

Rusudan Japaridze

PROBLEM OF PLAGIARISM IN STUDENTS AND POSSIBLE WAYS TO PREVENT IT

Abstract

The given paper discusses the phenomenon of plagiarism, its main types and some of the basic reasons why students plagiarize. Plagiarism has always been a “headache” in all fields but it is a severe problem especially nowadays when people have access to all kinds of information on the internet and there is a temptation for students to “solve” their homework deadlines easily. Plagiarism is a big challenge in the modern world and the digitization of everything have made this process much easier. Students are novice researchers, so it is important for them to be aware of the dangers and negative consequences of misappropriation of someone else's intellectual property. It is the duty of us - teachers to inform them in this respect. The article highlights the main reasons why students might be tempted to plagiarize. Their possible solutions are also given.

Keywords: Plagiarism, academic integrity, prevention, solution

Introduction

*“The human plagiarism
which is most difficult to avoid,
for individuals ...
is the plagiarism of ourselves.”*

Marcel Proust

Plagiarism has become very topical lately not only in art and literature but in higher educational institutions as well. Preventing plagiarism and promoting academic integrity is a challenge for education institutions globally. Plagiarism has always been a serious problem for academics, but the introduction of the Internet, digitization and access to all kinds of information have made plagiarism prevention even more difficult. Digital work is becoming more and more common in educational

institutions and this often makes plagiarism easier. The greatest role of teachers in this regard is to emphasize the importance of academic integrity and also to teach students exactly what plagiarism is. My paper deals with the problem of plagiarism, its etymology, definition and its main types, also the main reasons why students plagiarize. I will also suggest possible solutions.

A brief history of plagiarism: The 1st-century Roman poet Martial used the term to complain about other poets stealing his verses. The word seems to have entered English in the form “plagiary,” used by Ben Jonson in 1601. A 1755 dictionary defined it as “the crime of literary theft.” According to the Encyclopedia (Britannica) “plagiarism is the act of taking the writings of another person and passing them off as one’s own.”

At a glance, **plagiarism** has an unexpected etymology. It derived from Latin “plagiarius” - “kidnapper, seducer, plunderer”. When I found it first it was a bit unexpected for me but then I realized that developing this kind of etymology may have had its reason. For all the people who have intellectual property and have created something valuable, this work is really like a dearest child to him. So just for the parent whose child is kidnapped, it is nearly the same horrible feeling for an author when his/her thoughts are appropriated. In my opinion, we should start talking about this topic with our students with the etymology of this word, because this kind of comparison will always be a good reminder of the fact how serious this phenomenon is and what kind of emotions it is connected with. (<https://www.etymonline.com/word/plagiarism>)

As I have already mentioned, this presentation discusses the main reasons why students resort to plagiarism, although this will not be an attempt to justify these reasons in any way, justifying plagiarism as illegality, but explaining that misappropriation of someone else's intellectual property is not allowed as stealing someone else's material property is forbidden. So, I think when we, lecturers, are aware of the reasons why they plagiarize, it will be one step forward to solve and prevent this problem in the future because as it is said, understanding the cause of a problem is a half-solved problem. I think this is teachable if we know how to explain to our students the importance of academic integrity and the dangers connected with plagiarism. We must make our students think and analyze that academic integrity is necessary not only due to legal and ethical reasons but also plagiarism kills their creativity and hinders them in voicing their ideas which very often can be more valuable than the information they steal.

Methodology

The target group of the survey were 30 students who answered questions about plagiarism and its main causes. The data analysis carried out in this research involved several procedures. At the initial stage of the research, students were surveyed, the questionnaire comprised the following questions:

1. What is plagiarism?
2. What are the main reasons for plagiarism in students?

At the next stage, the answers were carefully examined and analyzed. The study has been carried out by the qualitative and quantitative analysis of the data obtained.

The quantitative analysis of the data showed that for the majority of students (80%), the main reason for plagiarism is the lack of time, ie the discrepancy between the time allotted for the assignment and the difficulty and the volume of the assignment. This came as no surprise in today's reality, when scarcity of time and proper time management is generally a global problem, but once again it reminds us- lecturers that we need to be careful with assignment deadlines so as not to inadvertently push students into plagiarism.

In addition to the time problem, other reasons have also been named, which I will list and discuss below:

1. The first and the most significant reason that students often name as an excuse is ignorance of the essence of plagiarism and its different forms. Is it Plagiarism if I borrow someone's ideas or if I use their exact words? This is the common question asked by my students and I guess from this that they do not know the different forms of plagiarism. Very often they plagiarize because of this unintentionally. Very often students do not deliberately commit plagiarism. Usually, it results from:

a. Improper Citation - Common errors that lead to accidental plagiarism include using words or passages from the source without using quotation marks and/or without citing the source;

b. Careless Note-Taking- Very often inexperienced students often forget to organize notes according to their sources while reading. As a result, they cannot tell which notes came from which source when they are in the stages of writing up their assignment.

Solutions: How can educators cope with this problem? First of all, teachers have to develop their strategies for fighting plagiarism, for instance:

Talk about plagiarism

Of course, students can be aware of what plagiarism is. But there are so many other details of this issue they have only a vague idea of. Teachers can hold a discussion in class and emphasize the following topics:

- What are the types of plagiarism
- How to avoid plagiarism
- What punishment students should expect when plagiarizing
- How to properly cite sources
- How to paraphrase
- How a bibliography should look
- What checkers are the best for detecting plagiarism
- How can accidental plagiarism be easily noticed

Give unique assignments

The best way to avoid plagiarism is to give your students assignments that require a creative and individual approach. If students have typical homework assignments, there is a chance they try to find and copy-paste materials from web resources. If a task is original, students will enjoy it and most likely do it on their own.

Use plagiarism checkers

There's a chance that your students can accidentally plagiarize: They can use a quote without quotation marks or paraphrase inaccurately. Just to be on the safe side, it's advisable to use a plagiarism checker. And also we should teach them how to use these checkers to see what areas are unoriginal so that they can clearly see what needs to be corrected. Since checkers find similarities automatically, it saves a lot of time and effort.

At the beginning of the course, we should explain plagiarism to our students, what forms it has and what academic integrity implies.

We should put an emphasis on **4 basic forms of plagiarism:**

- **Direct plagiarism** is the word-for-word transcription of a section of someone else's work, without attribution and quotation marks.

- **Self-plagiarism.**

Self-plagiarism is one of the common types of plagiarism, where high school students copy and paste part of their previously submitted academic paper. If the student submits the same paper for two different class projects without asking the concerned teacher, then that is considered self-plagiarism.

- **Mosaic plagiarism.**

There is another type of plagiarism that is unintentional. In this case, the plagiarist may have mentioned the source of the content he has referred to. But, if he/she does not acknowledge the quoted part or put them under the quotation marks correctly, then the writer commits the crime of plagiarism.

- **Accidental plagiarism.**

Accidental plagiarism occurs when a person neglects to cite their sources, or misquotes their sources, or unintentionally paraphrases a source by using similar words, groups of words, and/or sentence structure without attribution.

2. The second reason for plagiarism is that most students do not know that it is a serious offence that is punishable. No matter how surprising it may seem, plagiarism hasn't always been considered a crime. Many people throughout history didn't regard words or ideas as property at all and saw nothing wrong with "borrowing" liberally from others. They say that all texts are versions of earlier texts; there's been nothing new under the sun since Plato and Aristotle and they weren't new either; everything belongs to everybody. Unfortunately, many students have such an attitude towards this issue. They often argue that some ideas are the common property.

Solution: Many ideas and phrases are so familiar that they have become the common property of all; these require no documentation. However, the use of ideas or phrases that are original with another author requires that the appropriate credit be given to the original author.

Students and scholars must acknowledge the source of the phrases and ideas that are not their own. We should make students understand that original work and proper attribution is valued and respected by others. Citation isn't simply about giving credit for other people's words. It's about both giving credit to other people's work that your writing is built upon and highlighting where your information came from.

3. Another problem is setting inadequate time limits or deadlines for students to conduct a research or homework: in such a situation students are in a corner and under high pressure, it's no excuse for plagiarism, but higher educational institutions can be a high-pressure environment. Students struggle to maintain 4.0 GPAs while trying to combine a social life, student life, studying and working with one another. We demand both quality and quantity from their homework. In this environment, it's deplorable but hardly surprising that students sometimes resort to desperate, unethical tactics. Cheating has always been a headache for the teachers. Today, plagiarizing a class assignment or academic article is easier than ever thanks to the internet. It's incredibly simple to copy and paste the text into your document without attribution. The Internet is commonly blamed for encouraging cheating among students. Students have access to numerous paper databases, where they find and download already-written papers and pass them off as their own. Students copy passages from different online publications and, in this manner, compile their work.

Solution: To avoid such a situation, we, lecturers should take the following into account: In order not to provoke plagiarism, we should set adequate time limits and deadlines for submitting assignments and should not expect quality and voluminous assignments to be written in a day or two.

4. One of the reasons for plagiarism is that students lack the confidence to express their views and opinions, they think that they will never think better than the authors of popular ideas. Academic integrity is necessary not only due to legal and ethical reasons but also plagiarism hinders you in voicing your ideas which very often can be more valuable than the information they steal. For many students, this stifles creativity because they prefer the ready-made material to a lot of thinking and reasoning.

Solution: We Should try to encourage them to express their ideas freely and not to kill their creativity with plagiarism.

5.The last reason for plagiarism can be a present situation conditioned by the pandemic. The move to remote learning due to the pandemic has produced some unusual trends in the incidents of academic integrity violations. For example, **Lee Ann Clements**, (PhD Director of Academic Integrity, Professor of Biology & Marine Science) at Jacksonville University in Florida says that the data of this university showed that people of all ages when presented with stressful, uncertain times make bad decisions based on lack of information. My observations on my students also showed me that online learning makes it difficult for some of them to get the instructions clearly and when confused they try to cheat.

Solution: While teaching online, teachers have to give clear instructions and ask questions to verify students understand everything properly.

Conclusion:

As we have seen, there is no problem without reasons. If we, lecturers, are aware of these reasons and assess them properly, we will help our students avoid plagiarism.

The policy of plagiarism in higher education is often established from a moral point of view. Students studying plagiarism are often described as unscrupulous, lazy, or simply unethical. Many educators give students an automatic failure assessment when they turn to plagiarism. Teachers need to explain to students that classroom backwardness is not only the main problem but also their future career will be in danger. Even when their plagiarism can be intentional, we should try to remember that students are learners and emerging writers. They are not bad people. They are not thieves and criminals. There is a reason why they are plagiarizing. Students need to understand that plagiarism has serious consequences and that thinking independently and creatively will always be appreciated everywhere.

Preventing this problem is much better than punishing students for plagiarism and thinking about punitive measures.

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Author's email rusudan.japaridze@tsu.ge:

Author's biographical data

The author of the article is a Doctor of Philology and works at Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University. She has a broad experience in teaching English to multi-level and exam-oriented classrooms. She has been delivering lectures for more than ten years.