

The Complexity of Textual Borrowing in Learning English As a Foreign Language

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Abstract

Exploring the notion of ownership of text and learning was potential to understand the question of textual borrowing. However, this relationship remained under-explored. This study would address two key research questions: (1) How did learners of English as a foreign language paraphrase texts and (2) How were their attitudes towards plagiarism. Data were drawn from texts produced by undergraduate students of English Department in reading comprehension classes. Two stages of analyses were carried out. Firstly description of quality of paraphrasing the texts by the learners were presented and distributed. Secondly, the learners' attitudes towards plagiarism were described. These analyses were used as starting point to interpret the student plagiarism. Findings and discussion revealed that 20% of the learners' works were 100% unique. They agreed to say that plagiarizing was as bad as stealing an exam and that plagiarism impoverished the investigative spirit. The rest were plagiarized ranging from 5% up to 24%. They said that sometimes they felt tempted to plagiarize because so many other students were doing it. They argued sometimes they copied a sentence or two just to become inspired for further writing. Pedagogically, it implies that since paraphrasing is using one's own words to express someone else's ideas, students should be encouraged to cite a source accurately and define unfamiliar words instead of being punished. They need to change any words or phrases that match the original so closely. The ideas and meaning of the original source must be maintained and words must be their own.

Keywords: attitudes, language learning, paraphrase, textual borrowing

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Introduction

How do undergraduate students paraphrase a text? What are the attitudes of these students towards plagiarism? Why is it that many teachers seem to react to supposed acts of plagiarism with such moral outrage? Which one is more significant, suspecting the student's borrowing or the intention behind the borrowing? Questions such as these prompted the impetus of this article to explore the ways students paraphrase a text and the ways they identify themselves in academic writing. In addition, this article demonstrates the value of adopting critical discourse analysis (CDA) to study student plagiarism.

Research-based writing in American institutions, both educational and corporate, is filled with rules that writers, particularly beginners, are not aware of or do not know how to follow. These rules deal mostly with research and citation. Gaining familiarity with these rules, however, is critically important, as inadvertent mistakes can lead to accusation of plagiarism.

Rules dealing with research and citation are of particular significant in American institutions when one is carrying out research-based writing. Negligence in complying with these rules could run the risk of being accused of plagiarism. However, many writers are unaware of these rules, especially learners who are just learning the ropes.

Dealing with textual borrowing, what is meant by ownership of text is as very complex as the notion of learning. It is important to understand the cultural and historical specificity of notions of ownership and authorship and to explore the implications of these concepts' being increasingly promoted as international norms.

Considering the complexity of textual borrowing, understanding the culture and the history of the notion of authorship and ownership is of significant when attempts to address this issue. Additionally, searching for implications of the concept of authorship and ownership is not less important for these concepts are being disseminated worldwide as international code of conduct.

Above all, plagiarism should be addressed in terms of cultural and educational issues in particular when one discusses the relationship between 'text', 'knowledge' and 'learning' in a certain context of culture. Creative thought could be either promoted or hindered not only by the language the learners supposed to function academically but also by the nature of the institution they are involved. Questioning these possibilities is of critical importance as well.

Literature Review

Sun & Yang (2015) conducted a research to uncover published authors' text-borrowing. The goal of the study is to investigate the paraphrasing strategies and self-plagiarism. Turnitin plagiarism detection software was employed to uncover the text-borrowing practices. The findings suggest there were 30 paraphrasing strategies found in the data. Overall, author's previous publication was reused by more than two-thirds (67.28%) of the observed texts.

Casey, K. (2006) conducted a research on the use of paraphrase in summary writing. The study analyzed L1 (n = 79) and L2 (n = 74) writers' use of paraphrase. The use the paraphrase types by the writers was then compared. The findings indicate that new copies are used more

significantly by L2 although L1 used the same number of paraphrases. It implies that students' textual borrowing strategies should be discussed with a particular focus on issues related to plagiarism.

Liao et.al (2010) conducted a research on students' views of textual borrowing in Academic Setting. This study examines the writers' performance of paraphrasing. The findings indicate behaviors and perceptions mismatch. They denied committing plagiarism and claimed they were aware of the significance of paraphrasing but they failed to produce acceptable texts.

The present study aims to describe how Indonesian undergraduate students of English as a foreign language paraphrase texts and what such attitude they demonstrate on the discourse of plagiarism.

The influence of forces of culture, social and politics on how student plagiarism is interpreted as a concept has been discussed. According to Scollon (1995) approach to plagiarism is constructed with great influence from "Utilitarian Discourse System". Meanwhile, Pennycook (1996) points out that "possessive individualism" is highly influential to plagiarism conception found in Western academic institutions today. Scollon & Scollon (2008) suggests that there are four elements influencing each other in discourse system namely ideological norms, socialization practice, discourse forms, face relationships.

Utilitarianism believes that a good society is the one that provide the greatest happiness for most of the people (Bentham, 1962: 34). Within Utilitarian discourse one can find six discourse forms including "anti-rhetorical", "positive-empirical", "deductive", "individualistic", "egalitarian", and "institutional sanctioned". In this article, I mainly examine student plagiarism form from the aspect of "individualistic". Possessive individualism in particular together with Utilitarian discourse system (UDS) have effectively influenced the conception of plagiarism in Western academic institutions at present.

How to approach plagiarism in the academy is of particular importance when we realize the difference of the nature of undergraduate, postgraduate, and academics. Bakhtin (1986:89) points out that one of the theoretical aspects of communication is the capability of individuals to generate their own words in making a text. In communication, an exchange of words could take place in varying degrees of "otherness" and "our-ownness".

Barthes (1997: 160) claims that texts are to put facts, events, details together to make a closely connected whole in every way possible with words or lines taken from a book or a speech, words that show where you can find a piece of information, the fact of an idea being like another and reminding you of it, language connected with customs and beliefs, art, way of life of a particular society or group, and not taking any risk against exploring the original texts.

At present virtual texts mediated by computer are used to search for and describe information replacing the habit of reading books or printed material. It implies culturally and change the way you notice things and the ability to understand the true nature of something and the way in which two or more things are connected concerning textuality. The function or position

that the writer and reader has or expected to have will be a matter that needs to be discussed or even leads to doubt or uncertainty. In universities, the basic qualities of learning and teaching consequently stops having one state, position or direction and starts having another (Landow, 1992).

As writers and readers, the way we produce and connect to electronic texts changes in line with the changes of language we use to describe texts in accordance with the features of the new phenomenon. Access to a place in an electronic document on a computer that is linked to another electronic document (hyperlink) increases because some points at which writers and readers stop being possible or existing in print technology has been freed by electronic technology.

Such electronic linking creates hypertexts that have the potential to provide linkages to a limitless number of associated texts. Hypertext, argues Landow (1992, 1997), embodies poststructuralist conceptions of the open text: notions of center, margin, hierarchy and linearity are replaced by terms such as multilinearity, nodes, links and networks. The implications of textuality as open, with links to the works of several different writers, throw into question the notion of text as the univocal property of a single author. Hypertext by its very nature is multifocal, with its ownership belonging arguably therefore to multiple authors.

The idea of text as having only one meaning or interpretation and leading to only one conclusion (univocal) is thrown into question as a result of textuality as open to involving several different authors. Instead, hypertext is intrinsically having many different interpretations, meanings, or values, with its possession of property plausibly to be owned by many different authors.

Method

This is a critical discourse analysis (CDA) on investigation of how learners of English as a foreign language paraphrase texts and how are their attitudes towards plagiarism. Data are drawn from texts produced by ten undergraduate students of English Department in reading comprehension classes. This number of respondents is gained through random sampling machine out of 62 students. Two stages of analyses are carried out. Firstly, description of quality of the texts produced by the learners are presented and distributed. Smallseotools.com plagiarism detection software and human scrutiny were employed to uncover the text-borrowing practices. Secondly, the learners' attitudes towards plagiarism are described by comparing between participants' behaviors and their perceptions. These analyses are used as starting point to interpret the student plagiarism.

CDA is selected for a number of reasons. CDA is a theoretical perspective on language that provides a way of analyzing language in a broader social process. It is argued that language can be used for both describing and constituting something. It can be useful in framing what is regarded to "be" and acceptable to carry out (Fairclough, 1992).

CDA is chosen due to the reasons that (i) discourse could shape the way a person functions in a particular situation either arguing as it is now or helping to show that a change is true; (ii) discourse can have an effect on the way that somebody behaves or thinks in making sense of something at individual level or societal level; (iii) the narrative of change is disseminated and

shaped by interaction; (iv) the effect and the interest of discourse is constructed by a dynamics of power on the basis of the kind and what is possible for a change; (v) for the sake of survival being open to alternatives is a condition for a dominant discourse to meet; (vi) continuous process of interactive and discursive constructs and makes discourse change gradually; (vii) the ability of the agent of change to understand a phenomenon improves when he is interested in knowing the discursive nature of their practice (Grant & Marshak, 2011 as cited in Dunford 2013).

In order to answer the two questions underpinning this study, i.e., how learners of English as a foreign language paraphrase texts is described and how their attitudes towards plagiarism are analyzed and interpreted. The former is a descriptive analysis of the learners' works of paraphrasing texts and their attitudes towards plagiarism. It is used as a starting point for critical analysis. The latter is a critical interpretation of the paraphrased texts and the attitudes of the learners towards plagiarism.

Findings and Discussion

This section is intended to answer those two questions of this study, i.e. the learners' pattern of paraphrasing texts and their attitudes towards the discourse of plagiarism

Pattern of paraphrasing texts

The pattern of students' works of paraphrasing texts is shown in Table 1. It is categorized into accuracy of information, content clarity, original thought and sentence structure.

Table 1: *The learners' works of paraphrasing a text*

| Aspects of Paraphrasing | Quality of Paraphrasing | Learners | | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------------|---|----------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|-----|
| | | S1 | S2 | S3 | S4 | S5 | S6 | S7 | S8 | S9 | S10 |
| Accuracy of information | Some information was correct. There were places that it is evident the student did not fully understand what they had read. | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| | Almost all of the key pieces of information are correct. | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | All information is correct and represents what the original contained. | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Content clarity | It is difficult to understand the meaning of what is written. Many disjointed thoughts are found, and their flow and continuity is lacking. | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|---|---|----|----|---|----|----|----|----|----|
| | The information is clearly written and is understandable. There is a flow to most of the thoughts and ideas | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | All information is clear to understand. There is a connection between all ideas presented and the flow of thought makes it very understandable | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Original thought | Some of the sentences are in the student's words. Some are exactly as written in the original text. | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| | Most of the sentences are in the student's words | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | all of the sentences are in the student's words. Some original thought is shown by elaborating on topic | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Sentence structure | Only some sentences show correct grammar and structure. | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| | Most sentences show correct grammar and structure | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | All sentences are grammatically correct, show good sentence structure and correct spelling. | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Percentage of plagiarized texts (%) | | 5 | 6 | 15 | 25 | 0 | 35 | 62 | 45 | 50 | 55 |

As the data have shown, most students' works of paraphrasing a text are nearing proficiency in nature. In terms of accuracy of information, it is found that some information was correct. There were places that it is evident the student did not fully understand what they had read. In terms of content clarity, it is difficult to understand the meaning of what is written. Many disjointed thoughts are found, and their flow and continuity is lacking. In terms of their original thought it is evident that some of the sentences are in the student's words and some are exactly as written in the original text. In terms of their sentence structure it is shown that only some sentences show correct grammar and structure. As the study conducted by Casey, K. (2006) suggests,

students' textual borrowing strategies should be discussed with a particular focus on issues related to plagiarism.

Only two students' works are proficient. The data show, in terms of accuracy of information almost all the key pieces of information are correct. In terms of content clarity, the information is clearly written and is understandable. There is a flow to most of the thoughts and ideas. Some connections between ideas/sentences are evident. In terms of original thought, most of the sentences are in the student's words. In terms of sentence structure, most sentences show correct grammar and structure.

Only one student's works prove advanced. In terms of accuracy of information, all information is correct and represents what the original contained. In terms of content clarity, all information is clear to understand. There is a connection between all ideas presented and the flow of thought makes it very understandable. In terms of original thought, all of the sentences are in the student's words. Some original thought is shown by elaborating on topic. In terms of sentence structure, all sentences are grammatically correct, show good sentence structure and correct spelling.

The data show, plagiarism check by smallseotools.com suggests that the student paraphrased texts ranges from five percent to 62 percent plagiarized and 25 percent to 38 percent unique. The data shown indicates the complexity of things going on behind the surface phenomenon of apparent plagiarism. Students come to our classes with different cultural and educational backgrounds, with different understandings of texts and language, with different approaches to learning. As the study conducted by Sun & Yang (2015) suggests, more explicit operational standards among disciplines toward factors that may contribute to unintentional self-plagiarism are required.

Attitudes towards Plagiarism

The attitude of the learners towards plagiarism is shown in Table 2. They include positive attitude, negative attitude and normative attitudes towards student plagiarism.

Table 2: *The learners' attitude towards plagiarism*

| No | Attitudes | Learners | | | | | | | | | |
|----|---|----------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|-----|
| | | S1 | S2 | S3 | S4 | S5 | S6 | S7 | S8 | S9 | S10 |
| 1 | Plagiarism impoverishes the investigative spirit | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 2 | The names of the authors who plagiarize should be disclosed to the scientific community | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 3 | Plagiarizing is as bad as stealing an exam | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| 4. | Sometimes I feel tempted to plagiarize because so many other students are doing it | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|----|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | Sometimes I copy a sentence or two just to become inspired for further writing | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| 6 | When I do not know what to write, I translate a part of a paper from a foreign language | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| 7 | If my roommate gives me permission to use his or her paper for one of my classes, I don't think there is anything wrong with doing that | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| 8 | Plagiarism is justified if the lecturer assigns too much work in the course | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| 9 | The punishment for plagiarism in college should be light because we are young people just learning the ropes | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| 10 | You could not write a scientific paper without plagiarizing | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| 11 | If one cannot write well in a foreign language (e.g., English), it is justified to copy parts of a similar paper already published in that language | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| 12 | Because plagiarism involves taking another person's words and not his or her material goods, plagiarism is no big deal | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| 13 | It's okay to use something you have written in the past to fulfill a new assignment because you can't plagiarize yourself. | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 |

As the data show, the students' attitudes towards plagiarism are diverse. However, they are mostly in common in the cluster of positive attitudes i.e. 'sometimes I copy a sentence or two just to become inspired for further writing' and 'the punishment for plagiarism in college should be light because we are young people just learning the ropes'. Ironically, the learners express their negative attitudes towards plagiarism of which they mostly say that 'plagiarizing is as bad as stealing an exam.' It is similar to the findings of the research conducted by Liao et.al (2010) which show mismatch between the participants' behaviors and perceptions.

In terms of other negative attitudes towards plagiarism, only two respondents agree to say that 'plagiarism impoverishes the investigative spirit'. Similarly, only one respondent says that 'the names of the authors who plagiarize should be disclosed to the scientific community.'

There are four respondents say that when they do not know what to write, they translate a part of a paper from a foreign language. Meanwhile, it includes two respondents who say that if their roommates give them permission to use their papers for one of my classes, they don't think there is anything wrong with doing that.

Nine respondents say that plagiarism is justified if the lecturer assigns too much work in the course. Meanwhile, three respondents agree to say that you could not write a scientific paper without plagiarizing.

Five respondents say that if one cannot write well in a foreign language (e.g., English), it is justified to copy parts of a similar paper already published in that language. Six respondents say that because plagiarism involves taking another person's words and not his or her material goods, plagiarism is no big deal.

Seven respondents say that it is okay to use something you have written in the past to fulfill a new assignment because you cannot plagiarize yourself.

Postmodern philosophical abstraction

Postmodernism is a concept in criticism that departs from modernism which distrusts grand theories and ideologies. The critiques put forward by postmodernism can be at a certain level of philosophical abstraction and another side which tends to deal in more material changes.

What is believed to be plagiarism, as Pennycook (1996) argues, has been dealt with in the ways that we cannot pedagogically rely on, and intellectually showing little thought for other people. Instead of viewing this issue as a matter of copying and learning how to practice academic writing, it is necessary to consider discussing how and why this belief or understanding has been shaped, how authority, authenticity, and authorship have been connected to each other, and how these actions continuously move and change.

As Scollon (as cited in Pennycook, 1995) points out that in understanding plagiarism, authorship and authenticity, we need to find their exact position in social power and privilege distribution rather than in the system of relational texts.

Since borrowing words from others is basically the nature of learning language, the way of being certain that your beliefs are right and others should accept them should be avoided. In other words, we should be flexible on drawing an imagined line between approved of and disapproved of textual borrowings Pennycook (1996, p. 227).

The idea of the fact of owning texts and learning starts to be something very complex when we begin to examine carefully the whole issue of textual borrowing. It is significant to learn the quality of being specific of the idea of ownership and authorship and to examine carefully the possible effect of these principles' being more and more all the time as international pattern of behavior.

It is necessary to treat plagiarism in particular ways, too. In the area of culture and education we need to examine the connection between text, knowledge and learning in a definite cultural situation. Additionally, we need to examine the way the things happen in the institution and the language in which it is perceived. The question is whether an educational institute helps learners to develop or prevents them from doing what they want to do?

It is certainly that we need to let the criticism works on the practice of borrowing that you cannot approve. However, accusations of plagiarism that is done by one member of an organization without the agreement of the other members is not confident enough and feeling that they are more important than other people, so that they are rude to them or do not consider them. It is necessary, as part of our duties as teachers, to start to have a quality that becomes better in knowing and realizing how and why the issues of textual borrowings and language learning are complex.

It is not sufficient to focus only on Western writing practices as a list of cultural topics that students should study in a particular subject at college. An effort is also needed to do better in knowing and realizing how are the worlds of students' language learning and textual borrowings including things that limit and restrict their lives and their belief on how academic norms work in particular way, and may be not obeyed.

Cultural Difference

Concerning with plagiarism, a warning to students about their behavior, a statement telling them that bad and unpleasant things may happen in the future so that they can try to avoid it; a statement telling them that you will punish or harm them, especially if they do not do what you want; are typically acts used to stop bad things from happening. Such prevention is presenting plagiarism as a simple black-and-white issue and ignoring the way in which text, memory and learning are connected and is difficult to understand. It also neglects distinct connection between cultural difference, literacy, and learning.

For those undergraduate students in writing in a second language, a generally accepted rule, standard or principle of knowledge by which something is judged and the set of technical words or expressions used in a particular senses, are required to be new and interesting in a way that is different from anything that has existed before. They are supposed to involve making fair, careful judgments about the good and bad qualities of something. In addition it is done or produced by and for them-selves.

Domination of electronic media over societies has resulted in the end of the author. It is line with the death of the author to texts as deconstructionist approach to texts suggests.

Thus, if the view of textuality discussed in the previous section is postmodern to the extent that it follows the epistemological shifts brought about by postmodern philosophical changes, there is also a postmodern approach grounded in the notion that postmodernism is a real condition of late capitalist society. That is to say, whereas on the one hand we may point to the death of the author brought about by deconstructionist approaches to texts, on the other we may see the death or the demise of the author as a product of changes in communication in societies dominated by electronic media.

As Scollon (1994) suggests, writing practices are changing, and it is now common to find multiple layering effects in academic texts, where the supposed origin of a quote becomes ever murkier. It would seem, then, that both the postmodern skepticism about the myth of originality and the more material considerations about changing writing practices point toward the need to reevaluate beliefs in originality and textual ownership. There is therefore a degree of hypocrisy in

the defense of the culture of originality because postmodern understandings of language and meaning, by contrast, point to the possibility of little more than a circulation of meanings.

This is a postmodern approach based on the idea that postmodernism is an actual situation in which people live near the end of capitalist society. A way of writing in a particular situation is becoming different. It is more frequent at present to find a change of something caused by something else arranged in layers in academic texts. The supposed point from which something starts is not clearly known and suspected of not being honest.

The strong feeling that originality and textual ownership exist or are true is likely necessary to be reevaluated considering more material changing of writing practices and postmodern skepticism that originality is something that many people believe but that does not exist or is false. Defending the culture of originality is, therefore, indicating a degree of hypocrisy since postmodern particular way in which it understands language and meaning, on the contrary, leads to a particular development or logical argument that they are not simply a circulation of meanings.

It makes it difficult to understand the creating who or what someone is in intercultural discourse as the way of understanding or thinking that have not changed for a long time about plagiarism has been considered to be an ideology that gives special rights or advantages to a principle of an individual held for long enough within the European knowledge about and understanding of plagiarism. Such tradition disagrees strongly with the notion of ownership and memorization in ESL classes and many writing programs. There is a discourse that you can get for teachers having been to university in the Western belief which emphasizes having power or control over others in terms of originality and creativity.

Conclusion

Findings and discussion reveal that some information was correctly presented. However, there are places that it is evident the student does not fully understand what they have read. Some of the sentences are in the student's words. Some are exactly as written in the original text. Only some sentences show correct grammar and structure. Through empowerment, almost all of the key pieces of information are correct. Most of the sentences are in the student's words. Most sentences show correct grammar and structure. To avoid plagiarism the learners' work should meet such quality including that all information is correct and represents what the original contained. All of the sentences are in the student's words. Some original thought is shown by elaborating on topic. All sentences are grammatically correct, show good sentence structure and correct spelling.

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