starves the seeds of originality" (p. 145), and ruins five most important values of academic integrity including "honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility" (p. 4). As Rezanejad and Rezaei (2013) state, "plagiarism has become an interesting topic for research in academic contexts. With the rise of this issue and its spread into the academic discourse community, teachers have attempted to root out academic corruption and subsequently terminate all such misdemeanor" (p. 276). Although a lot of research studies have been conducted in this area, still more research is needed to be done in academic contexts because plagiarism is believed to be differently perceived in different cultures (Liu, 2005).

Regarding Iranian EFL context, due to the increase in the number of universities in Iran and the number of postgraduates (Rezanejad & Rezaei, 2013), some academic problems have happened. In other words, less proficient EFL students plagiarize by copying and pasting a whole paragraph without knowing that it is an example of academic dishonesty. However, the reason is that most of them haven't been trained about academic ethics (Ghazinoory, Azadegan-Mehr & Ghazinoori, 2011).

According to Stephens and Wangaard (2009), teachers have a great role in the prevention of academic dishonesty by talking about it and stressing academic integrity and warning students of the consequences of academic dishonesty. According to Davis (1993), teachers should give students some skills for monitoring their progress and evaluating their own performance. Moreover, they should create the opportunities for the learners to submit drafts of papers for peer-reviewing. Eret and Gokmenoglu (2010) believe that by using some ethical rules in institutions, it is possible for teachers to detect those learners who commit plagiarism and punish them. Moreover, the invention of plagiarism detection tools can be useful and influential, too (Beasley, 2004). Overall, academic dishonesty is a growing concern in our society, yet it can be challenging to overcome the barriers that impede learning. The promotion of academic integrity and mastery goals appears to serve as a significant factor for prevention of academic dishonesty (Kose, 2011).

Regarding the concept of plagiarism in writing, Howard (2001 as cited in Stapleton, 2010) coined the term "patchwriting" which refers to a stage in which a writers' discourse integrates with another author's due to the lack of competence for the purpose of conveying the message effectively and not deceiving (Leki & Carson, 1997). McCabe and Trevino (1996) stated that students' perception of plagiarism shows the existence of indecisiveness among them regarding what plagiarism is. Some researchers (e.g., Ashworth & Bannister, 1997; Park, 2003) state that in students' opinion, plagiarism is not serious and they think plagiarism will not harm others.

The present study would try to shed more light on the causes and reasons of the EFL learners" plagiarism. With an in-depth approach, we will aim at:

1) Increasing our understanding on why EFL learners plagiarize,

2) Enhancing our insights on what they consider as plagiarism in their own majors,

3) Exploring EFL learners' reasons for committing plagiarism,

4) Investigating whether EFL learners have any information about plagiarism and whether they are taught how to avoid it or not, and

5) Finding out the main source through which EFL learners get aware of the concept of plagiarism.

The findings of this study can help teachers in training and enhancing EFL learners' information on the concept of academic dishonesty and plagiarism. The more the students know about plagiarism, the less they would be involved in acts of academic dishonesty. Moreover, the findings are thought to guide universities to establish committees to decide about these cases and establish related rules to alert students and make them take plagiarism more seriously. The findings are of great benefit to both practitioners and theoreticians in the field of language teaching in general and teaching writing in particular. They would help English language teachers, especially writing instructors in improving EFL learners" writing and learner autonomy by providing insights on how to avoid plagiarism and its disadvantages. More specifically students need to be informed of detection software and the procedures professors use to detect plagiarism. This should be part of all courses at universities and plagiarism issues and their penalties must be explicitly stated in all course syllabuses. If the students know how their professors find cases of plagiarism, they would pay more attention to it. All these attempts can help reduce plagiarism among students and other academics. Furthermore, the findings of the study would inform teachers on how to examine students reasons for engaging in cheating behavior in order to better understand their internalized conceptions of cheating.

The following research questions were formulated and addressed in this study:

1. What is Iranian EFL students' definition of plagiarism?

2. What is regarded as plagiarism in students' own field of study?

3. How do students think their professors detect plagiarism?

4.   What are EFL students' reasons for plagiarism?

5.   When did they first hear of plagiarism?

6.   What is the main source through which they get familiar with the concept of plagiarism?

2. Method

2.1 Participants

A total of 150 participants, both females and males, within the age range of 22-50, from State and Azad universities in Urmia participated in this study. The participants were EFL MA students majoring in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL).

2.2 Design

This study encompassed both qualitative and quantitative methods, in that data was collected via questionnaires and interview to achieve methodological triangulation. Thus, a total of 150 participants, both females and males, from State and Azad universities in Urmiaparticipated in the study. In this study, the factors and reasons that caused learners to commit plagiarism in writing their dissertations and articles were investigated.

2.3 Instruments

In this study, both qualitative and quantitative methods were applied. The instruments used in this study were employed in two phases:

2.3.1 Quantitative Phase (Plagiarism Questionnaire)

The main instrument utilized in this study was a questionnaire developed by Rezanejad and Rezaei based (2013). The questionnaire was composed of six parts which directly addressed the research questions accompanied by a last section which recorded the participants' basic demographic information including age, gender, field of study, and education level with no inquiry for name to keep the respondents' answers completely confidential. The questionnaire was a six-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = slightly disagree, 3 = disagree, 4 = slightly agree, 5 = agree, 6 = strongly agree). The first part (items 1 to 6) of the questionnaire included six items which checked the respondents' definitions of plagiarism. The second part (items 7 to 12) included 6 items which explored what the Iranian language students practically considered as plagiarism in their own field of study. In the third part (items 13 to 21), how they thought their professors detected plagiarism was addressed. The fourth part (items 22 to 34) of the questionnaire with 13 main reasons for plagiarism was used to find out the reasons behind plagiarism. In the last parts (items 35 to 42), the participants were asked about their familiarity with the concept of plagiarism.

2.3.2 Qualitative Phase (A Semi-structured Interview)

In addition to the questionnaire, the participants in this study were interviewed using some questions similar to the ones in each section of the questionnaire to triangulate the findings of the quantitative phase.

2.4 Design

This study encompassed both qualitative and quantitative methods, in that data was collected via questionnaires and interview to achieve methodological triangulation. Thus, a total of 150 participants, both females and males, from State and Azad universities in Urmia participated in the study. In this study, the factors and reasons that caused learners to commit plagiarism in writing their dissertations and articles were investigated.

2.5 Procedure

The data for this study were collected through a questionnaire. Before distributing the questionnaire to the participants, the researcher told the participants that their identities would be kept confidential and that no information would be revealed. Afterwards, the questionnaire was distributed among the subjects. It took the participants roughly 30 minutes to fill out the questionnaire. To triangulate the findings, regarding the qualitative part of the study, a semi-structured interview including 16 questions was run with ten learners to complement the quantitative data at the end of the study.

2.6 Data analysis

By means of the SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) software the researcher calculated the reliability of the questionnaire before administering it to the main population. Subsequently, the researcher used the frequency of data collected by questionnaire and explained them in percentage. In addition to the questionnaires, to triangulate the findings, the researcher conducted interviews with some learners and reported them qualitatively. In other words, having interviewed the learners, the researcher transcribed and reported what they said in words.

3. Results

3.1 Quantitative Phase (Plagiarism Questionnaire)

 Before using the questionnaire, the researchers calculated the reliability of it using CronbachAlpha (see Table 1).

Table 1. Cronbach Alpha for the Questionnaire

N of Items	Cronbach Alpha
42	0.87

Having calculated the reliability of the questionnaire using Cronbach Alpha which was .87, the researcher used the piloted questionnaire to survey the subjects in the experimental group. The items of the questionnaire were examined in terms of their percentage.

The First Research Question: What is Iranian EFL Students' Definition of Plagiarism?

As illustrated in Table 2, in order to answer this research question, the students were presented with six items related to the notion of plagiarism and its different definitions.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics for EFL Learners' Definition of Plagiarism

Items	strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	Strongly disagree
1. Plagiarism is using someone else's words as if they were your own.	96%	4%	0	0	0
2. Plagiarism is using someone else's ideas as if they were your own.	96%	4%	0	0	0
3. Plagiarism is using someone else's results as if they were your own.	95%	5%	0	0	0
4. lagiarism is getting your ideas from a text book.	33%	2%	0	2%	63%
5. Plagiarism is copying and pasting without acknowledging the original source.	97%	3%	0	0	0
6. lagiarism is getting ideas from a source and paraphrasing them but without acknowledging the original source.	64%	20%	11%	5%	0

As Table 2 illustrates, the most frequent item was item 5 (i.e., *plagiarism is copying and pasting without acknowledging the original source*) which was defined as plagiarism by 97% of the respondents. Moreover, items 1 and 2 were selected by exactly the same percentage of the participants. From among 150 respondents in this study, 96 % of students equally agreed that plagiarism is: *using someone else's words and ideas as if they were your own. Plagiarism is using someone else's results as if they were your own* was selected by 95% of the respondent. In addition, *Plagiarism is getting ideas from a source and paraphrasing them but without acknowledging the original source* was selected as the sign of plagiarism by 64% of them. However, the fourth item, that is, *plagiarism is getting your ideas from a text book* was regarded as the least sign of plagiarism and was selected by 33% of the participants. In other words, most of the respondents (63%) believed that getting your ideas from a text book is not plagiarism.

The Second Research Question: What is Regarded as Plagiarism in Students' Own Field of Study?

Table 3 indicated what students regarded as plagiarism.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics for What Language Students Regard as Plagiarism

Items	strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	Strongly disagree
1. Submit an assignment produced as a joint effort but under your name only	92%	8%	0	0	0
2. Copy a completed assignment that your friend has emailed to you	99%	1%	0	0	0
3. Lend a completed assignment to a friend who then copies some parts of it.	60%	32%	8%	0	0
4. Pass off someone else's work as your own and for your own benefit	99%	1%	0	0	0
5. Work on a term project with your classmates/professor and submit the article under your name only	97%	3%	0	0	0
6. Take a questionnaire from an article and work on it without acknowledging the source and write	25%	15%	35%	18%	7%

As

Table 3 illustrates, the most frequent items were items 2 and 4 (i.e., *Copy a completed assignment that your friend has emailed to you* and *Pass off someone else's work as your own and for your own benefit*) which were considered plagiarism by 99% of the respondents. Moreover, item 5 (i.e., *Work on a term project with your classmates/professor and submit the article under your name* only) was selected by 97% percentage of the participants. From among 150 respondents in this study, 92 % of students agreed that plagiarism is item 1, that is, *Submit an assignment produced as a joint effort but under your name only,* is plagiarism. Moreover, 60 % of them stated that *Lending a completed assignment to a friend who then copies some parts of it* is also regarded as plagiarism. However, learners were mostly neutral regarding the sixth item, (i.e., *Take a questionnaire from an article and work on it without acknowledging the source and write*) and was selected by 35% of the participants who were neutral.

The Third Research Question: How do students think their professors detect plagiarism?

Table 4 shows learners' opinion about how their professors can detect plagiarism.

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics for How Students Think their Professors Detect Plagiarism

Items	strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	Strongly disagree
1. Do not care about detecting plagiarism.	0	2%	0	13%	85%
2. Do not have the ability to detect plagiarism.	0	0	0	8%	92%
3. Detect plagiarism but they do not care to penalize us.	%	3%	2%	27%	68%
4. Warn us too much about plagiarism.	0	0	0	2%	98%
5. Guess about who might have done plagiarism	18%	20%	45%	10%	7%
6. Read the whole term paper to find familiar sentences from famous scholars	69%	38%	3%	8%	7%
7. Detect plagiarism by judging based on students' characteristic	10%	3%	10%	18%	59%
8. Detect plagiarism from their teaching experience	43%	30%	18%	9%	0
9. Use the Internet and search engines to detect plagiarism	99%	1%	0	0	0

According to Table 4, the results showed that the participants believed that their professors *Use the Internet and search engines to detect plagiarism* (99% strongly agreed and 1% agreed) and *Warn us too much about plagiarism* (98% strongly agreed and 2% agreed). They stated that *their professors have the ability to detect plagiarism* (92% strongly agreed and 8% agreed). Moreover, they stated that *their professors care about detecting plagiarism* (85% strongly agreed and 13% agreed); however, they stated that *their professors can detect plagiarism but they do not care to penalize students* (68% strongly disagreed and 27% disagreed) and *that their professors detect plagiarism by judging based on students' characteristic* (59% strongly disagreed and 18% disagreed). In addition, students believed that *their professors read the whole term paper to find familiar sentences from famous scholars* (69% strongly agreed and 38% agreed). Furthermore, they agreed that their professors detect plagiarism from their teaching experience (43% strongly agreed and 30% agreed). Most of the students were neutral (45%) about the item stating that their professors guess about who might have done plagiarism.

The Fourth Research Question: What are EFL students' reasons for plagiarism?

In Table 5, EFL learners' reasons for plagiarism are presented.

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics for What EFL Students' Reasons for Plagiarism

Items	strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	Strongly disagree
It is easy to plagiarize	85%	12%	0	3%	0
They do not have a good command of English.	90%	5%	0	5%	92%
They usually do not have enough time to meet the deadlines.	33%	37%	12%	10%	8%
Professors do not pay much attention to detect plagiarism	10	2%	0	8%	80%
Just for fun.	0	0	0	3%	97%
They do not know much about the severity of plagiarism and its consequences.	97%	3%	0	0	0
Most Iranian professors themselves do not care much about term projects, why should I do so? They only think of our exam papers as a criterion for our final grades. I prefer to invest more time on reading for the test rather than doing my term projects.	38%	42%	10%	10%	0
There is no difference in teachers' evaluation of the plagiarized and non-plagiarized projects.	12%	20%	0%	40%	28%
Everyone else is doing it	23%	34%	20%	19%	4%
They feel the original text is well-written and difficult to be changed.	30%	45%	0	15%	5%
Of the lack of clarity of university regulations.	32%	34%	12%	12%	10%
Universities do not take responsibilities for teaching students what is considered as plagiarism.	88%	10%	0	2%	0
Of the same treatment to those whoplagiarize and those who don't.	3%	15%	2%	28%	52%

According to Table 5, the learners' reasons for plagiarism were as follows:

1. They did not know much about the severity of plagiarism and its consequences (97% strongly agreed and 3% agreed).
2. Universities did not take responsibilities for teaching students the concept of plagiarism (88% strongly agreed and 10% agreed).
3. It was easy to plagiarize (85% strongly agreed and 12% agreed).
4. They did not have a good command of English (95% strongly agreed and 5% agreed).
5. Most Iranian professors themselves did not care much about term projects; they only thought of students' exam papers as a criterion for students' final grades. (38% strongly agreed and 42% agreed).
6. They felt the original text was well-written and difficult to be changed (30% strongly agreed and 45% agreed).
7. They usually did not have enough time to meet the deadlines (33% strongly agreed and 37% agreed).
8. Lack of clarity of university regulations (32% strongly agreed and 34% agreed).
9. Everyone else was doing it (23% strongly agreed and 34% agreed).
10. There was no difference in teachers' evaluation of the plagiarized and non-plagiarized projects (12% strongly agreed and 20% agreed).
11. The same treatment was applied to those who plagiarized and those who did not (3% strongly agreed and 15% agreed).

12. Professors did not pay much attention to detect plagiarism (0% strongly agreed and 2% agreed).
13. Most of the students were neutral (45%) about the item stating their professors guess about who might have done plagiarism.
14. Just for fun (0% agreed).

The Fifth Research Question: When did They First Hear of Plagiarism?

Table 6 presented when learners got familiar with the concept of plagiarism.

Table 6. Descriptive Statistics for When They First Heard of Plagiarism

Items	strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	Strongly disagree
From my high school teachers	7%	5%	0	15%	73%
From my university professors	98%	2%	0	0	0
In workshops or seminars on plagiarism	15%	23%	0	30%	43%

According to Table 6, the learners first heard of plagiarism:

1. From their university professors (98% strongly agreed and 2% agreed).
2. In workshops or seminars on plagiarism (15% strongly agreed and 23% agreed).
3. From their high school teachers (7% strongly agreed and 5% agreed).

The Sixth Research Question: What is the Main Source through Which They Get Familiar with the Concept of Plagiarism?

The results of the sixth question are presented in Table 7.

Table 7. Descriptive Statistics for the Main Source through Which They Get Familiar with the Concept of Plagiarism

Items	strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	Strongly disagree
The Internet	7%	5%	0	15%	73%
University professors	90%	2%	0	3%	2%
TV and radio	4%	3%	0	13%	80%
Newspapers and magazines	24%	13%	5%	36%	30%
Friends or family members	32%	21%	0	25%	22%

According to Table 7, the main source through which they got familiar with the concept of plagiarism was:

1. University professors (90% strongly agreed and 2% agreed).
2. Friends or family members (32% strongly agreed and 21% agreed).
3. Newspapers and magazines (24% strongly agreed and 13% agreed).
4. The Internet (7% strongly agreed and 5% agreed).
5. TV and radio (4% strongly agreed and 3% agreed).

3.2 Qualitative Data Analysis for Semi-structured Interview with the Learners

To triangulate the findings, the researcher interviewed the learners using 8 questions to find out more about their attitudes toward plagiarism. The results are summarized and transcribed here.

Interview on the attitude of participants about plagiarism

The questions used in the interview were derived from the questionnaire which the researcher applied in the study. In order to reassure the reliability of the interview, the researcher consulted with several supervisors in different English Learning Institutes including, Ardam, Sadaf and Danial Institutes. Therefore, the supervisors and experienced teachers who were qualified in their jobs had satisfaction toward the interview questions. So then, the researcher used 16 questions in the interview in order to survey more in the study. Ten participants were interviewed individually and the interviews were recorded by the researcher for further analysis.

In order to triangulate the findings, the researcher interviewed the participants in this study using 16 questions to find out more about their attitudes toward plagiarism. Later on, the interview recordings were transcribed by the researcher and frequent statements were taken in to account and their frequencies were calculated. In table 8 themes and frequencies are presented

Table 8. Themes and Frequencies of Statements on Plagiarism

Theme	Frequency
Copying others' work	8
Stealing others' work	6
Pretending others' work as your own	6
Submitting a team work project as your own	8
Professor's negligence upon plagiarism	4
Taking plagiarism easy	2
Ambiguity of university rules upon plagiarism	6
Lacking command of English	8
Not having enough awareness of plagiarism	9
Neglecting the severity of plagiarism	5
Fear of failure in projects	5
Lack of motivation	2
Not hearing about plagiarism before	10
Getting the information from the internet	10

As table 8 illustrates, 8 out of 10 participants considered copying others' work as plagiarism and 6 participants believed the one who steals others' work was accused of plagiarism. Furthermore, 6 participants considered pretending others' work as their own, as plagiarism. Eight participants thought they were accused of plagiarism if they worked on a term project with their classmates/professor and submitted the article under their name only. According to the interviews, 4 participants complained about professors' negligence upon plagiarism, also, 6 participants blamed the ambiguity of university rules upon plagiarism and they supposed the lack of clarity of university regulations as a cause of plagiarism. Besides, 2 participants believed some professors took plagiarism easy.

On the other side, 8 participants confessed that students plagiarized because they did not have a good command of English and according to 9 participants, sometimes not having enough awareness of plagiarism could cause plagiarism. Furthermore, 5 participants believed the students plagiarized because they did not know much about the severity of plagiarism and its consequences. Participants mentioned some reasons why students plagiarize: 5 participants asserted that students plagiarize because they are afraid of failure in their projects and as it has been mentioned before, they plagiarize because they have the lack of awareness of plagiarism and good command of English. Besides, 2 participants believed students did not have enough motivation and they took their essays and dissertations easy and plagiarized as well.

When participants explained when they first heard of plagiarism, all participants claimed they had never heard of plagiarism before, and they heard about it at university from their professors. It is also important to mention that, all of the participants got the information about plagiarism from the Internet and university professors.

4. Discussion

4.1 Research question one: What is Iranian EFL students' definition of plagiarism?

Based on interviews with participants, plagiarism was copying others' work and pretending it as their own, also they claimed using others' work without permission or giving credit to the original author was called plagiarism. Moreover, participants believed plagiarism was taking others' ideas and writing and introducing them as their work without even mentioning the source of the work.

4.2 Research question two: What is regarded as plagiarism in students' own field of study?

Generally, participants believed if they stole or copied others' work and pretend it as their own work and used it in their essays or dissertations without mentioning the source, they were accused of plagiarism. Not to mention that they thought they were accused of plagiarism if they worked on a term project with their classmates/professor and submitted the article under their name only. They also thought they were accused of plagiarism if they took a questionnaire from an article and worked on it without acknowledging the source and the writer. Because they believed the authors or designers had worked on their works, students must have acknowledged that they were using the questionnaires designed by others.

4.3 Research question three: How do students think their professors detect plagiarism?

Overall, participants supposed their professors cared about detecting plagiarism, but some participants doubted it. They claimed their professors warned them about detecting plagiarism but they had not seen the results. The participants believed their professors threatened them a lot but did not check their projects. They also supposed, sometimes their professors detected plagiarism by judging based on their performance in class or by their character which could have an impact on their judgment. Moreover, participants said, in order to detect plagiarism, their professors were equipped with some applications or the Internet search engines.

4.4 Research question four: What are EFL students' reasons for plagiarism?

Different reasons for plagiarism were mentioned by participants including: lack of good command of English and motivation. Participants believed students were not aware of plagiarism; therefore, it led to plagiarism in various cases. Besides, some participants thought students' laziness and fear of failure caused plagiarism. Moreover, professors' reactions to those who plagiarized and those who did not plagiarize also played an important role in plagiarizing according to a few participants; nonetheless, it seems, the participants considered the lack of good command of English and awareness of plagiarism as the most noticeable reasons for plagiarism.

4.5 Research question five: Have students ever been taught about plagiarism? If yes, when and where?

According to participants' interviews, the students never had been taught about plagiarism before entering university, and most of them had not heard of plagiarism before. They mainly had heard of it at university and later on plagiarism had been clarified for them by their professors and Internet.

4.6 Research Question six: What is the main source through which they get familiar with concept of plagiarism?

Accordingly, the main source through which students got most information about plagiarism was ultimately the Internet. Most of the participants mentioned that they got familiar with the concept of plagiarism through university professors, friends or family members, newspapers and magazines, the Internet, and TV and radio.

The findings of the present study are in line with Rezanejad and Rezaei (2013) who investigated students' understanding with plagiarism, their attitudes toward their professors regarding this issue, and their reasons for doing so. The results indicated that students' definition of plagiarism as copying someone else's words. Moreover, students mostly considered copying their friend's assignment as an act of plagiarism. In addition, they mostly argued that professors at universities used different strategies to detect plagiarism. The study also indicated that Iranian students' reasons for plagiarism varied but they did it mainly because of its easiness.

Moreover, the findings of the current study support MahdaviZafarghandi, Khoshroo, and Barkat's (2012) study who examined Iranian EFL Masters learners' understanding of various forms plagiarism using a questionnaire. The findings indicated that learners did not have enough understanding about various forms of plagiarism. The findings emphasized the need for training learners in issues related to plagiarism. In addition, Devlin and Gray (2007), in accordance with this study, investigated students' attitude toward the reasons for plagiarism. According to the findings, students' poor academic skills and some teaching and learning factors were the main reasons of plagiarism among students.

In the same vein, the results accord with Wilkinson (2009) who studied students' perceptions toward various forms of academic dishonesty. Students felt that getting a better grade and having too many assessment items were strong motivators for cheating. Moreover, students stated that lighter penalties should be used for plagiarism such as warnings, resubmission, etc.

Furthermore, Eret and Gokmenoglu (2010) conducted a study on the academicians' views on plagiarism. The results, in line with this study, showed that the academicians had negative attitude toward plagiarism; however, they plagiarized due to foreign language problems, time constraints, and lack of knowledge about plagiarism.

5. Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher arrived at the following conclusions:

a. Most of the students are aware of the concept of plagiarism and have the same definition of what it is.
b. Their professors use the Internet and search engines to detect plagiarism and warn them too much about plagiarism.
c. They do plagiarism since they have less information about how not to plagiarize and less command over English language.
d. They heard of it from their university professors, then in workshops or seminars on plagiarism, and finally from my high school teachers.
e. They got familiar with the concept of plagiarism through university professors, friends or family members, newspapers and magazines, the Internet, and TV and radio.

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