

Textual Plagiarism in Iraqi EFL and L1 Postgraduates Academic Writing

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Abstract

Academic writing is quite distinctive and producing it requires high levels of language proficiency in general and sufficient knowledge in one's own disciplinary discourse in particular. This means that producing academic language is a hard task even for those students who write in their first language. Thus, the task would definitely be harder for those EFL students who write in a second/foreign language. This study explores the way Iraqi L1 and EFL postgraduates write from their sources and whether the medium of instruction they are writing in affects their source use practices. It is hypothesized that Iraqi MA students in most Arabic and English departments throughout the Iraqi Universities tend to misuse their sources, and thus produce texts that contain high levels of textual plagiarism. In order to verify the above hypothesis, extracts from 20 MA theses written by Iraqi L1 and EFL postgraduates were selected for analysis. The analysis was based on a comparative reading approach where MA student texts were compared to their retrievable sources. Findings show that all the L1 and EFL writing samples contained language repeated from sources without attribution, a thing that reflects how dependent both groups of students were on their sources.

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الانتحال النصي في الكتابة الأكاديمية لدى طلبة الدراسات العليا في العراق

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تعد الكتابة الأكاديمية نوع مميز من انواع الكتابة .ويتطلب إنتاج نص اكايمي مستويات عالية من الكفاءة اللغوية بشكل عام ومعرفة كافية في الخطاب الاكاديمي الخاص لكل فرع اكايمي. وهذا يعني أن نتاج لغة أكاديمية مهمة صعبة حتى بالنسبة للطلاب الذين يكتبون بلغتهم الأولى. وبالتالي ، ستكون المهمة بالتأكيد أكثر صعوبة بالنسبة لطلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية الذين يكتبون باللغة ثانية أو اجنبية. تهدف هذه الدراسة للكشف عن الطريقة التي يكتب بها الخريجون العراقيون في اقسام اللغة العربية واللغة الإنجليزية من مصادرهم وما إذا كانت لغة الكتابة التي يكتبون بها تؤثر على طريقة كتابتهم من المصادر. لقد افترضت الدراسة بان طلاب الماجستير العراقيين في معظم أقسام اللغة العربية والإنجليزية في جميع أنحاء الجامعات العراقية يميلون إلى إساءة استخدام مصادرهم، وبالتالي إنتاج نصوص تحتوي على مستويات عالية من الانتحال النصي. لغرض التحقق من هذه الفرضية تم تحليل (20) نصا من رسائل الماجستير كتبها طلاب الدراسات العليا في اقسام اللغة العربية والانكليزية ومن مختلف الجامعات العراقية. اعتمد التحليل على نهج القراءة المقارنة حيث تمت مقارنة نصوص طلاب الماجستير مع مصادرهما القابلة للاسترجاع. تظهر النتائج أن جميع عينات الكتابة في L1 و EFL احتوت على لغة مكررة من مصادر دون إسناد ، وهو الشيء الذي يعكس مدى اعتماد كلا المجموعتين من الطلاب على مصادرهم.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الانتحال النصي، الكتابة الترفيعية، الكتابة الأكاديمية، التكرار الغير موثق

INTRODUCTION

Academic writing is a cumulative skill that develops gradually from the early stages of education till the quite advanced ones. It is a skill that builds on an essential feature of academic writing which is writing from sources. Being able to write from sources requires high levels of language proficiency, not to mention advanced knowledge of academic writing techniques, such as paraphrasing and summarizing. Both of these two requirements are believed to assist academic writers to write from their sources instead of copying directly from them (Liu, 2005; Shi, 2004; Flowerdew, 2007).

However, not being able to write from sources in an academic way can lead some writers to commit what is called "textual plagiarism". Textual plagiarism is, thus, a type of source use that involves copying someone else's words or ideas and pasting them as if it is the writer's own words or ideas (Pecorari, 2008). While dealing with sources is an unavoidable step in academic writing, false documentation, and direct copying are misbehaviors that should be avoided by any academic writer (Howard, 1993; Pecorari, 2003; Coulthard, 2004).

Recently the problem of textual plagiarism has reached an epidemic level within the Iraqi academic community in general, reaching quite high levels in the writings of novice academic writers in particular (See, Hussein, 2014; Hussein & Ali, 2015, Ali, 2020). What makes the matter worse is the basic fact that within the Iraqi educational context, Iraqi students in all the EFL departments throughout Iraqi universities receive a sufficient amount of lectures in academic writing and research methods both in their graduate and postgraduate studies, but still most postgraduates seem to find difficulty in documenting their sources and not to mention writing from them (Hussein & Ali, 2015).

Most students face difficulty in using certain academic writing techniques like summarizing and paraphrasing when writing. Most of them tend to copy directly from their sources (plagiarism) rather than using quotation marks or block quotations. Others try to "patchwrite" (stitching one sentence together with another in order to piece together a paragraph) rather than summarize or paraphrase using their own words (ibid). The question that must be asked then is, what are the reasons behind this paradoxical state of affairs ?

The answer might lie, the researcher believes, in the basic fact that academic language is distinctive and producing it requires both high levels of language dexterity and a good control over the basic requirements of one's own disciplinary writing norms and conventions. This means that even if academic writers write using their first language, still the language used in their writings would contain terms,

expressions, and phraseology that are not used in daily life speech. In this respect, Boudrou and Passeron (1994:18) notably stated that "academic language is no one's mother tongue".

If writing academically is considered a demanding task to those writing in their first language what about those who, literally write in a foreign one? Do those who write in a foreign language depend more on their sources than those who write using their first language ?

In other words, the current study aims at identifying how far does language relate to plagiarism ?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Textual Plagiarism vs. Patchwriting

The Merriam Webster online dictionary defines plagiarism as an act of "stealing and passing off the ideas or words of another as one's own: use another's production without crediting the source". Similarly, the Oxford online dictionary also defines the word as "the practice of taking someone else's work or ideas and passing them off as one's own." Like most traditional definitions of plagiarism, the above definitions cast the act in terms of wrongdoing and fraud.

Recently, there has been a shift in the way plagiarism is perceived, especially within the global academic community. This shift has been a result of extensive work and research carried out in the field of applied linguistics (Howard 1999; Roig, 2001; Pecorari 2003; Chandrasoma, Thompson & Pennycook, 2004; Flowerdew and Li, 2007). Based on these extensive studies, the view on plagiarism in academic writing has shifted from being an act of theft and stealing to being a matter of language failure.

Plagiarism, according to this view, is related to the low levels of language proficiency which most novice academic writers are likely to suffer from. Plagiarism is, thus, a matter of language disability that could be pedagogically cured (Bloch, 2007; Pecorari, 2008; Howard, et al, 2010; Flowerdew, 2007).

Based on this understanding, Pecorari (2008:4) classifies textual plagiarism into two types: the first which she terms "Prototypical Plagiarism", is defined as "the use of words and/ or ideas from another source, without appropriate attribution, and with the intention to deceive"; while the second type is based on Howard's (1993, 1995, 1999) influential term "Patchwriting", and which is defined by Howard (1993: 233) as "copying from a source text and then deleting some words, altering grammatical structures, or plugging in one synonym for another." Examples of the first type can be seen when students buy or download a ready-made research paper and submit it as if they have written it or students have their papers written by ghostwriters. As for the second type "patchwriting", it is best seen when students try to write from a source and due to the lack of language proficiency they copy with mild changes thinking that they are paraphrasing.

The fact that textual practices can vary from the act of copying large chunks of language and averring it to the one's self to the act of inappropriate paraphrasing definitely brings to the conclusion that not all acts of plagiarism are intentional.

Accordingly, patchwriting can be viewed as an unintentional act of wrongdoing that most novice writers commit while trying to find their own academic writing style. In this respect, Pecorari (2008) notes that any human skill is never learnt in "a straight line from input to mastery" but there always seems to be an in-between stage that can help us master that skill. For novice academic writers patchwriting is this in-between stage that they go through when developing their academic literacies, see Figure (1).

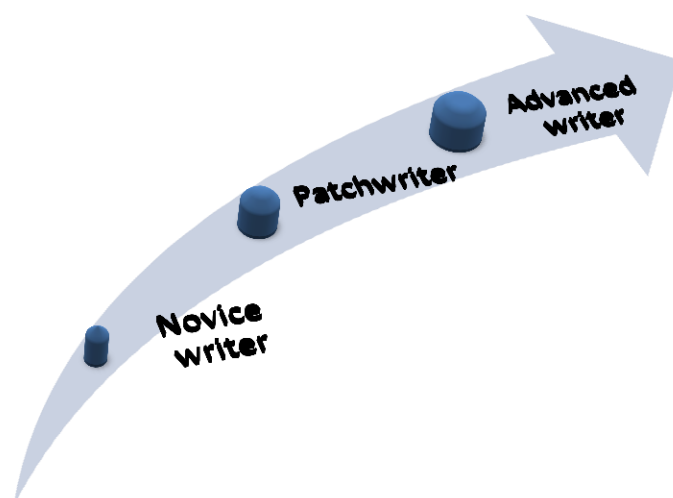


Figure 1: Patchwriting as a developmental stage in academic writing proficiency

METHODS

Data Collection

The data consisted of (20) electronic MA theses written by Iraqi postgraduates during the years 2016 to 2021. They were all available online as electronic copies and, the researcher also made sure that they were all available as hard copies in the students' university libraries. Because the MA samples were final drafts that have been academically approved and certificated by their universities, protecting both the students and their supervisors' identities was a priority. Thus, for the ease of reference and for anonymity each sample was given a code (Eng1- Eng10) for the EFL writing samples and (Arb1-Arb10) for the L1 writing samples .

The extracts chosen for analysis came from chapter two of each these, which is the literature review. The reason behind this choice was due to the fact that this chapter contains intensive use of sources and various types of citation forms. Accordingly, this chapter is expected to provide a considerable amount of insights regarding the way researchers use and employ source material .

The length of each written sample ranged between 12,000-18,000 words. The total number of words for the ten EFL portions was 147,045 with an average of 14,704 words for each extract. As for the total number of sources in the ten EFL writing samples, 743 sources were used whereby 530 sources were retrieved. The total number of words in the L1 samples was 163,016 with an average of 16,301 words for each sample. Throughout all the L1 writing samples a total of 920 sources were used whereby 577 were obtained. Regarding the date of submission, all MA theses chosen were submitted during the years 2016 to 2021. Details regarding the EFL and L1 textual samples are shown in the two tables below.

Table (1)

EFL Writing Samples According to Source Number, Word Number, and Date of Writing

Writing Sample	Sources Used	Sources Obtained	Word Number	Submission Date
Eng 1	92	63	13, 728	2019
Eng 2	81	54	16, 742	2016
Eng 3	66	50	12, 888	2020
Eng 4	102	62	15, 247	2017
Eng 5	64	51	12, 400	2021
Eng 6	72	46	14, 044	2019
Eng 7	68	42	15, 850	2021
Eng 8	78	57	14, 128	2018
Eng 9	59	34	15, 501	2021
Eng 10	61	43	16, 517	2019
Total	743	502	147,045	—
Average	74%	50%	14,704	—

Table (2)

L1 writing samples according to Sources Number, Word Number, and Date of Writing

Writing Sample	Sources Used	Sources Obtained	Word Number	Submission Date
Arb 1	109	58	17, 678	2020
Arb 2	98	56	17, 459	2018
Arb 3	103	72	16, 096	2017
Arb 4	82	53	16, 197	2016
Arb 5	84	61	15, 433	2015
Arb 6	116	61	17, 902	2020
Arb 7	76	52	14, 843	2019
Arb 8	87	58	16, 415	2017
Arb 9	73	49	14, 043	2016
Arb 10	92	58	17, 124	2017
Total	920	577	163,016	—
Average	92%	60%	16, 301	—

Data Analysis

The Comparative Reading Approach

Analyzing the textual data was based on a comparison reading approach that required not only reading but also comparing the texts written by students to that of their sources. Thus, the basic requirement for carrying out such a comparison was source identification. The identification of sources depended solely on the way they were listed in the thesis reference list and referred to within the text. Therefore, missed source attribution and ill documentation of sources were excluded from the investigation.

Another basic requirement was dividing up the writing samples into passages. For the ease of both the comparison processes and for the later quantitative analysis, the researcher divided each writing sample into passages each of which was determined by a source reference. Hence, the length of each passage

within the same writing sample may vary considerably from one another according to its in-text citation. Some passages might consist of 20-30 words while others might range between 200-500 words.

Due to the issue of source retrieving, not all the passages in the writing samples could be compared to their sources. A total of 394 passages, or 65% (from 602 passages), were compared in the EFL writing samples. As for the L1 samples, 448 or 66% of passages out of 664 have been compared to their retrievable sources.

Table (3) shows the total number of passages and the compared passages in each EFL writing sample, while Table (4) details the same information for the L1 writing samples.

Table (3)

Percentages of Compared Passages in each EFL Writing Sample

Writing Sample	Total Passages	Compared Passages	% Compared
Eng 1	62	43	69%
Eng 2	58	42	66%
Eng 3	61	40	65%
Eng 4	81	52	64%
Eng 5	44	31	70%
Eng 6	71	42	59%
Eng 7	54	34	62%
Eng 8	69	49	71%
Eng 9	53	32	60%
Eng 10	47	36	76%
Total	602	394	65%

Table (4)

Percentage of Compared Passages in each LI Writing Sample

Writing Sample	Total Passages	Compared Passages	% Compared
Arb 1	81	57	70%
Arb 2	66	46	69%
Arb 3	73	48	65%
Arb 4	61	42	68%
Arb 5	59	38	64%
Arb 6	82	52	63%
Arb 7	56	34	60%
Arb 8	54	39	72%
Arb 9	48	32	66%
Arb 10	84	60	71%

Total	664	448	66%
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After comparing the passages to that of their sources, identifying whether they contain textual plagiarism or not came next. This involved adopting an analytic framework that could quantitatively and qualitatively account for the intertextual relationships found between the compared passages and their sources.

Pecorari's (2008) textual plagiarism model

To confirm the existence of textual plagiarism in the L1 and EFL samples, the three conditions in Pecorari's (2008) textual plagiarism model should be met:

1. there should be a linguistic similarity between the student text and the source text;
2. the similarity is lengthy enough so as not to be considered coincidental, as Pecorari (2008: 6) puts it "the longer the chunks of language that two texts share the greater the likelihood that plagiarism has occurred," and
3. the similarity is not attributed, i.e. not signaled out by the use of quotations (direct quotations and indirect quotations). If language is not attributed to sources then any academic reader will infer that it is the writer's own language.

However, the presence of one or two of these criteria in a piece of writing is not enough for determining textual plagiarism. All three criteria should be proven to exist within a text for the label textual plagiarism to be applied to it. Consequently, what is of great interest to this investigation is the unattributed language similarities and any attributed language in the 20 writing samples are to be excluded.

In all the 20 samples, unattributed repeated language was relatively easy to identify. In trying to account for how pervasive this practice is throughout the textual data, quantitative measurements are required.

The analytic framework adopted provides a quite practical quantitative measurement which can help express unattributed language repetition found in each passage of a student writing sample in percentage terms. This is done by dividing the number of words which are in common between a student passage and a source passage by the total number of words in the student passage. For example, if a passage in one of the writing samples consists of (88) words whereby (68) of them are taken verbatim without quotation from a matching passage in a given source, then the percentage of unattributed language repetition will be $68/88=77\%$.

Figures (2) (3) (4) and (5) below show passages from four EFL writing samples (Eng5, Eng4, Eng3, Eng2) compared to their relevant sources. These samples hold respectively 100%, 65%, 47%, and 32% similarity with their sources. Words that are found similar between the two texts are underlined.

Figure (2)

EFL student passage with 100% language similarity with source.

Eng. 5/ Passage (4)	Valor (2017:43-44).
<u>The discourse of advertising is characterized by two main communicative elements: information and persuasion. Even though both functions are necessary for an advertisement to be effective, most of the studies in this area have shown that persuasion is the major purpose of advertising, whereas informative function is thus minor to the persuasive one</u> (Valor,2017).	<u>The discourse of advertising is characterized by two main communicative elements: information and persuasion. Even though both functions are necessary for an advertisement to be effective, most of the studies in this area have shown that persuasion is the major purpose of advertising, whereas informative function is thus minor to the persuasive one.</u>

The passage shown in Figure (2) contains (53) words, all of which were clearly located in a (53) word passage in the cited source. Applying the above quantitative measurement, the unattributed repetition would be $53/53 = 100\%$. Thus, passage (4) in the EFL writing sample (Eng5) holds a 100% similarity in language with its source.

As for the passage in Figure (3) below, 65% of its language can be found overlapping with a corresponding source passage without attribution. The passage has (43) words whereby (28) of them are found in common with a passage in the referred source. Thus, the rate of unattributed repetition found in the passage (1) in the (Eng.4) would be $28/43= 65\%$.

Figure (3)

EFL student passage with 65% similarity with the source language

Eng.4/ Passage (1)	Crystal (2008: 379)
Crystal (2008: 379) defines pragmatics as <u>the study of language from the viewpoint of users, especially with particular attention to the choices they make, the constraints they encounter in using language in social interaction and the effects their</u> utterances have <u>on</u> some communicators.	Pragmatics is <u>the study of language from the point of view of users, especially of the choices they make, the constraints they encounter in using language in social interaction and the effects their</u> use of language has <u>on</u> other participants in the act of communication.

Regarding the passages in figures (4) and (5) below, the similarities between them and their sources were both under the 50% level. The first holds 47% language similarity with its source, while the second only 32%.

Figure (4)

EFL student passage with 47% similarity with source

Eng.3/ Passage (14)	Varttala (2001: 16)
According to Varttala (2001), in_Brown's and Levinson's work, the concepts of <u>politeness are not</u> to be <u>included</u> in an analogous context as the kind of concept <u>postulated by Grice</u> . <u>Politeness is seen as distinct from such</u> laws, and, thus considered <u>as a social</u> justification to <u>deviate from Grice's 'asocial'</u> standards for <u>linguistic behavior</u> .	Brown's and Levinson built their theory of politeness on Goffman's concept of face. In_their work principles of <u>politeness are thus not included</u> within the same framework as the kinds of principles <u>postulated by Grice</u> . Instead, <u>politeness is seen as distinct from such</u> rules, <u>indeed as a social</u> reason to <u>deviate from Grice's 'asocial'</u> principles of <u>linguistic behavior</u>

Figure (5)

EFL student passage with 32% similarity with source

Eng.2/ Passage (8)	Munday, (2001: 17)
Product-oriented DTS includes examining <u>of a single ST</u> with its <u>TT</u> or <u>several TTs of the same ST</u> . <u>Function-oriented DTS</u> includes examining of the translation in the TL <u>sociocultural situation</u> , while process-oriented DTS attempts to describe what is going on in the mind of the translator while s/he is translating (Munday, 2000, pp16, 17)	Product-oriented DTS examines existing translations. This may involve the description or analysis <u>of a single ST–TT</u> pair or a comparative analysis of <u>several TTs of the same ST</u> (into one or more TLs). By <u>function-oriented DTS</u> , Holmes (ibid.) means the description of the function in the recipient <u>sociocultural situation</u> .

Of all the (394) compared passages in the EFL samples, a total of 67, or 17% are one hundred percent similar to the language of their sources. Ninety-five, or 25% of the passages reach the 50% level and 85, or 21% are under it. The rest of the remaining passages (147), which constitute 37%, all rang above the 50% level. Table (5) details these results.

Table (5)

Percentages of Language Similarity with Sources by Passages in the EFL Writing Samples

Language Similarity (%)	N. Passages	Percentage to Compared Passages
100%	67	17%
90-99%	33	8%
80-89%	35	9%
70-79%	30	7%
60-69%	49	12%
50-59%	95	25%
40-49%	31	8%
30-39%	27	7%
20-29%	15	4%
5-19%	12	3%
0-5%	0	0 %
Total	394	100%

Whether above, under, or at the 50% level, all the passages shown in the figures contained unattributed language that can be traced back to sources. It is quite clear, though, that the way EFL students incorporate source language within their own reflects the lack of confidence to write autonomously.

However, even more common was the unattributed repetition found in the L1 writing samples. Like, the EFL compared samples, the L1 passages contained language repeated from their sources at various levels. Figures (6), (7), (8), and (9) are examples of passages coming from four L1 student writing samples and which, sequentially, hold 100%, 60%, 40%, and 30% similarity with their sources

Figure (6)

L1 student passage with 100% similarity with the source

Arb.10/ Passage (1)	Anees (1975:176)
تتأثر الأصوات اللغوية بعضها ببعض في المتصل من الكلام. فحين ينطق المرء بلغته نطقاً طبيعياً لا تكلف فيه . نلاحظ أن اتصال الكلمات في النطق المتواصل قد يخضع أيضاً لهذا التأثير. على أن نسبة التأثير تختلف من صوت إلى آخر . فمن الأصوات ما هو سريع التأثير يندمج في غيره أكثر مما قد يطرأ على سواه من الأصوات (3).	تتأثر الأصوات اللغوية بعضها ببعض في المتصل من الكلام. فحين ينطق المرء بلغته نطقاً طبيعياً لا تكلف فيه . نلاحظ أن اتصال الكلمات في النطق المتواصل قد يخضع أيضاً لهذا التأثير. على أن نسبة التأثير تختلف من صوت إلى آخر . فمن الأصوات ما هو سريع التأثير يندمج في غيره أكثر مما قد يطرأ على سواه من الأصوات.
(3) الأصوات اللغوية. إبراهيم أنيس. مكتبة نهضة مصر مطبعة مصر, 1975, 176	

Figure (7)

L1 student passage with 60% similarity with source

Arb 9/ Passage (3)	Mohammad (1998: 15)
<p>حلت نظرية السرد، منذ الخمسة عشر عاماً المنصرمة، محل نظرية الرواية بوصفها موضوعاً يحظى باهتمام مركزي في الدراسة الأدبية، والفرق بين الاثنين ليس قضية عمومية فقط – كما لو كنا، بعد أن حللنا نوعاً من القصص، واصلنا دراسة الأنواع الأخرى، ثم وصفنا الجنس الذي يجمعها إننا، بتغييرنا تحديد ما يدرس، نغير ما نرى: وحين تستخدم تعريفات جديدة لتخطيط المنطقة نفسها فإن النتائج ستختلف، كما تفعل الخرائط الطبوغرافية والسياسية والسكانية (1).</p> <p>(1) نظريات السرد الحديثة، والاس مارتن. ترجمة: حياة جاسم محمد، المجلس الأعلى للثقافة، 1998.</p>	<p>حلت نظرية السرد، خلال الخمسة عشر عاماً الماضية، محل نظرية الرواية بوصفها موضوعاً يحظى باهتمام مركزي في الدراسة الأدبية، والفرق بين الاثنين ليس قضية عمومية فقط – كما لو كنا، بعد أن حللنا نوعاً من القصص، واصلنا دراسة الأنواع الأخرى، ثم وصفنا الجنس الذي يجمعها إننا، بتغييرنا تحديد ما يدرس، نغير ما نرى: وحين تستخدم تعريفات جديدة لتخطيط المنطقة نفسها فإن النتائج ستختلف، كما تفعل الخرائط الطبوغرافية والسياسية والسكانية.</p>

Figure (8)

L1 student passage with 40% similarity with source

Arb 8/ Passage (12)	AL-Baqylany (2001:247)
<p>ولكن صعوبة الأمر تتجلى في كون مفهوم (المكي والمدني) كعلم في التفسير مجرد اصطلاح تواضع عليه العلماء، فلم يكن للنبي (ص) في ذلك قول ولا نص. كما ولم ينص على تقسيم القران على هذا النحو ولا اثر عنه أنه ذكر هذا وإنما عدل النبي (ص) عن ذلك لأنه مما لم يؤمر فيه. ولو فعل لظهر وانتشر</p> <p>(2) الانتصار للقران /القاضي أبو بكر بن الطيب الباقلاني. تحقيق د. محمد عصام القضاة، بيروت لبنان، 2001</p>	<p>اما بخصوص مفهوم المكي والمدني لم يكن من النبي عليه السلام في ذلك قول ولا نص ولا قال أحد ولا روى أنه جمعه ولو كان ذلك منه لظهر وانتشر وعرفت الحال فيه، وإنما عدل النبي ﷺ عن ذلك لأنه مما لم يؤمر فيه، ولم يجعل الله تعالى علم ذلك من فرائض الامة.</p>

Figure (9)

L1 student passage with 30% similarity with source

Arb. 7/ Passage (8)	AL-Syuwtee (1990:198)
<p>الاستبدال مختلف, الى حد ما, عن البديل. اذ ورد مصطلح <u>البديل</u> في باب <u>التوابع في النحو</u> وهي الصفة والتوكيد والعطف والبديل وهذه التوابع لا يشترط في وقوعها رفع المتبوع بل اتباعه في الوظيفة الاعرابية. اي في الرفع والنصب والجر, والمطابقة في التعريف, والتذكير, والعدد, والتذكير, والتأنيث (4).</p> <p>(4) الأشباه والنظائر, جلال الدين السيوطي (ت: 911هـ) تحقيق عبد الاله نيهان دار الكتب العلمية 1411هـ - 1990</p>	<p>ويختلف الاستبدال عن البديل, فالبديل أحد التوابع في النحو. يجتمع مع المبدل منه, وبديل الحرف من غيره لا يجتمعان أصلاً, ولا يكون إلا في موضع المبدل منه. ولا يرفع المتبوع بل يتبعه في الوظيفة الاعرابية.</p>

Altogether, 448 passages in the L1 writing samples were compared to their sources. Fifty-five, or 12% of the passages had 100% unattributed repetition; a total of 98, or 22% were at the 50% level. A hundred and forty (31%) were above the 50% level, while 155, which constitute 35%, were under the 50%. Table (6) shows these results.

Table (6)

Percentages of Language Similarity with Sources by Passages in the L1 Writing Samples

Language Similarity (%)	N. Passages	Percentage to Compared Passages
100%	56	12%
90-99%	37	8%
80-89%	32	7%
70-79%	29	6%
60-69%	42	9%
50-59%	98	22%
40-49%	44	10%
30-39%	46	10%
20-29%	33	7%
5-19%	22	5%
0-5%	9	3%
Total	448	100%

Though, the percentages illustrated in tables (5) and (6) did not account for all the passages in the writing samples, they do, to some extent, help in providing a clear picture on how dependent those two groups of student writers were on the language of the sources they were writing from .

As the two tables show, passages with 50% language similarity with sources seem to be the highest in both writing samples, 25% of the passages in the EFL writing samples, and 22% in the L1 writing

samples. However, figures also reveal that the two groups of writers differed qualitatively in the amount of language they used from their sources. While the EFL samples had 17% of its passages with 100% similarity with their sources, the L1 writing samples had only 12%. Also, the EFL samples had 37% of their passages with repeated language from sources above the 50% level, while the L1 samples had 32%. As for those passages that had repeated language which was under the 50% level, the EFL passages had 21%, while the L1 passages raised to 35%. No passages in the EFL writing samples were found to have 0% of language similarity with their sources, on the other hand the L1 writing samples had (9) passages that held 0% similarity with their sources.

It should be noted that unattributed language repetition found in the L1 and EFL sample passages only shows one side of the story. In order to answer the question of the study and determine whether textual plagiarism occur more often in the L1 or in the EFL student writing samples, this unattributed language repetition should be put in a larger context, i.e. the context of the textual data as a whole. This broad context can be reached by calculating a resulting percentage score for textual plagiarism in both types of writing samples and comparing them accordingly .

Comparing Unattributed Repetition in the EFL & L1 Samples

After showing the percentage score of unattributed repetition in all the compared passages of the writing samples, an average percentage score for each writing sample can be calculated. This can be arrived at by dividing the sum of the percentage scores of all the passages that were compared in a given writing sample by the number of passages in that writing sample. For example the writing sample (Eng.1) had 43 passages compared to their cited sources each of which contained unattributed repeated words that were expressed by percentages. The sum of percentages of unattributed repetition for the 43 compared passages was (1522). So, the total percentage score of unattributed repetition in the whole writing sample (Eng.1) can be calculated like this: $1522/43 = 35\%$.

Table (7) details the percentages of unattributed repetition in each EFL writing sample. While table (8) shows the percentages of unattributed repetition in the L1 writing samples .

Table (7)

Percentages of UR by the sample in the EFL Textual Data

Writing Sample	Passages Compared	Percentages of UR
Eng 1	39	35%
Eng 2	41	37%
Eng 3	40	31%
Eng 4	44	43%
Eng 5	38	61%
Eng 6	41	47%
Eng 7	35	64%
Eng 8	43	50%
Eng 9	35	59%
Eng 10	38	70%
Total	394	50%

UR: Unattributed repetition

Table (8)

Percentages of UR by the sample in the L1 Textual Data

Writing Sample	Passages Compared	Percentages of UR
Arb 1	57	46%
Arb 2	46	45%
Arb 3	48	69%
Arb 4	42	34%
Arb 5	38	52%
Arb 6	52	37%
Arb 7	34	44%
Arb 8	32	51%
Arb 9	39	59%
Arb 10	60	55%
Total	448	49%

As the two tables show, the resulting rate of unattributed repetition for the EFL writing samples is 50%. This means that 50% of the language in the EFL compared passages is, approximately, repeated verbatim without attribution from their sources. On the other hand, the resulting rate of unattributed repetition is slightly lowered to 49% in the L1 writing samples. That is, 49% of the language in the L1 compared passages can be found in their sources. The findings of the data analysis are to be discussed next.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Although, the two types of textual data may seem approximately equal in the amount of unattributed repetition found in them, still the L1 writing samples differed qualitatively in the way repeated language is incorporated within its language. This can be easily identified through relating the average rates of textual plagiarism found in tables (7) and (8) to those rates found in tables (5) and (6). The average rate of textual plagiarism in the L1 writing samples (49%) comes mostly from passages that had language similarity with their sources at and under the 50% level (57% of the L1 passages had repeated language at and under the 50% level), while the average rate of textual plagiarism in the EFL writing samples (50%) comes mostly from passages that contained language similarities above the 50% level (53% of the passages were above the 50% level.)

Thus, regarding the question of whether textual plagiarism occurred more often in the L1 writing samples or in the EFL ones, it has been found that both writing samples contained instances of language similarities that could be traced back to sources and at, approximately, the same level .

However, as mentioned above, most of the compared passages in the L1 writing samples contained less than 50% repeated language from sources, while most of the compared passages in the EFL samples contained repeated language above 50%. This finding may suggest that Iraqi L1 novice academic writers writing in their first language are more capable, roughly speaking, to incorporate the language of a source within their own language in a way that the repeated chunks would seem quantitatively lesser than their own language .

Tables (7) and (8) also illustrate that the percentages of unattributed repetition varied considerably in both writing samples, ranging from 31% in the EFL sample (Eng.3) to 70% in (Eng.10) and from 34% in the L1 sample (Arb.4) to 69% in (Arb.3). Similarly, recalling tables (5) and (6) one can notice that the percentages of unattributed repetition varied considerably from one passage to another. While some passages had 100% similarity with the language of their cited sources, the majority had less than or about 50% similarity. This means that students not only copy verbatim from their sources but vary in the way

they incorporate source material within their own writing. This way of incorporating source language within one's own language is called "patchwriting" (Howard,1999.)

Patchwriting: a basic technique in writing from sources in the L1 and EFL writing samples

A total of 273 or 69% EFL compared passages (from the 394 passages that were compared in the EFL writing samples) represented instances of patchwriting. As for the L1 samples, in all the 448 compared passages, a total of 282, or 63% were found patchwritten .

A possible explanation for this frequent use of patchwriting highlights an important claim argued earlier that academic writing is distinctive and producing it requires high levels of language dexterity and control. In an attempt to master it, novice academic writers tend to rely on their sources through patchwriting. Thus, for many, this type of source use reflects a transitional stage in the process of academic writing development and which needs effective pedagogical considerations. Through this stage, novice academic writers not only become familiar with academic writing styles and conventions but can master the discourse of the academic disciplines they belong to.

Thus, it would be fair to say, that patchwriting found in these writing samples reflect the large amount of effort both group of writers had put into trying to enhance their academic writing skills in general, and develop a well-recognized academic disciplinary discourse that could meet the expectations of their academic community, in particular.

CONCLUSION

The paper reported the results of a Textual Plagiarism analysis carried out on 20 L1 and EFL MA theses written by Iraqi postgraduates. The results showed that all twenty writing samples contained high levels of unattributed language repetition from sources. In fact, it was quite evident from the initial reading comparison that student's texts held overlaps with the language of their sources and that these overlaps varied considerably from one text to another. Some students tended to repeat large chunks of language from their sources while others introduced some kind of changes to the language of their sources before incorporating it with their writings. This alteration practice is called patchwriting, a type of source use that has been proven to be the most frequently employed type throughout the textual data .

However, it should be noted that the way Iraqi L1 novice academic writers use source material was, to some extent, different from the way Iraqi EFL novice academic writers did. These slight variations in source use could be closely related, as discussed above, to language abilities. It was quite clear that Iraqi L1 students writing in Arabic face difficulties when writing from sources academically and that these difficulties are likely to be even more distinguishable for Iraqi EFL students writing in English .

Based on the findings of the data textual analysis, it is reasonable to claim, but with slight caution that textual plagiarism is probably a widespread practice among Iraqi MA students. To solve this conundrum of plagiarism that we are facing within the Iraqi academic community, we need to shift our perspectives on how we view plagiarism in students' academic writings. Plagiarism can not only be a result of deliberate cheating but it could be a result of students suffering from low language proficiency. Being able to write from sources is a cumulative process that needs intensive education and learning. So, instead of informing, warning, detecting, and punishing, teaching and developing academic writing courses would help solve this conundrum. The paradox that we are facing within the Iraqi academic community is a result of inadequate teaching curriculums that lack the focus on writing in general and academic writing in particular .

Consequently, more research is needed in order to dig deeper into the causes behind this prevalent practice among Iraqi novice academic writers. Moreover real pedagogical steps need to be taken to account for patchwriting and to consider it a necessary step in the process of academic writing development. In other words, patchwriting should be viewed from a pedagogical perspective rather than being viewed as an act of fraud and wrongdoing .

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