

***In the Name of
Allah***

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Faculty of Languages and Literature

English Department

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of the Degree of Master of Arts in Teaching English as a
Foreign Language (TEFL)

**The Effects of Teaching Paraphrasing and Citation
Strategies to Avoid Plagiarism in Students'
Second Language Academic Writings**

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Dedicated with my heartfelt love and respect

To my enthusiastic supporters:

My inspiring father,

My devoted mother,

My patient husband, and

My very first teachers.

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Abstract

Plagiarism in ESL/EFL learning contexts has been established as a dynamic and multi-layered phenomenon and has become a topic engaging many researchers in a heated debate in recent years. Comparisons of student-generated texts with their source texts have shown that students rely on source texts in their writings and copying is a major strategy used by both L1 and L2 writers.

In our country as an EFL context also plagiarism has become a growing academic concern. Aiming to contribute to this problem, this study first analyzes 7 postgraduate students' academic writings at the English department of Yazd University through a plagiarism detection software to identify their problems and the degree to which they rely on copying strategy in their L2 writings before and after the treatment. At the second stage, the effects of teaching two anti-plagiarism strategies of paraphrasing and citation on 19 postgraduate and 34 graduate students' use of multiple sources in their writings are investigated. The treatment included a multidimensional course conducted in 30 minutes per week for 12 sessions and aimed at a) teaching correct quotation rules and the different functions of citation, while emphasizing the recognition of these rules at work and b) teaching lexical changes and grammatical changes in paraphrase writing. The writing samples of the students were 3 source-based writing tasks and 3 citation tests assigned before, during and after the treatment to convey improvements in students' paraphrasing strategies and citation skills and the degree to which their writing strategies had approximated those of the L1 writers. Keck's (2006) new approach to the identification and classification of paraphrases within student writing

(Near Copy, Minimal Revision, Moderate Revision, and Substantial Revision categories) was adapted to analyze students' paraphrasing strategies in their summary writings. Also, the effective citation strategies of students were analyzed according to their use of the standard citation style and for a high variety of rhetorical functions.

The results of the assigned tasks and the two survey questions conveyed students' perceived growing confidence and significant improvements in their citation skills and paraphrasing strategies in their source-based writings. The possible reasons for students' insisting on copying at the end of the treatment are also discussed. The results can yield considerably insightful implications for writing course designers to treat significant problems of the students in their academic writings.

Key words: Plagiarism, Second Language Academic Writing, Citation Skills, Paraphrase Writing

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List of Abbreviations

EAP	English for academic purposes
EFL	English as a foreign language
ESL	English as a second language
ESP	English for specific purposes
HE	Higher education
L1	First language
L2	Second language
NS	Native speaker
NES	Native English speaker
NNS	Non-native speaker
NNSE	Non-native speaker of English
SLA	Second language acquisition
TEFL	Teaching of English as a foreign language
TESL	Teaching of English as a second language
TESOL	Teaching of English to speakers of other languages
TOEFL	Test of English as a foreign language

Definition of Key Terms

Plagiarism: Despite the researchers, dictionaries can be considered mere sources that reached a consensus on the definition of plagiarism (Akbulut et al., 2008). American heritage dictionary (2000) defines plagiarizing as ‘to use and pass off the ideas or writings of another as one’s own’. Random House Webster’s Unabridged Dictionary (2006) defines plagiarism as ‘the unauthorized use or close imitation of the language and thoughts of another author and the representation of them as one’s own original work’. The definition provided by William L. Kibler is more comprehensive as he not only talks about receiving unauthorized and unacknowledged assistance, but also mentions giving assistance in academic endeavors (Kibler, 1993).

Paraphrase: Keck (2006) defines a *Paraphrase* as follows: A *Paraphrase* is based upon a selected excerpt of a source text, and is approximately the same length of the selected excerpt; however, a *Paraphrase* may or may not accurately express the ideas of this excerpt. In a *Paraphrase*, at least one attempt has been made to change the language of the original excerpt. A *Paraphrase* may or may not be followed by appropriate citation of the original source.

Citation: The rules of discourse in this academic community require the writer to situate himself in relation to the existing body of published knowledge, whether in order to use it as support, to exemplify a point, to build on it, or to take issue with it. The term for this

reference to the works of other authors is often referred to as *citation* (Center for Academic Writing in Central European University, 2004).

Academic Writing: Writing is the principal means of communication in the academic community, where ideas and evidence are exchanged through the publication of articles and books. In order to be accepted as an academic, it is agreed that the writer has to fulfill two requirements: he has to show some sort of original contribution to the discipline, and at the same time he has to demonstrate that he is, in the words of Phillips and Pugh (1994), “*aware of what is being discovered, argued about, written and published by the related academic community across the world*”. Therefore, academic writing is often seen by the researchers as a kind of balancing act between these two contradictory aims, and this balance is certainly something that many students find difficult to achieve (Center for Academic Writing in Central European University, 2004).

Referencing: Whenever you cite the work of others, it is extremely important that you acknowledge the author/s in question and specify your source/s (i.e. where you found their work), otherwise you are in effect 'stealing' their ideas. Referencing then is the action of specifying precisely where the material quoted or referred to comes from e.g. '.....' (Wright Mills, 1980:24). "Referencing is a standardised method of acknowledging sources of information and ideas that you have used in your assignment, in a way that uniquely identifies their source" (<http://startup.curtin.edu.au/library/harvard.html>)

