



## Effects of the Supplementary for Understanding and Avoiding Plagiarism on EFL Students' Writing

Surichai Butcha<sup>1</sup> and Dararat Khampusaen<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup> English Program, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Khon Kaen University, Khon Kaen, Thailand

<sup>1</sup> E-mail: surichai.butcha@gmail.com, <sup>2</sup> E-mail: darkha@kku.ac.th

### Abstract

As the Internet is recognized as a high potential and powerful educational tool to access sources of knowledge, plagiarism is an increasing unethical issue found in students' writing. This paper is deriving from the 1st phase of an on-going study investigating the effects of the supplementary on citing sources on undergraduate students' writing. The 40 participants were divided into 1 experimental group and 1 control group. Both groups were administered with a questionnaire on knowledge and an interview on attitude related to using sources in writing. Only the experimental group undertook the 4 lessons focusing on using outside sources and citing the original work (quoting, synthesizing, summarizing and paraphrasing) were delivered to them via e-learning tools throughout a semester. Participants were required to produce 4 writing tasks after each lesson. The results were concerned with types and factors on using outside sources in writing of Thai undergraduate EFL students from the survey. The interview results supported and clarified the survey result. In addition, the writing rubrics confirmed the types of plagiarism frequently occurred in students' writing. The discussion shed the lights on cultural dimensions of plagiarism in student writing, roles of teachers, library, and university policy on the rate of plagiarism. Also, the findings promoted the awareness on ethics in writing and prevented the rate of potential unintentional plagiarism. Additionally, the results of this phase of study could lead to the appropriate contents to be considered for inclusion in the supplementary on using sources for writing.

**Keywords:** citing source, EFL writing, e-learning, Internet, plagiarism



## 1. Introduction

To achieve career goals, new graduates must possess sufficient knowledge and quality in various aspects. Universities aim at developing all the necessary skills for their students to acquire knowledge while studying. Writing skills are one of the qualities students are required to have. In Thai universities, in the same vein with many in other countries, writing in English has been recognized as a remarkably important part of academic life. Writing is embedded in several subjects. Students are required to write in all subjects. In some subjects, they need to write reports, essays, and assignment.

Students who study at schools, universities, colleges find the Internet helps them freely access the educational literature, encyclopedias, references, dictionaries, and databases. Some students prefer participating in distance educational courses, working collaboratively on projects with students from other schools, universities or countries. The Internet can be used to discuss different problems with others. Both students and teachers have employed this tool in the teaching and learning. The internet, in fact, can be used as an instructional tool in learning a language in several ways: reading, speaking, listening and writing (Nomass, 2013). To many research students, the Internet has been an effective tool for researching and writing. It provides gateways to databases, books, theses, journal articles and more. However, the Internet has two sides. The increase rate of unethical use of the Internet has been observed. Several works related to academic writing advocate that Masic (2013) assumed that the rise of plagiarism rate is related to the growth of the internet advancement. Moreover, the Internet is easier than the past to plagiarize as a great research tool (Bailey, 2015) and there are many online sources on the Internet where students are able to borrow the content easily without the awareness of plagiarism (Cynthia & Mitch, 2004). Likewise, the Internet could lead users to be a theft of “intellectual property” to a new level (Dan, 2017).

Nowadays, students access the Internet more easily than they did in the past through various devices without considering the ethical issues. Thus, students could possibly copy and paste information on the Internet for their paper and assignments without sufficiently giving a credit to the original sources but submit the piece of works as their own (Renard, 1999). While the Internet enables may offer the advantages in learning and acquiring new knowledge for students and teachers, many of them use the Internet without the logical awareness and the adequate knowledge in using others' work correctly. The author proposed that the most effective way to solve the problem is to address the cause of it; it is the need to educate students when they are learning to write.

In an academic setting, basic education curriculum in several countries in Asia has included English language subjects to school as early as preschool level, including Thailand, however the outcomes are not quite satisfying due to several reasons. Firstly, they rarely have an opportunity to use the language in daily life; thus, they might usually be interfered by their mother language. Secondly, writing skill is the outstanding weakness among EFL students. Thirdly, in some Asian cultures including in Thai, plagiarism is concisely disregarded as a serious offense. This issue has therefore been a frequent case mentioned in education. Thus, this reason could relate to the cause of plagiarism among Thai education; however, culture is not an only obstacle in writing in the standard of writing. Culture, to some people, refers to the traditional thing being taught in schools (Shukri, 2014). Finally, Thai students including some others from several countries have ability of using English language, but they may fail to provide appropriate citations, possibly from their lack of understanding in using others' materials. Plagiarism by students thus is more frequently found and getting more serious at all levels in higher institutions globally (Franklyn & Newstead, 1995).



In many western countries, similarly to in some Asian countries, the problem of academic misconduct is on the rise. To solve this problem, these countries attempted to motivate educational institutions to deal with the issue. However, the organizations could only partially prevent copying at some levels. While in Asia, at policy level, there are no concrete and strong punishments when the problem was identified. Thus, the problem is still increasing. Nevertheless, teaching about citing sources in high schools is paid less attention on than that it is in a university. Perhaps for this reason, several students ignored the punishment and policy of their institution. According to Young (2013), using others' idea without being granted permission or appropriately providing credit is generally considered a form of cheating. Wise, Suwannathachote, and Tantrarungroj (2013) investigated international plagiarism among American, Taiwanese and Thai schools to compare the proportions of plagiarism lessons provided to different levels of education in each country.

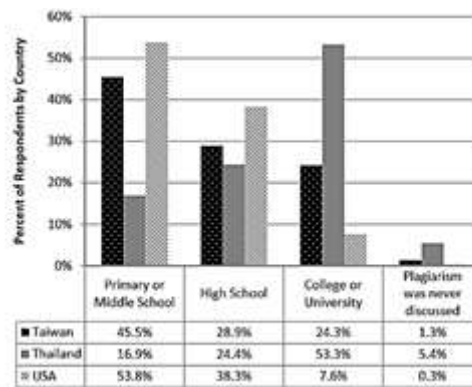


Figure 1 Proportions of plagiarism lessons provided in USA, Taiwan and Thailand (Wise, Suwannathachote & Tantrarungroj, 2013)

According to Figure 1, it reveals that USA and Taiwan take plagiarism more seriously by starting the first lesson on plagiarism from Primary or Middle school levels. On the other hand, a lot of Thai students start learning about plagiarism in their university level. It is also observed from the graph that some of Thai students did not learn about plagiarism since primary school until university at all.

When student are assigned to write in a foreign language, they may sometimes find that different intellectual traditions could intensify plagiarism (Myers, 1998). However, from Fig. 1 shows that tradition is not the main reason for plagiarism because Taiwan does not use English as the official language as USA but they emphasized this issue by treating the first lesson since Primary or Middle school levels. Consequently, this refers to the role of plagiarism in Thailand which relates to the capacity of using outside sources among Thai students.

Generally, a certain number of graduate students used to pass off others' work in their thesis because they do not have awareness of citing sources since they were undergraduate students. Moreover, in university, students are able to copy without punishment from their instructor even they acknowledged this action (Charubusp, 2015). Many students seek the fastest possible solution to classroom assignments, regardless of the validity of the sources or respect to the work of others, a phenomenon that is widespread across all educational levels (Sureda, Comas & Oliver, 2015). According to this problem, many detecting software were created for preventing academic plagiarism by online checking context then compare with the closest document which was previously published.

In Thailand, to comply with the globe, there are several policies and practices to prevent



plagiarism in publication to ensure the standard of their postgraduate degrees. Furthermore, several institutions' policy and practice in preventing and reducing plagiarism are in student guidebook. The most frequent attempts are in forms of training sessions on ethical research, setting guideline for thesis methodology, monitoring research progress, and offering Turnitin program for individual plagiarism check. For Chulalongkorn University, recognized as to be the leading Thai university in detecting plagiarism, the institution developed Akarawisutas, a plagiarism detection tool in 2013 in order to particularly check plagiarism in the documents written in Thai. It is, therefore recognized as the first formal plagiarism detecting program for Thai language. Furthermore, almost Thai universities aimed to adopt Turnitin as part of the plagiarism checking process.

However, in universities, instructors are not directly assigned to be responsible for giving lectures to their students on plagiarism. This issue is embedded in research courses as well as in academic writing courses. Conversely, it is rather essential that teachers be prepared for providing academic assistance students with using outside sources as this is an important part for thesis writing. In writing classes, the instructors may need to teach students how to summarize, synthesize, paraphrase or quote from the external sources. As discussed, failure to address plagiarism problems in classes could result in unethical work produced by the naive students later on.

Nevertheless, the library where most students refer to as a source of knowledge and information for their learning might be a part of the problem. The librarians, who work for advocating information literacy, are assigned in providing knowledge sources to prevent academic misconduct and promoting an ethical use others' word among their students; workshop, training for students and teachers, online guidance, Q&A chat box and handout (Mundava & Chaudhuri, 2007). Nevertheless, in several Thai universities, the roles of the librarians in supporting appropriate use of learning sources are limited. Students are unaware that these personnel are capable and available for this issue. Also, some Thai librarians are unconfident to provide such support, especially when the writing is in English.

In order to conduct the appropriate supplementary for understanding and avoiding plagiarism, this phase needed to highlight some interesting points and study student's misuse on using source. This phase according to the objective attempts to investigate types of plagiarism of EFL student writing by referring Turnitin's model to students' essay. The following table summarizes the 10 types of plagiarism by Turnitin software where is a leading detecting plagiarism software (Turnitin software, 2012).

Table 1: 10 types of plagiarism defined by Turnitin software

<b>Types of plagiarism</b>	<b>Definitions</b>
1.Clone	An act of submitting another's work, word-for-word, as one's own.
2.CTRL-C	A written piece that contains significant portions of text from a single source without alterations.
3.Find-Replace	The act of changing key words and phrases but retaining the essential content of the source in a paper.
4.Remix	An act of paraphrasing from other sources and making the content fit together seamlessly.
5.Recycle	The act of borrowing generously from one's own previous work without citation.



6.Hybrid	The act of combining perfectly cited sources with copied passages without citation in one paper.
7.Mashup	A paper that represents a mix of copied material from several different sources without proper citation.
8.404 Error	A written piece that includes citations to non-existent or inaccurate information about sources.
9.Aggregator	The “Aggregator” includes proper citation, but the paper contains almost no original work.
10.Re-tweet	This paper includes proper citation, but relies too closely on the text’s original wording and/or structure.

As in Table 1, there are 10 types of plagiarism as defined by the Turnitin software which is one of the most famous online detecting software and employed widely in several higher educational institutions. This software is aimed at comparing user’s document with Turnitin’s databases and then reveals the result in percentage format against the original work. However, when the software is used to check the writing prior to the publication, it could positively guide the writers to understand how to correctly avoid plagiarism. From the software’s descriptors, plagiarism type 1 to 5 occur more frequently. In detail, this could often occur when the authors recklessly copy and paste the text from the Internet without providing proper citation. Moreover, plagiarism 6 and 7 require the writer to synthesize and organize texts taken from certain sources and use them with citation. For plagiarism type 8 to 10, there are correct citations but with certain sentences and structures in that work might too close with the original moreover some of citations are non-existent.

## 2. Method

To accomplish the objective of this phase, the descriptive data is the main means of getting data. This study thus employs questionnaire and interviewing where the understanding, perception and the potential causes of plagiarism from their scenario which is explained in this section.

### A. Sample

The participants of the first phase of this on-going study were male and female undergraduate students from a Thai institution as showed in Figure 2.

<b>Gender</b>	
Male	5
Female	35
<b>Nationality</b>	
Thai	37
International	3

Figure 2: Characteristics of the students

### B. Material and Methods

An online questionnaire was developed and adapted from several previous studies (King, 2002) then validated the content by 2 experts (IOC). The questionnaire consisted of two parts and followed by the interview section.





**Part 1** aimed to investigate students' perceptions and attitude toward plagiarism which was consisted of 5 point Likert scale where: 1 for Strongly Disagree, 2 for Disagree, 3 for Neutral, 4 for Agree, and 5 for Strongly Agree.

**Part 2** was to explore students' knowledge on using outside sources in writing by using Dichotomous style (Yes/No/Not sure).

**Part 3**, 10 participants were provided randomly the semi-interview with 5 questions, which adapted from University of Bradford (University of Bradford, 2017), about the way to use various sources in their writing and prior experience on plagiarism in order to find out common types and factors of plagiarism.

Moreover, all students performed a piece of essay in the subject of Research Methodology, the researcher aimed to analyze their work individually in order to find out types of plagiarism which be done after interview section completed.

### C. Data analysis

In order to confirm the validity of the questionnaire, the researcher will endorse the test through three experts of test development thus IOC was analyzed for this study. Then, the data could be analyzed by using the t-test by SPSS program. However, this study attempted to present the result of the questionnaire by descriptive data as well as interviewing.

## 3. Results

The online questionnaire was randomly distributed to 40 undergraduate students. The results were quantitative and qualitative which analyzed using SPSS to calculate percentages, means, and standard deviations (SD). This section presents results of the study including: students' background knowledge, students' frequent types of plagiarism, and students' perceptions and attitudes about plagiarism.

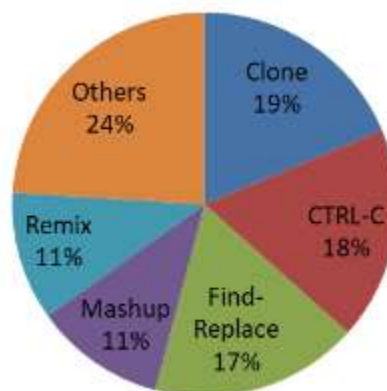


Figure 3: The frequency of plagiarism's types

As showed in Figure 3, using outside sources in assignments can lead to some problems. This must be done with great care and accurate understanding. The figure displays types of plagiarism which are unfortunately conducted by students when using sources in completing their work. Most frequently, plagiarized work according to Turnitin are usually occurred respectively as Clone (19%), CTRL-C (18%), Find-Replace (17%), Mashup (11%), Remix (11%)



and another 5 types (24%). According to various types of plagiarism, many institutions therefore attempt to reduce the increasing plagiarism among students and preventing the opportunity of academic misconduct in their institution with various actions, for example, providing the training on plagiarism or launching the policy to monitor the ethics in writing.

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- Time management
  - Lack of plagiarism
  - Low punishment
  - No feedback
  - Lack of knowledge
  - Personal issue
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Figure 4: Factors of plagiarism

Figure 4 revealed that there are six common factors of plagiarism among EFL undergraduate students. Firstly, students had poor time management and finally submitted a plagiarized work. Lack of knowledge is general awareness which is not educated by teacher or instructor for promoting the role of unethical work. Next, this is seemed to be a normal issue for many institutions because students disregard for the low punishment. In classroom, students indicated that they had no feedback on citing or plagiarism from teacher thus they could not acknowledge their misuses of outside sources. Then, lack of plagiarism, this issue was confirmed from almost students since they could not realize the important of plagiarism. Lastly, students may know how to use outside sources appropriately and arrange their plan for each subject but there are some personal issue as their filters; laziness, fear failure, gaining score and defiance.

For the part of interviewing, the result will be described for each question in the following section separately. 10 students will be invited as the participants.

***Question 1: Everyone knows this information, do you really need to reference it?***

The result showed that 4 students attempted to cite, 6 of them will not.

***Question 2: You are not sure how to reference, how do you do?***

The result showed that 1 student would like to search the original work, 3 of them asked some friends or instructors, 3 of them attempted to find an example as self-study and 3 decided to not cite.

***Question 3: You've run out of time for you assignment, what should you do?***

The result showed that 4 students planned to copy and paste, 5 of them were late submission and 1 student submitted on time but the assignment may not perfect.

***Question 4: What if there is no name on something that you are reading?***

The result showed that 4 students cited sources as anonymous and 6 more students did not cite

***Question 5: What is your experience on using outside sources and citing since high school?***

The result showed that only 2 students have learned on plagiarism issue since high school level and 8 students never studied until university level.

#### **4. Discussion and Conclusion**

According to Figure 3, the researcher found that students are able to conduct an essay with appropriate grammar and structure. However, plagiarism is seemed to be a problem for writing among Thai undergraduate students. Firstly, Clone which is the easiest way to finish an essay,



students attempt to find out a related source by searching the topic and read the context quickly then copy to their work. As Tălmăcian (2016), now a day, many of authentic materials has also an online edition which increases their ability worldwide for user at any time, the only condition being the user's access to Internet connection. Likewise, secondly, students are able to search the information and find the related content then copy and paste (CTRL-C), this type usually occur with student who has low ability in English and mainly use the Internet as tool aid. Moreover, students who never educated on citing and referencing indicated that they lack of knowledge on the role of plagiarism and the effect of this case. For Mashup and Remix occurred equally; students were informed the way to use sources appropriately but not correctly. Likewise, Kargbo (2010) explored the problem of undergraduate student involving to citing reference in academic work and also suggested the ways to deal with the problem for teacher and librarian. The result revealed that students were confused over citation format; format of citation for books and journal, moreover they lacked of confident in properly citing sources thus they desired to consult the librarian. The researcher mentioned that actually the faculty provided students citing practice but it was difficult for students to choose a suitable reference style. However, the researcher stated that certain student never studied how to cite and reference from their secondary school, that why some of them cannot apply correct citation in their work. In conclusion, the researcher advised the way to help student that library staff is the department who could help them as assistance by produce manuals and guides of accuracy of citations.

As Figure 4, it showed that there are six common factors of plagiarism among 7 Thai and 3 international undergraduate students. The differences between Thai and international undergraduate students are prior knowledge on citing and English proficiency. However, the awareness of plagiarism is identical.

The result is identical to Park (2003) who reviewed the reason why student plagiarize in their work that students used other sources without giving a credit due to lack of knowledge of plagiarism, time management, efficiency gain, social pressure, and low punishments. In addition, some students viewed plagiarism a common conduct performed by other people and more than 70% of the students reported that they knew someone who copied and pasted sentences online for their homework (Ma, Wan & Lu, 2008). Also, they claimed that other people were cheating and plagiarizing too. Therefore, this issue became no big deal for these students to plagiarize (Ma, Wan & Lu, 2008). Additionally, student realized how to cite and reference through online tutorial because the tutorial could improve students' ability in citing and awareness of plagiarism (Margaret, 2015).

However, the opportunity in reducing rate of plagiarism could be observed. As this problem could be partially caused by the lack of knowledge and unawareness of the author in using the outside sources, it could be solved with a well-structured training targeting at developing skills and fostering moral in using sources. It is hoped that the strategic lessons and activities could lead to more understanding and knowledge in using outside sources and that their writing could be free from plagiarism.

For this phase, the researcher needs to focus on students' prior knowledge and attitude toward plagiarism in order to start the next phase proficiently. This on-going study is conducted for helping students to realize how to prevent plagiarism by citing outside sources correctly through the supplementary in writing class. Moreover, they will become successful learners who have learning awareness and performing capably.

There are three critical points from this phase; (1) generally, undergraduate students are not concern about awareness of plagiarism which is dissimilar to graduate students who be required to conduct a research, thus providing writing course belong to the way of using sources





may improve students and prevent plagiarism. (2) Using detecting software cannot prevent plagiarism properly and develop students' skill because the software focuses on identical written work and its database which means students must be aware the software not the important of citing. (3) In order to prevent instead of detect plagiarism among undergraduate students, instructor could promote suitable methods to use sources and technology correctly by advocating policy and punishment officially. In other word, this study hopes to present the solution of plagiarism among undergraduate students so as to solve the problem with the root cause, not the consequence.

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