Reasons of plagiarism in undergraduate academic writing and benefiting from Turnitin
Plagiarism increase
Detection
Interpreting similarity reports
The study
  Methodology
  Findings and discussion
  Conclusion and implications
  Ongoing research
“[T]he practice of claiming credit for the words, ideas, and concepts of others” (APA, 2010, p. 171).

“Although plagiarism may occur incidentally, it is often the outcome of a conscious process” (Barron-Cedeno et al, 2013).

Estimations of plagiarized content in student papers:

- Around 30% (Association of Teachers and Lecturers, 2008)
- More than 40% (Comas et al. 2010).
Detection

Why to use a plagiarism detector?

- To check student papers against plagiarism.
- To provide more effective feedback.

Advantages:

- **Instructors:** Saves time.
- **Students:** Provides rich feedback.
Interpreting similarity reports

- Detectors cannot solve the problem on their own (Carroll, 2009).
- Detecting genuine academic plagiarism requires a systematic approach (Meuschke & Gipp, 2013).
- Reliability of similarity reports (Brown, Fallon, Lott, Matthews & Mintie, 2007).
- Variations in interpreting similarity reports
  - Strict legalistic interpretations vs. More contextual interpretations (Hayes & Introna, 2005)
- Discriminate students who accidentally plagiarise from the ones who intentionally do so.
- The final responsibility for detecting plagiarism belongs to the lecturer, not to a plagiarism detector (Ellis, 2012).
The case of COMU ELT
Advanced Reading and Writing Skills Course
Gender comparison on plagiarism (% - Razı, 2014b)

- No gender differences (Walker, 2010).
- Male students plagiarise more (Rakovski & Levy, 2007; Razı, 2015).
- Consider their poor performance (Severiens & ten Dam, 2012).
- First-year undergraduates inexperience (e.g., Park, 2003; Razı, 2015; Yeo & Chien, 2007).
Self-reported difficulties in academic writing (Razı, in press)

- Cause of plagiarism
- Paraphrasing: directly quotes
- Reliability of sources
- Paraphrasing: comprehension
- Academic writing rules
- Writing complex sentences
- Length of a paragraph
- What to integrate into paper
- Requires a citation or not
- Comprehending sources
- Topic selection
- Overall coherence
- Overall unity
- Vocabualry selection
- Paragraph coherence
- Writing the references
- Stopping reading to start writing
- Paragraph unity
- Narrowing down the topic
- Supporting the main idea
- Identifying the main idea
- Using linking devices
- Outline
- Why refer to other studies
- Summarizing
- Use of quotations
- Paraphrasing: insufficiency in...
- Incorporating figures
- Using block quotations
- Paraphrasing: in-text citation rules
- Incorporating tables

Reasons of plagiarism by S. Razı
Lecturer-reported difficulties in academic writing (Razı, in press)
## Student submissions (Razı, 2014b)

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Frequency of plagiarism (Razı, 2014b)

1 every 5 student

4 year average ≈ 20%
The impact plagiarism detectors (Razı, 2014b)
The impact plagiarism detectors (Razı, 2014b)

SHARP DECLINE

2010-2011
2011-2012
2012-2013
2013-2014
The impact plagiarism detectors (Razı, 2014b)

PLAGIARISM STILL EXITS

2010-2011
2011-2012
2012-2013
2013-2014
Status (% - Razı, 2014b)

Reasons of plagiarism by S. Razı
Problem Statement

PLAGIARISM STILL SURVIVES IN
UNDERGRADUATE ACADEMIC WRITING!

WHY???
THE STUDY
Aim of the study

- Revealing the reasons of plagiarism.

- Research question:
  - How do plagiarizers explain their reasons to plagiarize?
Setting

- Turkey:
  - Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University
  - ELT Department
  - 2013-2014 academic year
  - Spring semester
Advanced Reading and Writing Skills Course:

- 194 students enrolled.
- 28 plagiarized.
- 11 male
- 17 female
Semi-structured individual interview questions.

Transparent Academic Writing Rubric:
- Valid and reliable (Razı, 2015).

Turnitin:
- Institutional license and
- Superiority (Hill & Page, 2009).
Advanced Reading and Writing Course Contents suggested by Razi (2011).

Accused students were interviewed. They were instructed on benefiting from similarity reports. After the interview, they revised and resubmitted within two weeks.
PROCESS WRITING AND TYPES OF FEEDBACK

Brainstorming
(Week 4)
Teacher mediated feedback

Outline
(Week 6)
Teacher mediated feedback

First draft
(Week 9)
Teacher mediated feedback

Familiarization of rubric
(Week 13)
Self feedback

Revision
(Week 12)
Teacher mediated feedback

Second draft
(Week 11)
Teacher mediated feedback

Proofreading
(Week 14)
Teacher mediated & peer feedback

Turnitin submission
Digital feedback

Self & anonymous peer score
Self & peer feedback

Tutor score
Tutor feedback

Reasons of plagiarism by S. Razi
PRE SCREENING

- The length
- The quotation ratio
- Similarity reports
- Not all students can proceed further.
Concerns Turnitin similarity reports:

- Sources not exist in databases.
- May not report actual plagiarism (McKeever, 2006; Walker, 2010).

Generalization:

- Data from a single university in the Turkish tertiary context.
Findings and Discussion
FINDINGS:
MALE SIMILARITY

Reasons of plagiarism by S. Razi
FINDINGS: FEMALE SIMILARITY

Reasons of plagiarism by S. Razı
• 3 accidentally; 8 on purpose

• Male_{10}: “One of my class mates told me that she had an assignment that she hadn’t submitted on Turnitin previously. I decided to submit her assignment since there was no risk but she was mistaken since she didn’t remember that she had submitted it on Turnitin last year.”
Findings: Reasons male

- **M1:** Did not know how to paraphrase.
- **M2:** Forgot to use quotation marks.
- **M3:** Tried to catch deadline.
- **M4:** Did not know how to paraphrase: Problems in restructuring.
- **M5:** Bored and then tried to catch deadline.
- **M6:** Cited like paraphrase to reduce quotation ratio.
- **M7:** Did not know how to paraphrase.
- **M8:** Did not know how to cite.
- **M9:** Insufficient number of sources. Cited a single source poorly.
- **M10:** Submitted a friend's assignment since she told him that she had not submitted it on Turnitin.
- **M11:** Submitted the same assignment for two courses.
• 1 accidentally; 16 on purpose

Female: “I realized that attending tutorials helped me avoid plagiarism as I had the chance of directly asking to you [the lecturer] but I got bored towards the end of the semester and did not attend the tutorials. To finalize my paper I simply copied expressions from other sources.”
Findings: Reasons female

- **F1**: To catch deadline, borrowed some expressions from a friend.
- **F2**: Since it was difficult to paraphrase, she avoided paraphrasing.
- **F3**: Thought that mentioning the author would be enough to copy the sentence.
- **F4**: Bored and then tried to catch deadline.
- **F5**: Tried to catch deadline.
- **F6**: Did not how to paraphrase.
- **F7**: Tried to catch deadline.
- **F8**: Bored towards the end of the paper and did not paraphrase carefully.
- **F9**: Bored in some parts of the paper and did not paraphrase carefully. Non-attendance to tutors resulted in weak paraphrase.
- **F10**: Tried to avoid submitting a short paper and integrated weak paraphrased expressions.
- **F11**: Tried to avoid spoiling meaning in restructuring so only changed some words.
- **F12**: Non-attendance to tutors because of illness and then tried to catch the deadline.
- **F13**: Did not how to paraphrase.
- **F14**: Thought that mentioning the author would be enough to copy the sentence. Tried to avoid spoiling meaning in restructuring so only changed some words.
- **F15**: Did not how to paraphrase.
- **F16**: Tried to catch deadline.
- **F17**: Did not accept being interviewed.
Accused students were instructed on benefiting from similarity reports.
After the interview, they revised and resubmitted within two weeks.
17 of 28 of them submitted plagiarism-free assignments.
There exist several reasons of plagiarism.

Reasons of female and male students might be different.

Students seem to adapt themselves to new situations and behave accordingly.

Consider first-year undergraduates inexperience (e.g., Park, 2003; Razı, 2015; Yeo & Chien, 2007).

Provide awareness on plagiarised expression.

Teach how to benefit from digital feedback.

Encourage resubmission rather than penalizing.
Implications:
On-going research

- In 2014-2015 academic year
  - Teach how to benefit from digital feedback (Razı, 2014a).
  - Multiple submissions:
    - Consider drop in plagiarism incidents from the 1st to the 2nd assignment (Ledwith & Rsques, 2008).
  - Peer review:
    - 3 anonymous peer reviews for each student:
      - An invaluable experience both for the author and the reviewer (Aghaee & Hansson, 2013).
Expectation: Removing the side effect of plagiarism detectors (Razı, 2014b)
Expectation: Removing the side effect of plagiarism detectors (Razı, 2014b)
The best and the worst scenarios may not be valid for every case!

- **Best scenario:** “They would delete.”
- **Worst scenario:** “We would be helping the students get away with plagiarism.”
- Students learn from their mistakes and correct.

Aim of the lecturer:

- Penalizing??? Receiving zero on the assignment, Failing the course, Suspension, Expulsion???

OR

- Develop awareness against plagiarism.
- Students might not feel that cheating on assignments is a serious problem (Brent & Atkinson, 2011).
References


