



A Qualitative Investigation into the Understanding of Plagiarism in a Malaysian Research University

Ghayth Kamel Shaker Al-Shaibani *

School of Languages, Literacies and Translation, Universiti Sains Malaysia

Omer Hassan Ali Mahfoodh

School of Languages, Literacies and Translation, Universiti Sains Malaysia

Fauzilah Md Husain

School of Languages, Literacies and Translation, Universiti Sains Malaysia

Abstract

This research paper explores forms of plagiarism and awareness of plagiarism in a Malaysian Research University abbreviated as AMRU for ethical considerations. In this case study, we adapted the interview prompts for the two constructs of plagiarism from Marshall and Gary (2005). The analysis of the semi-structured interview which lasted more than two hours at AMRU in May 2015 reveals that the interviewee's understanding of plagiarism is insufficient even though he has been doing his MA program by research mode in English for three years by then and he has attended around twenty workshops on research-related topics and academic writing. The interviewee is rather familiar with forms of plagiarism and he is aware of plagiarism as he has learned about plagiarism from his academic parents. However, terms such as quoting and paraphrasing and the two verbs, adapt and adopt were not clear to him before the interview; now he knows what they mean academically after the interviewer's explanation.

Keywords: forms of plagiarism, awareness of plagiarism, semi-structured interview, qualitative research, Malaysia

INTRODUCTION

As a concept tied to intellectual property theft (Armstrong, 1993; Green, 2002), plagiarism is the writer's claim to unoriginal ideas and language as their own (Hannabuss, 2001) or without providing proper credit to the originator of the ideas and language through sufficient citation and referencing techniques (Larkham & Manns, 2002). While also prevalent outside of tertiary education (Green, 2002; Larkham & Manns, 2002), members of academia must adhere to higher standards than laypersons as they are expected to contribute to an already existing body of knowledge with their original ideas and findings (Habibzadeh & Shashok, 2011; Vardi, 2012). Without a safeguard against plagiarism in academia, it would be difficult to trace ideas and

concepts to their creators and honouring them for their important contributions to human knowledge. Moreover, as this is a form of intellectual property theft, plagiarism is an unethical and despicable crime (Armstrong, 1993; Bennett, 2005) for any writer with a conscience to commit.

A widespread phenomenon at all levels of education, stretching from students to members of faculty (Handa & Power, 2005), plagiarism especially plagues the newcomers to tertiary schooling, undergraduate students (Bretag, 2013). Plagiarism has been documented in postgraduate students and teaching staff as well (Kenny, 2007), but not at the same severity as it has within the ranks of young people taking their Bachelors studies. Moreover, there are variations in the incidence of plagiarism as they differ from discipline to discipline (Habibzadeh & Shashok, 2011). For example, Meade's study in 1992 where students in business studies and engineering ranked the highest for academic cheating, and also Pecorari and Petric's (2014) study of international students who have difficulties expressing themselves in English.

In Malaysia, the general knowledge and awareness of plagiarism amongst students is far from satisfactory. Ali, Ismail and Cheat (2012) in their study to identify the extent of student's understanding of the concept of plagiarism through the use of computer and information technology found that 40% of the respondents thought that copying their friend's assignment, buying assignments from seniors, and making changes to statements without acknowledging the original writers were not considered as plagiarism. Yusof and binti Masrom (2011) in their study on Malaysian students' understanding of plagiarism found that the general knowledge of plagiarism amongst tertiary education students in Malaysia is too shallow. They may understand the basic concepts of plagiarism, but fail to properly reference secondary citations and grasp the concept that copying several sentences from other sources is still plagiarism.

Jones and Sheridan (2015) discussed plagiarism in the digital age with regard to the use of plagiarism detection software such as Turnitin and online translation tools such as Babelfish and Google so as to prevent cyber plagiarism practised by university students in Australia and elsewhere. Based on their review of the literature, one can conclude that university students are not fully aware of forms of plagiarism as cheating, stealing and dishonest acts; and for those who know these forms of plagiarism, they can still plagiarise by using technological tools and text manipulation to submit the academic work as theirs. Such an act hinders creativity, critical thinking, new ideas, and originality; it also raises the issue of equity among students – those who plagiarise and those who do not (pp. 712-714). This also affects the construction of knowledge greatly; and educators and providers of knowledge should make students aware of the negative consequences of committing plagiarism and that curbing these forms of dishonesty and cheating is healthy for any society.

DEFINITION OF PLAGIARISM AND PLAGIARISM SOFTWARE PROBLEM

According to the online Oxford dictionary, plagiarism is defined as “the practice of taking someone else's work or ideas and passing them off as one's own”. This definition

at best is simplistic. This is because the act of plagiarism is difficult to define in a comprehensive and standardized manner (Fishman, 2009; Pecorari & Petrić, 2014; Posner, 2007); it is viewed differently in various educational institutions, and is therefore given a multitude of definitions. Weber-Wulff (2014) said: “there are numerous definitions... that focus on different aspects of the problem.” This can be observed in the following definitions of plagiarism from three different universities. According to the University of Oxford, plagiarism is seen as:

“Presenting someone else’s work or ideas as your own, with or without their consent, by incorporating it into your work without full acknowledgement. All published and unpublished material, whether in manuscript, printed or electronic form, is covered under this definition. Plagiarism may be intentional or reckless, or unintentional.” (para. 1)

However, Brown University Writing Center stated that plagiarism is:

“Appropriating another person’s ideas or words (spoken or written) without attributing those word [sic] or ideas to their true source...” (para. 1)

Massachusetts Institute of Technology defined plagiarism as:

“Plagiarism occurs when you use another’s words, ideas, assertions, data, or figures and do not acknowledge that you have done so.” (para. 4)

While there is no universal definition of plagiarism, acts of plagiarism such as using exact words, drawings, charts, assignments, as well as paraphrasing, having another person do one’s assignments alongside using services of ‘paper mills’ and ‘essay banks’, as well as self-plagiarism, that is to repurpose one’s own text and use it for another, all of which are done without proper citation or acknowledgment of the sources from which the text was used, are all forms of plagiarism (Park, 2003).

Powell (2012) said that students come to Higher Education with a variety of different previous learning experiences; therefore, it is not uncommon for students to misunderstand the meaning and significance of plagiarism in the specific learning institution in which it is being assessed. Based on the survey-questionnaire carried out by Marshall and Garry (2005), it was found that “students have a poor understanding of the concept of plagiarism and the many different ways in which they can plagiarise”. Park (2003) discussed that some of the motives behind why students plagiarise is because there is a genuine lack of understanding of what plagiarism is which then leads them to unintentional plagiarism. The Internet has contributed to plagiarism by providing the convenience and availability of unparalleled temptation and unrestricted opportunities for students to cheat (Kiss, 2013; Marshall & Garry, 2005; Park, 2003).

Marshall and Garry (2005) suggested that education programmes need to deconstruct the more formal definitions of plagiarism into specific examples that illustrate the range of activities that are not allowed to avoid misconduct. Weber-Wulff (2014) suggested that students should be taught about plagiarism in secondary schools. With the

introduction of the Internet into academia, digital plagiarism has become a double edged sword (Park, 2003) because whilst students can easily plagiarise, the very same technology has made it easier for plagiarism to be detected. Based on research conducted by Batane (2010). It was found that when students knew that their work would be checked using the plagiarism detection software, Turnitin, the overall plagiarism rate decreased by 4.3%; therefore proving that the software works as a deterrent to stop students' plagiarism. However, there are notable limitations to the use of the software. One such limitation is the tendency to identify material as plagiarized even when it is not (Noynaert, 1997). Research carried out by Kiss (2013) showed how plagiarism detection applications like Google, KOPI, Plagiarism Detector, and Plagiarism checker were unable to accurately detect all acts of plagiarism. Therefore, relying on plagiarism detection software alone is insufficient. Plagiarism should be taught over the course of a degree programme and viewed as a guide to operate within academic writing as opposed to placing emphasis on how it is criminal (Roberts, 2008).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Forms of plagiarism

While plagiarism is commonly understood to be the appropriation of ideas without proper attribution to the original contributor (Habibzadeh & Shashok, 2011; Larkham & Manns, 2002), its definition also extends to the appropriation of language use (Habibzadeh & Shashok, 2011; Hannabuss, 2001): Composing a paragraph by taking short phrases from a number of sources, putting them together, and adding own words to make a clear message, for example, is still plagiarism when no quotation marks are used (Pecorari & Petrić, 2014; Ryan, Bonanno, Krass, Scouller & Smith, 2009). So is the verbatim copying of strings of words without quotation marks and insufficient paraphrasing (Gilmore, Strickland, Timmerman, Maher & Feldon, 2010; Howard & Davies, 2009; Vieyra, Strickland & Timmerman, 2013). However, even with sufficient paraphrasing, proper citation must be used; otherwise, it is known as sham paraphrasing (Vieyra et al, 2013). Gilmore et al. (2010), Howard and Davies (2009), and Vieyra et al. (2013) did not mention the number of words taken from the original source without quotation marks and the level or percentage of insufficient paraphrasing to be considered as plagiarism. Other forms of plagiarism and academic cheating that are less recognized by newcomers to the tertiary education include copying another student's assignment without the student's knowledge, recycling, self-plagiarism and presenting an assignment written by someone else as own work (Armstrong, 1993; Bennett, Behrendt, & Boothby, 2011; Owunwanne, Rustagi & Dada, 2010; Ryan et al., 2009). In cases of copying their friends' assignments and asking their friends to do their assignments, students tend to think that they are only getting some help for their assignments and research papers, when in actuality it is an offense to academic trust (Maxwell, Curtis & Vardanega, 2008; Park, 2003).

Amiri and Razmjoo (2015) found out that the sampled undergraduates (12 students) cannot distinguish between the various forms of plagiarism and they hardly defined the term plagiarism clearly. They stated that "almost all of them thought that once they

change some words or structures, they do not need to mention the source" (p.7). However, Amiri and Razmjoo (2015) did not mention the forms of plagiarism committed by the participants in their data analysis, except for few instances from the literature in the discussion even though the construct, forms of plagiarism, is raised in the second question of the interview questions. Rather, they focused on causes leading to plagiarism.

Lei and Hu (2015) studied the perception of plagiarism and forms of plagiarism of 112 Chinese university English teachers (57 overseas-trained and 55 home-trained teachers) in mainland China using a survey. They focused on blatant plagiarism (as quoting someone's language without acknowledgement), subtle plagiarism (as Incorporating someone's ideas into one's own writing without acknowledgement), and inappropriate referencing, and they defined them as forms of plagiarism. They also added that paraphrasing without acknowledgement is a form of plagiarism. Both groups fared well in recognising various forms of blatant plagiarism. Overseas-trained teachers revealed good and moderate knowledge of various forms of subtle plagiarism and inappropriate referencing. Home-trained teachers showed moderate and limited knowledge of various forms of subtle plagiarism and inappropriate referencing. They also argued that inappropriate referencing, for example, listing sources at the end of the article without citing them in the text is also a form of plagiarism. However, forms of plagiarism as a key term in their study was hardly discussed in depth. Moreover, we believe that inappropriate referencing is not a form of plagiarism, rather it is related to the write-up process which sometimes results in missing in-text citations as long as all the references are listed in the end of the article.

Awareness of plagiarism

It has come to light that the lack of education and training about plagiarism to students in secondary education has contributed to the incidences of plagiarism in tertiary education (Madray, 2007). Without prior knowledge and exposure to the concepts of plagiarism, intellectual property (Green, 2002), ethical academic conduct and originality of expression (Armstrong, 1993; Vardi, 2012), students find it difficult to adjust to the tertiary education when there is suddenly an overwhelming emphasis on plagiarism, and how not to get caught for it (Madray, 2007).

In a study regarding students' understanding of the concepts of plagiarism, Breen and Maasen (2005) conducted focus group interviews with 13 Australian undergraduate students. During the interviews, the students were asked questions to determine their understandings of plagiarism. Based on the interviews, the students clearly understood plagiarism as using large sections of other people's work, either from books, journal articles, and other assignments, without acknowledging the original authors/writers. The findings indicated that students generally have fairly clear understanding of the primary concept of plagiarism which is using a large section of other people's work, but vague about other forms of plagiarism such as making small changes to the order of words in the original text and the number of words from the original text that can be copied before they need to reference.

Devlin and Gray (2007) held group and individual interviews with 56 Australian university students. Students' feedback revealed their lack of understanding of what exactly constitutes plagiarism. They found 8 categories for plagiarising: slack admission criteria, poor understanding of plagiarism, poor academic skills, teaching and learning factors, personal actors and pressure. Moreover, Ellery (2008) who interviewed 21 South African undergraduate students who committed plagiarism found that majority of the students were unaware that they had plagiarised based on their writing practices. The interviews revealed that plagiarism by interviewees was inadvertent. Many students failed to realize that some of their writing practices such as failing to reference paraphrased text equated to plagiarism. The study also revealed that the students have poor understanding of the concept of plagiarism and thus need better guidance than had been provided regarding plagiarism.

Erkaya (2009) conducted semi-structured interviews with 6 Turkish students. The study is qualitative; and the researcher has used semi structured interviews as the instrument of data collection. Six Turkish students, two from senior high school and four from college participated in the study. The two most prevalent causes of plagiarism among the Turkish students were students' lack of awareness about plagiarism and students' lack of knowledge about writing research papers.

Yusof and binti Masrom (2011) conducted a quantitative research study to investigate the extent of Malaysian students' understanding of plagiarism, referencing and citation rules. The respondents were 48 Malaysian university students. The findings revealed that majority of students were unaware of features of plagiarising in secondary citations, have insufficient knowledge and understanding of plagiarism and its many forms. Although the students have some basic understanding of plagiarism, their understanding of plagiarism and referencing rules can be categorized as weak. They concluded that Malaysian students lack knowledge on plagiarism and may not be aware that there are many different levels of plagiarism.

In addition, Ali et al. (2012) used the survey method to obtain students' understanding of the concept of plagiarism. Three hundred and twenty seven final year students at a Malaysian university were involved in the survey. The findings indicated that students are mostly unaware of what acts constitute as plagiarism. Majority of the respondents agreed that copying, and using the works of others without referencing the source are acts of plagiarism. However, about 40% of the respondents did not consider copying their friends' assignment, buying assignments from seniors and changing statements from the sources obtained without acknowledging the original authors/writers as acts of plagiarism. Overall, it was found that the general understanding of plagiarism was unsatisfactory.

In a study by Ramzan, Munir, Siddique, and Asif (2012) to investigate the graduate and postgraduate students' awareness and understanding of plagiarism in universities of Pakistan, 350 Pakistani graduate and postgraduate students were surveyed. The findings regarding the level of awareness of plagiarism amongst graduate and postgraduate students clearly indicate that their understanding of plagiarism is poor.

The students possess an unsatisfactory level of knowledge in defining plagiarism. Only 73.1% understand the definition of plagiarism and many students are unaware of university's plagiarism policies.

METHODOLOGY

The researchers of this study set up nine questions (refer to Appendix) for the face-to-face interview. The interview questions were set to investigate *forms of plagiarism* and *awareness of plagiarism*. Ten postgraduates were separately interviewed. They are all Malaysians, except for one whose nationality is Nigerian. However, the researchers have selected only one typical interview to be the case study in this article as this study is exploratory and also because this interviewee referred to as AK, after his initials (henceforth AK) has responded to the questions more elaborately whereby this interview transcript is more than thirteen pages in length. Furthermore, he has been doing his research for three years by then and he has good knowledge about research as his parents are academics, and he was about to submit his thesis for viva voce. The interviewee was still doing his Master's programme on Pragmatics at a research university in Malaysia renamed as AMRU which stands for *A Malaysian Research University* for ethical considerations.

ANALYSIS OF THE CASE STUDY

The analysis of this case study consists of two main parts, *forms of plagiarism* and *awareness of plagiarism*. For forms of plagiarism, there were six questions; and for awareness of plagiarism, there were three questions (refer to Appendix). The researchers will cite the interviewee AK by paraphrasing yet maintaining the intended meaning and by quoting his responses where necessary in the analysis. Grammatical errors pronounced by AK will not be corrected to keep the quoted responses intact, and key words left out as in verbs will be inserted for clarity; such errors and left out verbs will be indicated by [*sic*] following the APA writing style.

Forms of plagiarism

Question 1: What are the forms of plagiarism you know?

AK preferred to define plagiarism first before he could provide another example of plagiarism; he said, "Plagiarism is about taking another person's work and claiming it as yours. That is plagiarism. Plagiarism also involve [*sic*] using someone else's exact word and putting it in your journal [article] or thesis or whatever formal documentation claiming it as yours. It doesn't only involve words, pictures like drawings, name cards, symbols ... any visually edited music also. There are forms of plagiarism in music as well". He considers claiming others' work such as drawings, name card designs, and songs [lyrics and beat] as forms of plagiarism. He stated that the song, "Dirty Lines or Dirty Talk by Will Ferrell ... is an exact copy of a song recorded twenty years ago. The lyrics is almost the same, the beat was almost the same...that is part of plagiarism... So, not only students do it not only researchers do it, but musicians, celebrities, and singers [also do it]".

Question 2: Do you consider buying a paper as a form of plagiarism?

AK stressed that juniors at the undergraduate level ask their seniors or fresh graduates to do their assignments for 50 Malaysian Ringgits (approximately \$ 10-12)/page. This has been happening in the two universities he attended while he was doing his first and second degrees. He confirmed that this kind of service is very common at AMRU. He stated that the reason behind this practice is due to the lack of academic ethics and knowledge as it happens in the early stages of the students' academic life.

Then the interviewer (the first author) asked him if the plagiarism check software, Turnitin, used by this university has been effective in detecting such cases. He pointed out that students know how to cheat/copy to avoid Turnitin detection; for example, they change 10% similarity index to 5% (which is allowed at this university) by clicking certain buttons as elaborated herein: "I have tried Turnitin. My assignments and stuff like that becomes seven and my friends they [*sic*] told me you can bring it down to four or to three. All you have to do is to click a few buttons or omit certain words, omit certain sentence [*sic*] and you can bring it down to three or four percent". He stated that the use of certain words and phrases such as adapt, adopt, needs, analysis, literature review, methodology, and research methodology are unavoidable in writing research.

Question 3: Do you think that copying a whole paper from a source text without proper acknowledgement is plagiarism?

He stated that there should proper citation and acknowledgement of the cited source; he answered, "That is plagiarism. If you copy one sentence or you copy one paragraph you have to say that, okay look here I've cited from so and so and you must put it there. Same thing with graphs with charts. Things like that you have to cite".

Question 4: What about copying and submitting other scholars' or students' research or paper as yours? Is it different if this research or paper belongs to one of your relatives?

Similarly, he answered it, "That is plagiarism, but students these days they think that [*is*] [*sic*] okay I just copy it submit it...lecturers they [*sic*] will know because the lecturers they [*sic*] themselves can submit that document in Turnitin and find out, [and say] [*sic*] oh this student is lying". He stated that when lecturers in this university discover this type of plagiarism, they deduct marks in this case as punishment. He insisted that taking information from someone should be properly cited and acknowledged even when taking this information from a relative.

Question 5: If a researcher copies sections from another source such as a book, added the citation, but did not put the copied sections in inverted commas, is this plagiarism?

In his response, AK considered this as "a grey area" at first as he was not certain if this is a form of plagiarism; however, after a short while, he said, "I believe it is plagiarism, not done intentionally". Then, the interviewer sought a more accurate response by saying,

but sometimes we quote without using quotation marks. The interviewer was referring to the long quotations having 40 words and above that should be indented as a block text and that page number and author(s)' name(s) should be written in the end of such long quotations without quotation marks as used in the APA writing style. AK had no idea of this type of quotation.

Question 6: Do you think that paraphrasing a text from one or more source texts without supplying appropriate documentation is a case of plagiarism?

AK was confused between the two terms, *paraphrasing* and *quoting*, and he was unable to distinguish between them. At first he said, "I think it is plagiarism.... It is a grey area...". He was not familiar with the fact that paraphrasing and quoting from one or more than one source in a single paragraph require certain rules as paraphrasing is a re-wording process which keeps the meaning of the original text intact; while quoting is to copy the exact words and to indicate the page number from which the quotation is extracted, and that both, paraphrasing and quoting require acknowledging the source(s) by mentioning the surname(s) and year(s) of publication(s). After this explanation made by the interviewer, AK said, "it is something new that I think I have to look into it".

Awareness of plagiarism

Question 7: Did you know about plagiarism before you joined the university?

AK did not know about plagiarism when he joined a university for the first time; he plagiarised from Wikipedia during his first year for his first degree (undergraduate studies). However, he was exposed to the notion of plagiarism during his second degree (postgraduate studies) when he joined an English programme for Master's degree. Two of his lecturers explained briefly about it and about the APA style adopted in this university during his first classes for around forty five minutes. AK pointed out that his friends from other faculties have no idea about plagiarism as their lecturers did not explain to them and thus he explained to them what it means and how to avoid it in their research writing.

Question 8: How do you differentiate between plagiarism and paraphrasing?

Up to this point, it is still "a grey area" to AK when talking about plagiarism and paraphrasing as he described it. The interviewer, who is the first author, attempted to understand what AK really means by the term *grey area* he frequently used during this interview in that it refers to something confusing to him as the difference between the two terms *plagiarism* and *paraphrasing* as seemingly he does not have much information on both terms. In around four hundred and twenty three words elicited from AK, the interviewer managed to obtain AK's response to this hard question to him by raising few more sub-questions emerged such as: Interviewer: So you have to say Helen stated this and this and then your voice?

AK: Yeah

Interviewer: So don't mix up your voice with the scholar's voice or opinion?

AK: Yeah

From his lengthy response to this question, we can say that he was trying to convey this message: when paraphrasing, we the students have to differentiate between the scholar's voice and our voice to avoid plagiarism as ideas are copyrighted. For example, students should use phrases such as *In my opinion, this...* or *As a researcher I think ...* as discourse markers to be clear to the readers. AK feels guilty if he commits plagiarism at this level of postgraduate studies and he is being cautious for two reasons. Firstly, when a scholar discovers that he/she is being plagiarised, this scholar will be hurt emotionally. Secondly, if AK commits plagiarism now during his studies, he will not be able to reprimand his students committing plagiarism when he becomes a lecturer in the future. AK is yearning for lectureship in the future as he voiced it out during the interview.

Question 9: Is copying someone else's design, visual work or theoretical framework plagiarism?

AK answered this question with "Yeah, it is...". He stated it is plagiarism without proper citation. Then, the interviewer asked him, how can we cite properly to avoid this type of plagiarism. He said, "Interesting, how do I cite? I can't remember how I did, but there is a way. I can't remember how I did that because there is a book if I am not mistaken APA Sixth Edition..." explains it. Hence, this has led to raise this question: Are you familiar with the terms adapted and adopted? AK has conducted a study on *English among Nurses* and thus he has adapted a questionnaire to appropriate it to the Malaysian context. For example, he changed this sentence "*I am feeling blue*" from the original questionnaire which was used in an American context by translating it into the English language as "I am feeling sad" or "I am feeling miserable" because if the sentence "*I feel blue*" is translated into the Malay language as "*Saya rasa biru*" which literally means "*I feel blue*", his respondents will not understand what it means. The interviewer attempted to find out whether AK has really accurately used the appropriate verb *adapt* in this case, he did not.

Some other elicitation from the interview

The two confusing terms adopt and adapt

During the interview, the interviewer discovered that AK has misunderstood and thus misused the verb *adopt* instead of *adapt* in his MA thesis write-up; he realised this misuse only after the interviewer explained to him the different meanings of these two terms. After that, he said, "Yeah I think I have to go back and check that".

Academic writing workshops

When asked about attending workshops on plagiarism, AK suggested that workshop organisers should register only a small number of participants so that students' questions and queries are addressed individually to achieve effective learning. He also

suggested that lecturers have to be aware of such topics on plagiarism. This is so because some lecturers from this university are unable to explain questions on plagiarism. Generally, AK seems that he is aware of and has some knowledge about plagiarism. In 2012, he was taught about plagiarism very well in a course as he said; however, he was not aware of self-plagiarism despite having around twenty workshops over three years while doing his Master's programme.

DISCUSSION

We have set 9 main questions divided into two main parts, *forms of plagiarism* (6 questions) and *awareness of plagiarism* (3 questions) to investigate the understanding of plagiarism at the postgraduate level. The forms of plagiarism examined in this qualitative study are 1. Buying a paper 2. Copying a whole paper from a source text without proper acknowledgement 3. Claiming other scholar's, student's or a relative's research or paper as yours 4. Copying sections from a source with citing the source, but the cited text is not placed in inverted commas 5. Paraphrasing a text from one or more sources without proper documentation. As for the awareness of plagiarism, it includes 1. Familiarity level of plagiarism 2. The differentiation between plagiarism and paraphrasing 3. Copying a design, visual, or theoretical framework.

We first attempted to seek AK's understanding of the forms of plagiarism and we found out that he emphasised stealing someone's research, words, visuals, name cards, music, and songs, and claiming the ownership of these materials. That is, he defined plagiarism rather than listing down the forms. His definition was similar to what Habibzdeh and Shashok (2000), and Larkham and Manns (2002) stated that plagiarism is commonly understood as the appropriation of ideas without proper attribution to the original contributor.

AK confirmed that seniors and fresh graduates on campus and off campus offer academic writing services (illegally) for around \$10-12 per page. AK attributed this academic misconduct to the lack of academic integrity among students. This is also underscored by groups of researchers such as Armstrong (1993), Bennet et al. (2011), Owunwanne et al. (2010), and Ryan et al. (2009), who mentioned that among forms of plagiarism, copying a person's work without the person's knowledge and presenting it as own work and presenting an assignment written by someone else as own work are less recognised by the undergraduates as they think they are paying the writers for their services (Maxwell et al., 2008; Park, 2003). Such misconduct among undergraduates may be carried forward to their postgraduate studies in the future. AK considers any form of copying whether a section or a whole study from any researcher without acknowledgement as blatant plagiarism. Lei and Hu (2015) found out that their respondents (two groups of teachers, home-trained and overseas-trained) fared well in recognising various forms of blatant plagiarism, but did not fare well in understanding subtle plagiarism.

With regard to the direct citation (quotation) and indirect one (paraphrasing), we have set questions 5 and 6 to explore AK's understanding of quotation styles - which namely

include two types, with (if less than 40 words) and without (if more than 40 words) inverted commas- and paraphrasing. AK did not know that quoting and paraphrasing are two different types of citation. Similarly, in an Australian context, undergraduates are not familiar with the type of changes they make while citing and also the number of words that they can copy before they can cite someone (Breen & Maasen, 2005).

AK confessed he did plagiarise from Wikipedia when he was doing his first degree; however, during his postgraduate studies, he was taught about it and introduced to the APA writing style by two of his lecturers very briefly. AK now feels guilty if he commits plagiarism as he expressed this feeling during the interview. He had around 20 academic workshops and yet to have a good understanding of plagiarism as a whole. The lack of or little understanding of plagiarism has been also reported in the literature as in an Australian context (Delvin & Gray, 2007), a South African context (Ellery, 2008), a Turkish context (Erkaya, 2009), a Pakistani context (Ramzan et al., 2012), and a Malaysian context (Ali et al., 2012; Yusof & binti Masrom, 2011).

When setting question 8 and the sub-question raised by the interviewer, we wanted to draw the respondent's attention that plagiarism may be committed via paraphrasing. We concluded from AK's hesitant response at first that students should distinguish between the scholar's voice and the student's voice when writing research. AK is not very aware of how to paraphrase a text without committing plagiarism. This finding is similar to the study by Breen and Maasen (2005) which found that students are vague about paraphrasing and the number of words from the original text that can be copied before they need to reference.

To further explore AK's understanding of plagiarism, question 9 and the sub-questions (How can we cite properly to avoid this type? Are you familiar with the verbs adapted and adopted?) did this function. AK did not use the verb *adapted* when he has already modified a questionnaire previously used in a western context to suit/tailor it to his research in the Malaysian context. Such an inaccurate use of the verbs, *adopt* and *adapt* results in inaccurate research as this confuses readers including examiners because the two verbs have two different meanings. It is a matter of word choice and rigour when writing research. To explain this, when a researcher uses the verb *adapt* instead of *adopt*, he/she is considered as dishonest in this respect because readers and examiners would think that there is some contribution when using *adapt* due to the expected changes made to the original questionnaire, framework, design, visuals and the like. Research is about conducting a study and reporting its findings rigorously to reflect truth and integrity.

CONCLUSION

We have explored the understanding of plagiarism at the postgraduate level in a Malaysian research university exemplifying AK as a case study. AK's definition of plagiarism was similar to a definition reported in the literature which reveals his basic understanding of the topic under investigation. AK plagiarised at the undergraduate level, but not as a postgraduate as he is more cautious/aware now. After the interview

ended, AK shared his better understanding of plagiarism and some academic writing principles he learned from the interview which will help him revise his write-up as in the word choice of *adopt* and *adapt*, indentation for long quotations, the difference between quoting and paraphrasing, clarity in writing as in the distinction between the student's voice and the reported scholar's voice, and rigour in research. This is so to avoid committing plagiarism and to be rigorous. Overall, there is a dearth and little understanding of plagiarism reported in the literature in some contexts as is the case with AK.

There is academic misconduct in the form of presenting an assignment written by someone else as own work practised by senior students and fresh graduates in and around AK's university. Therefore, there must be an enacted law to criminalise such misconduct at the academia because it is the center of higher education, knowledge dissemination, integrity, and ethics. Based on the literature reviewed, one can conclude that forms of plagiarism are not deeply examined nor clearly defined in Asian, African and Western contexts. There is also little awareness about plagiarism in its broader sense, and the length of the text being referred to is not clear either. In all the studies reported, students seek a better and deeper understanding of the forms of plagiarism so that they can avoid them in the future. Thus, we recommend conducting more studies on this issue to help fill the gap.

FUNDING

This work was supported by Universiti Sains Malaysia, Malaysia [Grant number 304/PBAHASA/6313161].

REFERENCES

- Ali, W. Z. W., Ismail, H., & Cheat, T. T. (2012). Plagiarism: to what extent it is understood? *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 59, 604-611.
- Amiri, F., & Razmjoo, S. A. (2015). On Iranian EFL Undergraduate Students' Perceptions of Plagiarism. *Journal of Academic Ethics*, 1-17.
- Armstrong 2nd, J. D. (1993). Plagiarism: What is it, whom does it offend, and how does one deal with it?. *AJR. American journal of roentgenology*, 161(3), 479- 484.
- Batane, T. (2010). Turning to Turnitin to Fight Plagiarism among University Students. *Educational Technology & Society*, 13(2), 1-12.
- Bennett, R. (2005). Factors associated with student plagiarism in a post-1992 university. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 30(2), 137-162.
- Bennett, K. K., Behrendt, L. S., & Boothby, J. L. (2011). Instructor Perceptions of Plagiarism Are We Finding Common Ground?. *Teaching of Psychology*, 38(1), 29-35.
- Breen, L., & Maassen, M. (2005). Reducing the incidence of plagiarism in an undergraduate course: The role of education. *Issues in Educational Research*, 15(1), 1-16.
- Brown University Writing Center (2016). *What is Plagiarism?*. Retrieved July 8, 2016, from <http://library.brown.edu/libweb/plagiarism.php>

- Bretag, T. (2013). Challenges in addressing plagiarism in education. *PLoS Med*, 10(12).
- Devlin, M., & Gray, K. (2007). In their own words: a qualitative study of the reasons Australian university students plagiarize. *High Education Research & Development*, 26(2), 181-198.
- Ellery, K. (2008). Undergraduate plagiarism: a pedagogical perspective. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 33(5), 507-516.
- Eret, E., & Gokmenoglu, T. (2010). Plagiarism in higher education: a case study with prospective academicians. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 2(2), 3303-3307.
- Erkaya, O. R. (2009). Plagiarism by Turkish students: causes and solutions. *Asian EFL Journal*, 11(2), 86-103.
- Fishman, T. (2009). "We know it when we see it" is not good enough: toward a standard definition of plagiarism that transcends theft, fraud, and copyright. In *4th Asia Pacific Conference on Educational Integrity (4APCEI)*, pp. 1-5). NSW, Australia.
- Gilmore, J., Strickland, D., Timmerman, B., Maher, M., & Feldon, D. (2010). Weeds in the flower garden: An exploration of plagiarism in graduate students' research proposals and its connection to enculturation, ESL, and contextual factors. *International Journal for Educational Integrity*, 6(1).
- Green, S. P. (2002). Plagiarism, norms, and the limits of theft law: Some observations on the use of criminal sanctions in enforcing intellectual property rights. *Hastings Law Journal*, 54(1).
- Habibzadeh, F., & Shashok, K. (2011). Plagiarism in scientific writing: words or ideas? *Croatian medical journal*, 52(4), 576.
- Handa, N., & Power, C. (2005). Land and discover! A case study investigating the cultural context of plagiarism. *Journal of University Teaching & Learning Practice*, 2(3), 8.
- Hannabuss, S. (2001). Contested texts: issues of plagiarism. *Library management*, 22(6/7), 311-318.
- Howard, R. M., & Davies, L. J. (2009). Plagiarism in the Internet age. *Educational Leadership*, 66(6), 64-67.
- Jones, M., & Sheridan, L. (2015). Back translation: an emerging sophisticated cyber strategy to subvert advances in 'digital age' plagiarism detection and prevention. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 40(5), 712-724.
- Kenny, D. (2007). Student plagiarism and professional practice. *Nurse education today*, 27(1), 14-18.
- Kiss, A. (2013). Loopholes of Plagiarism Detection Software. *Procedia - Social And Behavioral Sciences*, 106, 1796-1803.
- Larkham, P. J., & Manns, S. (2002). Plagiarism and its treatment in higher education. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 26(4), 339-349.
- Lei, J., & Hu, G. (2015). Chinese university EFL teachers' perceptions of plagiarism. *Higher Education*, 70(3), 551-565.
- Madray, A. (2007). Developing students' awareness of plagiarism: crisis and opportunities.
- Marshall, D. & Garry, D. (2005). How well do students really understand plagiarism?. In *Balance, Fidelity, Mobility: Maintaining The Momentum?* (pp. 457-465). Brisbane.

- Massachusetts Institute of Technology (2016). *What is Plagiarism?*. Retrieved July 8, 2016, from <https://integrity.mit.edu/handbook/what-plagiarism>
- Maxwell, A., Curtis, G. J., & Vardanega, L. (2008). Does culture influence understanding and perceived seriousness of plagiarism?. *International Journal for Educational Integrity*, 4(2).
- Meade, J. (1992) Cheating: is academic dishonesty par for the course?. *Prism*, 1(7), pp. 30-32.
- Noynaert, J. E. (1997). *Plagiarism detection software*. Retrieved July 10, 2016, from http://www.micsymposium.org/mics_2005/papers/paper97.pdf
- Owunwanne, D., Rustagi, N., & Dada, R. (2010). Students' perceptions of cheating and plagiarism in higher institutions. *Journal of College Teaching & Learning (TLC)*, 7(11).
- Oxforddictionaries.com (2016). *Plagiarism*. Retrieved July 7, 2016, from <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/plagiarism>
- Park, C. (2003). In Other (People's) Words: Plagiarism by university students—literature and lessons. *Assessment & Evaluation In Higher Education*, 28(5), 471-488.
- Pecorari, D., & Petrić, B. (2014). Plagiarism in second-language writing. *Language Teaching*, 47(03), 269-302.
- Posner, R. (2007). *The little book of plagiarism*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Powell, L. (2012). Understanding plagiarism: developing a model of plagiarising behaviour. In *iParadigms 5th International Plagiarism Conference*. The Sage Gateshead, UK.
- Ramzan, M., Munir, M. A., Siddique, N., & Asif, M. (2012). Awareness about plagiarism amongst university students in Pakistan. *Higher Education*, 64(1), 73-84.
- Roberts, T. (2008). *Student plagiarism in an online world* (pp. 23-34). Hershey, PA: Information Science Reference.
- Ryan, G., Bonanno, H., Krass, I., Scouller, K., & Smith, L. (2009). Undergraduate and postgraduate pharmacy students' perceptions of plagiarism and academic honesty. *American journal of pharmaceutical education*, 73(6), 105.
- University of Oxford (2016). *Plagiarism*. Retrieved July 6, 2016, from <https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/guidance/skills/plagiarism?wssl=1>
- Vardi, I. (2012). Developing students' referencing skills: a matter of plagiarism, punishment and morality or of learning to write critically?. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 31(6), 921-930.
- Vieyra, M., Strickland, D., & Timmerman, B. (2013). Patterns in plagiarism and patchwriting in science and engineering graduate students' research proposals. *International Journal for Educational Integrity*, 9(1).
- Weber-Wulff, D. (2014). *False Feathers: A Perspective on Academic Plagiarism*. Springer Science & Business.
- Yusof, D. S. M., & binti Masrom, U. K. (2011). Malaysian students' understanding of plagiarism. *Malay*, 35, 72-9.

APPENDIX

Interview prompts for Forms and Awareness of plagiarism adapted from Marshall and Gary (2005)

Participants' background

Before starting the interview session, each participant was required to write down his/her name, gender, field of study, mode of study, postgraduate level, and university in the form provided as shown below.

University:	
Field of Study:	
Mode of Study:	
Postgraduate Level (PhD, MPhil, MA):	
Name:	Gender:
Email:	
Mobile Phone No.:	

Interview prompts

Forms of plagiarism

1. What are the forms of plagiarism you know?
2. Do you consider buying a paper as a form of plagiarism?
3. Do you think that copying a whole paper from a source text without proper acknowledgement is plagiarism?
4. What about copying and submitting other scholar's or student's research or paper as yours? Is it different if this research or paper belongs to one of your relatives?
5. If a researcher copies sections from another source such as a book, added the citation, but did not put the copied sections in inverted commas, is this plagiarism?
6. Do you think that paraphrasing a text from one or more source texts without supplying appropriate documentation is a case of plagiarism?

Awareness of plagiarism

7. Did you know about plagiarism before you joined the university?
8. How do you differentiate between plagiarism and paraphrasing?
9. Is copying someone else's design, visual work or theoretical framework plagiarism?

Thank you very much for participating in this interview.