



## **Researchers in Progress I**

### **Languages in Contact: Interconnections and Interferences**

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# Plagiarism awareness and perceptions among postgraduate EFL students in Spain and Cyprus<sup>1</sup>

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## ABSTRACT

The present study examines and compares the awareness and beliefs of Spanish and Greek-Cypriot postgraduate EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students about plagiarism in academic writing. Through the completion of a questionnaire, the 32 participants of the study were assessed as to how aware they were of plagiarism and what they understood about it. At the same time, any existing differences in the way plagiarism is approached by Spanish and Greek-Cypriot higher education at an undergraduate level, as well as whether such differences can affect students' future academic performance, were observed and analysed. A quantitative analysis of the responses yielded important differences in the two educational systems' approach, suggesting that Greek-Cypriot higher education seems to better endow its students with the fundamental academic skills to avoid plagiarism. Yet, both educational systems are found to be in need of further improvement. The findings of this comparative study reveal that EFL students' postgraduate success can be significantly determined by the quality of their undergraduate preparation, while they call for the reassessment of the existing pedagogy and institutional policies in an attempt to preserve integrity within academia.

## KEYWORDS

Academic writing, plagiarism, higher education, EFL

## 1. Introduction

Among the principles around which the scholarly world revolves, academic integrity not only occupies a prominent position, but also plays a decisive role in upholding the reputation of academia. Being endowed with the fundamental knowledge and literacy skills, and thus adhering to the academic standards, is a prerequisite for any individual entering the field of higher education and can significantly determine their academic performance and success.

In the course of the last decades, however, a growing concern about the preservation of the value of academic integrity within tertiary institutions has been observed. Incidences of academic dishonesty appear to dramatically increase through time as students stray from the standards, resulting in various acts of improper academic behaviour. Cheating, falsification and collusion are only some of the forms of scholarly fraud to which students resort in their academic writing. Yet, the code of professionalism in the academic community appears to be most often breached by plagiarism, described as “the worst violation of academic and research integrity that threaten[s] honest contribution to knowledge creation” (Garwe & Maganga, 2015: 140).

Although a clear-cut interpretation of the term has been difficult for researchers and academics to reach, the most common definition ascribed to plagiarism is that of the inappropriate use of other people's words or ideas without acknowledging their source (Park, 2004; Sutherland-Smith, 2005; Hu & Lei, 2012; Gullifer & Tyson, 2013). Nowadays, the ease with which students gain access to ready-made online or printed material, as well as the extensive use of the well-known "cut and paste technique" (DeVoss & Rosati, 2002), has rendered plagiarism the most prominent form of academic malpractice (Park, 2004).

Being a cross-disciplinary issue, plagiarism has been the focus of a considerable number of studies that attempt to provide answers to the numerous questions that have emerged around the topic (Kolich, 1983; Howard, 1993, 1995, 1999; DeVoss & Rosati, 2002; Kenny, 2007). Concerns as to what exactly constitutes plagiarism, which factors underlie its presence, how it is approached by academics, what consequences it has and what can be done to confront it were addressed by various researchers. Many studies have also been carried out approaching the issue of plagiarism from the perspective of academics and students (Abasi & Graves, 2008; Gu & Brooks, 2008; Wilkinson, 2009; Ballantine & Larres, 2012). Investigating and understanding how this issue is viewed by the members of the academic community themselves, and especially how students think about plagiarism, can provide critical information regarding the reasons that trigger their unprofessional conduct.

Drawing on the fact that relatively limited research exists on students' perceptions and knowledge about plagiarism in the English as a Foreign Language (henceforth EFL) field, the present study explores the awareness and beliefs of two groups of Spanish and Greek-Cypriot postgraduate EFL students about this form of academic fraud. More specifically, the study aims to examine whether there are any differences in the approach the Spanish and the Greek-Cypriot higher education systems adopt towards the issue of plagiarism at an undergraduate level, and to subsequently determine if such differences can have an impact on students' academic performance during their postgraduate studies.

## **2. Theoretical background**

### **2. 1. Defining plagiarism**

Broadly defined, plagiarism refers to acts of misconduct such as cheating, deception and intellectual theft, since it has to do with manipulating others' words or ideas and presenting them as one's own. As a term, plagiarism has its roots in the Latin word *plagiarius*, which refers to the stealing of slaves (Kolich, 1983). Thus, in the context of academic writing it is seen as "a thief in literature; one who steals the thoughts or writings of another" (Mallon,

1989: 11). Park (2004: 292) defines plagiarism as “a form of cheating or academic malpractice, which also includes cheating in examinations, fabrication of results, duplication and false declaration”, and as such it runs “counter to [the] ethos of trust and integrity that should lie in the heart of any academic activity” (ibid.). The view of plagiarism as a theft in the sectors of the academic community is also shared by Larkham and Manns (2002: 348), who describe it as “a sub-section of cheating, itself defined as seeking to gain unfair advantage”. Consequently, based on the aforementioned definitions plagiarism is to be understood as the opposite of authorship, originality and transparency, as the ideas or expressions used in writing are neither original to the writer nor attributed to their original source.

Despite the fact that plagiarism may occur deliberately or unintentionally (Howard, 1993; Pecorari, 2003), a negative stance is adopted towards the issue, with many academics viewing it as “a spreading moral panic” in academia (Clegg & Flint, 2006: 373) or as “the cardinal sin of academe” (Loveless, 1994: 510). This is perfectly illustrated through Kolich’s (1983: 145) deft likening of plagiarism to a worm “that spoils the fruit of intellectual inquiry and reason and starves the seeds of originality that foster such inquiry”.

## **2. 2. Consequences of plagiarism**

The severity of plagiarism becomes evident through the far-reaching consequences it can have for both student and professor. Students caught plagiarising risk receiving a zero mark, thus failing the class or being expelled from university. Furthermore, an unpunished deceitful act is likely to be repeated. As Kenny explains (2007: 18), “if a student cheats during their academic career (and gets away with it), then they are almost certain to continue this behaviour in their working lives” (p. 18). Similarly, plagiarism can negatively affect the career of academics since identifying academic dishonesty in their students undermines their reputation as professional educators. They believe that “their colleagues would view detection of plagiarism in their classrooms as a failure on their part to ensure a suitably stringent learning environment [...] or as professional negligence” (Sutherland-Smith, 2005: 91). It could be thus inferred that plagiarism threatens “established academics [with facing] public disgrace” (Pecorari, 2003, p. 338).

## **2. 3. Reasons that lead to plagiarism**

A review of the literature reveals that students may resort to plagiarism for a number of reasons. The most prevalent among them appears to be the great technological advancement, and in particular the onset of the Internet. The latter’s “rich repository of online texts provides [students with] an unprecedented opportunity for plagiarism” (Kitalong, 1998: 255). As

DeVoss and Rosati (2002: 196) posit, students may not perceive online plagiarism to be wrong “because there is no review, publication, and catalogue process for most Web pages, and, on top of that, authors aren’t always privileged the way they are in print texts”.

An equally important factor that can lead to plagiarism is the cultural background of students. The way plagiarism is viewed in different parts of the world, as well as the education a student receives can significantly affect their academic conduct. It is thus logical to infer that, for instance, in a culture that “privileges rote learning and memorisation [students] are inclined to repeat from sources [...]” (Pecorari, 2003: 319). In addition, it is possible that “some graduate students may have pursued their bachelor’s degree and school system in a completely examination-oriented context and not actually had the opportunity to write an assignment” (Iyer-O’Sullivan, 2013: 4), something that can prompt them to plagiarise.

Finally, a highly important reason to which instances of plagiarism can be attributed is the way students themselves perceive this academic malpractice and what they know about it. As has been pointed out in various research studies, students may be tempted to plagiarise because of the lack of or pressure of time, which makes them “take shortcuts to save time or effort” (Logue, 2004: 40). Moreover, their under-developed authorial identities along with the lack of confidence in their own academic writing skills make them more prone to plagiarism. Believing that they “need to ‘say it better’ than the text” (Iyer-O’Sullivan, 2013: 12), and having no confidence in that they can do it, students simply repeat the ideas without adding or extracting any information. Other factors that were found to be bound to committing plagiarism are the lack of understanding of the required task and of the rules of referencing, the conceptual confusion, the fear of failure, the high assessment load, the belief that they will get better grades or that they will not be caught, and the repetitive warnings about the gravity of the issue, with the latter leading to over-citation (DeVoss & Rosati, 2002; Abasi & Graves; 2008; Gu & Brooks, 2008; Mammen & Meyiwa, 2013).

### **3. The study**

#### **3. 1. Aims of the study and research questions**

The present study comes to add to the growing body of literature on plagiarism by exploring the awareness and beliefs of Greek-Cypriot and Spanish postgraduate EFL students about this form of academic malpractice. In particular, it sets out to determine how aware of plagiarism these two groups are and how they perceive it, aiming to shed light on any existing differences in the way the Greek-Cypriot and the Spanish higher education system approach

this issue. Also, it seeks to establish whether such discrepancies can affect students' postgraduate success in the field of EFL. The specific research questions addressed are:

- 1) What do Spanish and Greek-Cypriot postgraduate EFL students believe about plagiarism and how aware are they of it?
- 2) a. Are there any differences in the way the Spanish and the Greek-Cypriot higher education approach the issue of plagiarism?
  - b. If yes, can such differences affect students' academic performance during their postgraduate studies in EFL teaching?

### **3. 2. Methodology**

#### **3. 2. 1. Participants**

A total of 32 students participated in the study. Half of them were Spanish postgraduate students pursuing a master in the Teaching of Spanish and English as SL/FL at the University of Alicante in Spain, while 13 amongst the latter had obtained an undergraduate degree in English Studies from Spanish universities. The remaining 16 participants were Greek-Cypriot graduates of the English Language Department of the University of Cyprus who were attending a master in the Teaching of English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) either abroad or in Cyprus (see Appendix A table 1).

#### **3. 2. 2. Material and procedure**

The material used for the purpose of this study was an online questionnaire, created using Google Drive, which was distributed to the participants through social networking sites. The questionnaire, which was anonymously completed, comprised of four sections. The first one concerned the participants' demographics, namely age, gender, and the titles of the undergraduate and postgraduate studies they had pursued. Section two consisted of ten statements aimed at eliciting students' beliefs about the severity of plagiarism and its consequences, as well as their perceptions regarding the acts of citing and referencing. Some examples of the statements are:

- *"I know what plagiarism is";*
- *"I do not consider plagiarism to be wrong"; and*
- *"I am aware of the consequences if caught plagiarizing".*

The participants had to rate their agreement or disagreement with the statements on a five-point Likert scale ranging from "Strongly agree" to "Strongly disagree".

The third section of the questionnaire involved seven questions measuring the participants' level of exposure to plagiarism both at an undergraduate and a postgraduate level. Students were required to provide answers to yes/no or open-ended questions related to their previous contact with plagiarism during their studies. Finally, in the last part of the section they had to choose two out of eight reasons which they believed to be more likely to lead to plagiarism. Some examples of these reasons are provided below:

- *lack of knowledge of the rules of referencing;*
- *lack of time;and*
- *lack of confidence in one's own academic writing skills.*

The fourth and last section of the questionnaire included a plagiarism recognition task, which tested the participants' practical skills regarding the issue. The task involved three academic extracts selected from original sources, each followed by the article's reference (either using the APA or MLA referencing style) and a student's version of it. The students' versions had to be carefully read by the participants and judged as incidences of plagiarism or not.

### **3. 2. 3. Study design**

Based on the relatively small sample size (n=32), the analysis of the data was done quantitatively. Moreover, gender was not considered to be a dependant variable in the analysis and thus no comparison was made based on it, since the majority of the participants in both groups were female.

The first step in carrying out the data analysis was the observation of the students' demographics, something that led to the establishment of undergraduate studies related to the English language as the independent variable for the analysis. In this way, three Spanish students were excluded, since they were graduates in fields other than English studies. Hence, the comparison took place among the 13 Spanish and the 16 Greek-Cypriot participants. The responses were analysed separately in each section for the two groups and were calculated in terms of percentages. The mean score of each group was calculated for each part in the three sections as well.

## **4. Results**

The comparison made between the Spanish and the Greek-Cypriot participants yielded interesting results concerning the two groups' awareness of and exposure to plagiarism, as well as their ability to cope with plagiarism in practice. In what follows, an overview of the study's findings is presented based on the three sections of the questionnaire.

#### **4. 1. Section 2: Plagiarism awareness statements**

The participants' responses to the ten plagiarism awareness statements reveal that there exist differences in the level of the two groups' awareness of this form of academic misconduct. Before proceeding to the presentation of the results, it should be mentioned that the way the statements are formulated in this section makes possible the interpretation of the responses in terms of accuracy and confidence (see Appendix A table 2). Under this perspective, it should be thus stated that the responses of the Spanish participants (henceforth Group 1) show a lower degree of both accuracy and confidence regarding plagiarism than the Greek-Cypriot students (henceforth Group 2). To start with, statements (2), (3) and (4) could be seen as testing the participants' accuracy through *par excellence* examples of inappropriate source usage in academic writing, with the first two offering important information about the study. While all participants in Group 2 expressed their strong disagreement with the beliefs that using information or ideas from articles without crediting their source is acceptable and that it is not necessary to cite articles by unknown authors, the responses of Group 1 were split between the answers "Agree" and "Strongly Disagree", or even "Neutral". This, along with the within-group variation detected among the Spanish participants in the remaining statements, further emphasises the idea that the Greek-Cypriot participants of the study outperformed the Spanish students in terms of accuracy.

At the same time, the rest of the statements in this section measure the participants' level of confidence about their knowledge concerning plagiarism. Special attention should be paid to statements (1) and (9) which provide robust evidence in favour of the idea that Group 2 has a higher degree of confidence than Group 1. Contrary to the Spanish group, the Greek-Cypriot participants expressed their strong agreement or strong disagreement with the two statements respectively, showing their high confidence in their knowledge about plagiarism. This is enforced through the within-group variation observed in the responses of Group 1 in statements 5 through 8 as well.

#### **4. 2. Section 3: Level of exposure to plagiarism**

As observed through the participants' responses in section 3, the level of the two groups' exposure to plagiarism during their undergraduate studies varies (see Appendix A table 3). The unanimity in both groups' responses in question (5) indicates that the issue of plagiarism had indeed been addressed by professors during their studies, with the majority in Group 1 rating the attention paid to it adequate and the majority in Group 2 rating it sufficient. Moreover, nearly all participants in both groups affirm having been asked to submit papers

using the APA and MLA styles (question 6). However, the Spanish group's answers to questions (1), (2) and (3) entail that the level of their exposure to plagiarism was inadequate. More specifically, almost all Spanish participants pointed out that prior to their postgraduate studies they had not attended courses specific to research paper writing (question 1) or to citation and referencing skills (question 2). In addition, all but one Spanish participant stated that they do not possess a handbook on APA or MLA styles (question 3). A reverse phenomenon is observed in Group 2, where all Greek-Cypriot participants affirm having attended a course specific to academic research skills (question 2). Also, almost all of them report that they are in possession of a handbook on APA or MLA styles and that they had attended a course specific to research paper writing at an undergraduate level.

Finally, an observation worth reporting is the convergence of all participants as to the main reasons that can lead a student to plagiarise. Three were the prevailing reasons which according to the two groups' opinion may give rise to incidences of plagiarism in academic writing: the lack of knowledge of the rules of referencing, the lack of sufficient instruction on how to avoid plagiarism and the lack of confidence in one's own academic writing skills.

#### **Section 4: Plagiarism in practice**

The two groups' performance in the plagiarism recognition task indicates that the participants coincide when it comes to identifying instances of plagiarism (see Appendix A table 4). The majority among the participants hold the belief that only the second extract could be judged as a plagiarised text, with the other two being perceived as examples of proper citation. Furthermore, it is worth pointing out that a within-group variation exists in the first two extracts' responses, something that reduces the possibility of chance performance. Yet, this within-group variation is maintained in the third extract for Group 1 but not for Group 2, whose participants appear to be almost equally divided between the two answers. It becomes, therefore, understandable that the third extract caused confusion among the Greek-Cypriot participants.

### **5. Discussion**

#### **5. 1. Overall interpretation of findings**

The findings of this study throw into relief the significant role of undergraduate education in developing students' authorial identities and raising their level of awareness about serious forms of academic fraud such as plagiarism. The analysis of the questionnaire brings to the forefront the different approach the Spanish and the Greek-Cypriot higher education system

adopt towards the treatment of plagiarism in their educational institutions. Through the responses of the Greek-Cypriot participants it becomes apparent that by the time they enter the field of postgraduate studies they are already familiar and equipped with the literacy and research skills needed to help them cope with the challenge of academic writing. Their exposure to courses specific to the principles of academic research appears to be more in-depth than that of the Spanish group, since the majority of the latter reported not having been exposed to academic writing courses during their undergraduate studies. Once the educational background of these students is taken into account, i.e. that they pursued an undergraduate degree at different Spanish universities, it could be reasonably hypothesised that a low exposure to plagiarism at that level is a general phenomenon observed across Spain. From this perspective, it could be said that Spanish higher education, once compared with the Greek-Cypriot system, appears to lag behind in addressing plagiarism and preparing its students for their academic studies.

Notwithstanding these findings, the participants' performance in the plagiarism recognition task used in the study constitutes an indication of the need for further instruction on plagiarism by both educational systems. The fact that the majority of the participants wrongly identified one of the three extracts as an example of proper citation could demonstrate their failure to recognise it as being written according to the MLA citation form and, consequently, it could signal their limited exposure to the particular style of reference.

The inadequacy of the training that the study's participants had received during their undergraduate studies regarding plagiarism is further substantiated through their responses in the second section of the questionnaire. In particular, the three reasons signalled out by the two groups as being more likely to lead to plagiarism, namely the lack of knowledge of the rules of referencing, the lack of sufficient instruction on how to avoid plagiarism and the lack of confidence in one's own academic writing skills, could be seen as reflecting their personal experience with the issue.

Taking into account that these beliefs are shared by students participating in a number of similar studies (Gu & Brooks, 2008; Iyer-O'Sullivan, 2013; Thesen & Cooper, 2014), it is understandable that students' perceptions about plagiarism are extrinsically bound to plagiarism issues in higher education.

## **5. 2. Future studies**

Despite the fact that certain limitations to this study exist, such as the lack of a statistical analysis, the relatively small sample size and the online distribution of the questionnaire, its

findings provide valuable insight into the issue of plagiarism that could serve as the foundation for future research. Given that the analysis of the results has shed light on the problematic instruction Spanish students receive about plagiarism and academic research skills at an undergraduate level, future studies could explore the policies of various Spanish universities on the issue. Of great interest would also be to shift the focus from students to academics, in an attempt to investigate the way they themselves view plagiarism, the extent to which they adhere to its principles, the attention they pay to it and the way they confront plagiarism issues in their classes. The results of such a study could give way to important findings as to whether academics' beliefs about and attitudes towards plagiarism can affect students' academic conduct. Lastly, since the present study examined the issue of plagiarism in the context of Western education, it would be equally interesting to investigate the awareness and beliefs of students who received the bulk of their undergraduate education in other Western countries such as Portugal, Italy etc. In this way, it would be made possible to either verify or further refute the idea that students receiving Western education are less prone to plagiarism (Maxwell, Curtis & Vardanega, 2008).

## **6. Conclusion**

The present study set out to examine the beliefs and awareness of two groups of Spanish and Greek-Cypriot postgraduate EFL students concerning plagiarism. The research questions addressed sought to shed light on any existing differences in the way Spanish and Greek-Cypriot higher education approach the issue of plagiarism at an undergraduate level, and to determine whether such differences could have an impact on their postgraduate academic performance.

The results derived provide evidence in favour of the idea that EFL undergraduate education can play a significant role in the successful realisation of postgraduate studies. Important differences have been detected between the two groups, demonstrating that, at this particular educational level, Greek-Cypriot education appears to better equip its students with the research skills needed to cope with the challenge of academic writing than Spanish education. The analysis of the participants' responses to the plagiarism awareness statements has revealed that the Greek-Cypriot students have a higher level of confidence and accuracy than the Spanish. This is also illustrated through the former's level of exposure to plagiarism, which was also examined in the study. Yet, the results derived from the plagiarism recognition task have made apparent that both groups are in need of a more in-depth exposure to this form of academic misconduct and that further training with real examples of plagiarism

is essential. This is further supported by the two groups' consensus regarding the reasons they perceive as more likely to lead to plagiarism. The fact that the two groups' beliefs converge in that the lack of knowledge about referencing skills, the insufficient instruction on avoiding plagiarism, and the lack of confidence in one's own writing skills, are the predominant reasons for a student to plagiarise, indicates that room for improvement exists for both the Spanish and the Greek-Cypriot systems.

The findings of this study bring to the forefront an existing gap in the academic instruction offered to students in tertiary education regarding plagiarism. The plague of plagiarism, that has gained ground through the years, threatens the values of integrity, honesty and trustworthiness. A re-evaluation of the current pedagogical approaches to plagiarism and the implementation of proactive teaching techniques are thus rendered imperative. Incorporating classroom activities on critical reading and writing skills that require students' thorough engagement with academic sources is a fundamental first step that can pave the way for the development of confident authorial identities. Given the subtlety and complexity of this multi-layered phenomenon and its consequences, it is even more pertinent that the students' knowledge in research skills be established once entering undergraduate or postgraduate education. It is crucial for educators to ensure that their students are adequately acquainted with study skills in order to avoid undesirable outcomes. As Ballantine and McCourt-Larres (2012: 290) very astutely explain, "a more holistic approach to plagiarism [is required] which recognises that students may not actually understand plagiarism and be prepared to deal with it when they enter higher education". In order for students to reach and conform to the norms and policies of the academic arena, it is therefore vital that educators lay a firm foundation as early as possible (Pecorari, 2003). A transformative pedagogy that fosters students' commitment to the values of honesty, responsibility and liability becomes thus the primary goal that, once achieved, can restore the hallmarks of academic integrity and make the academic community thrive.

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## **Footnotes**

1. The present article is based on the MA thesis “Postgraduate EFL Students’ Awareness of and Beliefs about Plagiarism: A Comparative Study of Spanish and Greek-Cypriot Higher Education”, carried out at the University of Alicante in 2013-2014 and supervised by Dr. Teresa Morell Moll.

## Appendix A

**Table 1:** Participants' demographics

Participants (n=32)		
	Group 1 – Spanish (n=16)	Group 2 – Greek-Cypriots (n=16)
<b>Gender</b>		
Females	12	12
Males	4	4
<b>Age group</b>		
21-23 years	3	15
24-26 years	6	1
27 + years	7	---
<b>Undergraduate Studies</b>	English Studies (n=10) Translation and Interpretation in English (n=2) English Primary Education (n=1) Drama and Theatre Studies (n=2) History and Geography (n=1)	English Studies (n=16)
<b>Postgraduate Studies</b>	Teaching of Spanish and English as Second/Foreign Languages (n=16)	Teaching of English as a Foreign Language (n=14) Psycholinguistics / Neurolinguistics (n=1) Intercultural Communication with Business (n=1)

**Table 2: Students' awareness about plagiarism**

statements	Plagiarism awareness agree	Strongly Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Mean
(1) I know what plagiarism is						
<b>Group 1</b>	7 53.8%	6 46.2%	---	---	---	4.58
<b>Group 2</b>	15 93.8%	1 6.2%	---	---	---	4.94
(2) There is no problem if I include in my paper a paragraph from an article without crediting its source						
<b>Group 1</b>	---	---	---	4 30.8%	9 69.2%	1.31
<b>Group 2</b>	---	---	---	---	16 100%	1
(3) If the author of the paragraph I am copying in my paper is unknown there is no need to cite the source						
<b>Group 1</b>	---	---	1 7.7%	4 30.8%	8 61.5%	1.46
<b>Group 2</b>	---	---	---	---	16 100%	1
(4) I can freely use some of the phrases my classmates wrote in their own paper						
<b>Group 1</b>	1 7.7%	---	1 7.7%	6 46.2%	5 38.5%	1.54
<b>Group 2</b>	---	1 6.2%	---	3 18.8%	12 75%	1.38
(5) I know how to paraphrase						
<b>Group 1</b>	3 23.1%	5 38.5%	5 38.5%	---	---	3.85
<b>Group 2</b>	7 43.8%	9 56.2%	---	---	---	4.44

(6) I know how to use the APA and MLA styles

<b>Group 1</b>	1 7.7%	5 38.5%	5 38.5%	2 15.4%	---	3.38
<b>Group 2</b>	7 43.8%	8 50%	1 6.2%	---	---	4.38

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(7) I know I plagiarize but I doubt that the professor will realize it

<b>Group 1</b>	---	---	---	5 38.5%	8 61.5%	1.38
<b>Group 2</b>	---	---	---	2 12.5%	14 87.5%	1.13

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(8) I do not realize that I am plagiarizing when writing

<b>Group 1</b>	---	---	2 15.4%	5 38.5%	6 46.1%	1.69
<b>Group 2</b>	---	---	1 6.2%	6 37.5%	9 56.3%	1.50

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(9) I do not consider plagiarism to be wrong

<b>Group 1</b>	---	---	1 7.7%	7 53.8%	5 38.5%	1.69
<b>Group 2</b>	---	---	---	1 6.2%	15 93.8%	1.06

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(10) I am aware of the consequences if caught plagiarizing

<b>Group 1</b>	4 30.8%	7 53.8%	---	2 15.4%	---	4
<b>Group 2</b>	12 75%	4 25%	---	---	---	4.75

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**Table 3: Participants' level of exposure to plagiarism**

1. Have you ever had a course while at the university that taught you step by step how to write a research paper?

	Yes	No	If yes, name the course	Level of education
<b>Group 1</b>	9 69.2%	4 30.8%	Applied linguistics (n=8)	Postgraduate
			Academic writing for undergraduates (n=1)	Undergraduate
			In-sessional EAP course (n=1)	Postgraduate
<b>Group 2</b>	13 81.3%	3 18.7%	Academic communication in English (n=6)	Undergraduate
			Academic essay writing (n=5)	
			Introduction to fiction (n=1)	

2. Have you ever had a course during your university studies that was specific to the teaching of academic research skills? (e.g. that taught you how to cite, to use references etc.)

	Yes	No	If yes, name the course	Level of education
<b>Group 1</b>	2 15.4%	11 84.6%	Applied linguistics (n=1)	Postgraduate
			Academic writing for undergraduates (n=1)	Undergraduate
<b>Group 2</b>	16 100%	---	Department English course (n=1)	Postgraduate
			English for Academic Purposes (n=1)	
			Introduction to academic skills (n=1)	Undergraduate
Academic essay writing (n=2)				
			Research skills in the humanities (n=11)	

3. Do you have a handbook on either APA or MLA style?

	Yes	No	If yes, do you consult it?	
			Yes	No
<b>Group 1</b>	1 7.7%	12 92.3%	1	
<b>Group 2</b>	15 93.7%	1 6.3%	14	1

4. Where else do you resort to when writing academic papers?

	<b>Group 1</b>	<b>Group 2</b>
Internet	11 84.6%	6 37.5%
Peers	1 7.7%	2 12.5%
Academic and Instruction Services	1 7.7%	8 50%
Other	---	

5. Has the issue of plagiarism been addressed by the professors in the courses you attended?

	Yes	No	If yes, rate the level of attention paid to it			
			Sufficient	Adequate	Insufficient	Mean
<b>Group 1</b>	13 100%	---	2	8	3	1.92
<b>Group 2</b>	16 100%	---	15	1	---	2.94

6. During your studies, were you asked to submit papers using the APA or the MLA style?

	Yes	No
<b>Group 1</b>	11 84.6%	2 15.4%
<b>Group 2</b>	15 93.7%	1 6.3%

7. Choose the two main reasons that you think may lead students to plagiarism.

	Group 1	Group 2
Lack of knowledge of the rules of referencing	10 38.5%	8 25%
Easy way-out when not understanding clearly the instructions of the assignment	2 7.7%	3 9.4%
Lack of time	3 11.5%	1 3.1%
Lack of sufficient instruction on how to avoid plagiarism	4 15.4%	8 25%
Lack of emphasis on the severity of plagiarism	---	---
It occurs unintentionally	1 3.8%	1 3.1%
The belief that it is difficult to be caught	2 7.7%	1 3.1%
Lack of confidence in one's own academic writing skills	4 15.4%	10 31.3%

**Table 4:** Participants' performance in the plagiarism recognition task

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<b>Extract 1: Does the student's text constitute plagiarism?</b>		
	Yes	No
Group 1	1 7.7%	12 92.3%
Group 2	2 12.5%	14 87.5%

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<b>Extract 2: Does the student's text constitute plagiarism?</b>		
	Yes	No
Group 1	9 69.2%	4 30.8%
Group 2	10 62.5%	6 37.5%

---

<b>Extract 3: Does the student's text constitute plagiarism?</b>		
	Yes	No
Group 1	3 23.1%	10 76.9%
Group 2	7 43.8%	9 56.2%

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## Appendix B

### Plagiarism Questionnaire

Complete the following questionnaire providing your answer wherever needed or choosing the option that best represents your view. Please bear in mind that it should remain anonymous.

❖ Demographic information

- Age: \_\_\_\_\_
- Gender: \_\_\_\_\_
- Current master programme attended: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
- Previous undergraduate studies: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

❖ Plagiarism awareness statements

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I know what plagiarism is					
There is no problem if I include in my paper a paragraph from an article without crediting its source					
If the author of the paragraph I am copying in my paper is unknown there is no need to cite the source					
I can freely use some of the phrases my classmates wrote in their own paper					
I know how to paraphrase					
I know how to use the APA and MLA styles					
I know I plagiarize but I doubt that the professor will realize it					
I do not realize that I am plagiarizing when writing					
I do not consider plagiarism to be wrong					
I am aware of the consequences if caught plagiarizing					

❖ Level of exposure to plagiarism

1. Have you ever had a course while at the university that taught you step by step how to write a research paper?

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>

If yes, indicate the name of the course and the level of education during which the course was attended.

Course name: \_\_\_\_\_

Level of education:	undergraduate	<input type="checkbox"/>
	postgraduate	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. Have you ever had a course during your university studies that was specific to the teaching of academic research skills? (e.g. that taught you how to cite, to use references etc.)

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>

If yes, indicate the name of the course and the level of education during which the course was attended.

Course name: \_\_\_\_\_

Level of education:	undergraduate	<input type="checkbox"/>
	postgraduate	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. Do you have a handbook on either APA or MLA style?

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>

If yes, do you consult this handbook when writing academic papers?

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. Where else do you resort to when writing academic papers?

Internet	<input type="checkbox"/>
Peers	<input type="checkbox"/>
Academic and Instruction Services	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>

5. Has the issue of plagiarism been addressed by the professors in the courses you attended?

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>

If yes, how would you rate the level of attention they have paid to it?

Sufficient	<input type="checkbox"/>
Adequate	<input type="checkbox"/>
Insufficient	<input type="checkbox"/>

6. During your studies, were you asked to submit papers using the APA or the MLA style?

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>

7. Choose the two main reasons that you think may lead students to plagiarism.

Lack of knowledge of the rules of referencing	<input type="checkbox"/>
Easy way-out when not understanding clearly the instructions of the assignment	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lack of time	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lack of sufficient instruction on how to avoid plagiarism	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lack of emphasis on the severity of plagiarism	<input type="checkbox"/>
It occurs unintentionally	<input type="checkbox"/>
The belief that it is difficult to be caught	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lack of confidence in one's own academic writing skills	<input type="checkbox"/>

#### ❖ Plagiarism in practice

Below you have three extracts taken from original sources. Each is followed by a student's version. Go through them carefully and say whether the student's text constitutes plagiarism or not.

(1)

Original text: By 'association' we meant a mnemonic link to some element or elements that would help in recall of the word, including a link to meaning, sound, sound and meaning together, structure, context, mental image, letter(s) in the word, proper names, signs, and so forth.

Source: Cohen, A. D. & Aphek, E. (1980). Retention of second-language vocabulary over time: Investigating the role of mnemonic associations. *System*, 8, 221-235.

Students' text: When talking about vocabulary learning through association, we refer to a process whereby students are encouraged to create a kind of “mnemonic link to some element or elements that [can] help in recall of the word [taught], including a link to a meaning, sound, sound and meaning together, structure, context, mental image [...] and so forth” (Cohen & Aphek, 1980, p.223).

References: Cohen, A. D. & Aphek, E. (1980). Retention of second-language vocabulary over time: Investigating the role of mnemonic associations. *System*, 8, 221-235.

Does the student's text constitute plagiarism?

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>

(2)

Original text: SLI is a developmental syndrome in which linguistic properties are apparently deviant or late in developing, at the same time that other properties of the child (cognitive, intellectual) are within normal range.

Source: Wexler, K., Schütze, C., & Rice, M. (1998). Subject case in children with SLI and unaffected controls: Evidence for the Agr/Tns Omission Model. *Language Acquisition*, 7, 317-344.

Student's text: While other properties of an SLI child, such as cognition and intellectuality, are within normal range, the linguistic properties are deviant or develop late (Wexler, K., Schütze, C., & Rice, M.).

Does the student's text constitute plagiarism?

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>

(3)

Original text: For me, literature has been the lamp of knowledge, a symbol of enlightenment and a path to immeasurable freedom through sometimes violent encounters.

Gikandi, Simon. “Editor's Column - This Thing Called Literature...What Work Does It do?” *PMLA* 127.1 (2012): 9-21.

Student's text: The real power of literature lies in the liberal values it promotes, in its potential to help and transform people through reinvesting in thinking and imagination. Sometimes, however, we are invited to go beyond this humanist understanding of literature and to move towards what remains concealed behind this ideal representation of it (Gikandi).

Works cited: Gikandi, Simon. “Editor's Column - This Thing Called Literature...What Work Does It do?” *PMLA* 127.1 (2012): 9-21.

Does the student's text constitute plagiarism?

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>