"THE IMPACT OF PLAGIARISM DETECTION ON ESL LEARNERS: SHAPING ATTITUDES AND WRITING SKILLS."

Aalqa Nadeem
BS English (Literature and Language) Student, University of Okara
Contact: +92 316 3936136
Aalqanadeem0@gmail.com

Muhammad Kashif
BS English (Literature and Language) Student, University of Okara
Contact: +92 305 9697632
kashifalikashi345@gmail.com

Waqar Mahmood Khan
Lecturer in English and Founder, Shaheen Empowerment and Guidance Center
University of Okara, Pakistan
waqar.m.khan@hotmail.com

Muhammad Haris Khan
M.Phil. Linguistics Scholar, Riphah International University, Lahore
Hariskhan29222@gmail.com

Abstract:

Plagiarism, the act of showcasing other's ideas or words as your own, has become a significant concern in academic writing since the rise of artificial intelligence (AI) in research. Detecting plagiarism is now emerging as an integral part of higher education institutions especially in Pakistani universities. This paper explores the impact of plagiarism detection on ESL learners attitudes and writing skills. A qualitative approach has been employed by conducting a semi-structured interview with 30 students including instructors of English Literature Department in University Of Okara. Results indicate that plagiarism detection can influence ESL learners attitudes and writing skills both positively and negatively. As the plagiarism detection tools can promote content quality and proper citation, it can also leads to ESL learners anxiety and stress. As the article concludes, certain recommendations have been listed for instructors and institutionsto effectively embed plagiarism detection into ESL writing. Recommendations include developing comprehensive programs, implementing plagiarism education in curricula, and faculty training regarding the best possible use of Plagiarism detection.

Keywords: Turnitin, Plagiarism detection, ESL writing, Writing anxiety, Learner attitudes.
Introduction :
Plagiarism is "the act of using someone else's work, ideas, or intellectual property without proper acknowledgement, presenting it as one's own" (American Psychological Association,2020). Also plagiarism as defined by Merriam-Webster, n.d. is " the unauthorised use or close imitation of another author's language and thoughts, representing them as one's own original work, which can lead to legal consequences". Since the rise of Online course delivery during COVID-19 pandemic, plagiarism has reportedly increased among students. During the time of remote learning, a study by Turnitin (2021), observed that up to 40% of educators involved in academic dishonesty, including plagiarism. Students were more likely to complete their assignments

through online resources which causes the increased rate of plagiarism (University of California, Berkeley, 2021).

This significant spike of plagiarism has become a great concern for institutions. The chronicle of Higher education,2021 reported that there is a significant increase of plagiarism detection in institutions onset of the pandemic. Plagiarism detection tools are being widely used to uphold academic integrity. Majorly in Pakistan, 70% of universities have employed Plagiarism detection tools to monitor students academic writing and research, including Turnitin and Urkund (Awan &Niazi, 2021). In Pakistan English language holds greater importance. English language serve as an official language in Pakistan. Being a second language, Pakistani ESL learners find it difficult to be proficient in writing English. It maybe due to lack of opportunities for practicing, such as writing assignments or feedback.

Khan and Khan (2024) stated that millions of students in underdeveloped countries are trying to learn English for economic purposes, as research shows a direct linkage between English proficiency and individuals' economic growth. Being not able to write well in English can motivate ESL learners to use online resources for their written academic works like assignments or research, causing the learners to depend heavily on online resources. That is why it heightened the risk of plagiarism in ESL learner's writing. Flowerdew and Li (2007) discussed plagiarism and second language writing in an electronic age in their study published in the Annual Review of Applied Linguistics. They evaluate that the electronic revolution in the production of text is the major cause contributing to plagiarism concerns. With the access to the internet, writers just "copy and paste" other's writing into their own; this temptation to copy and paste is greatly present in beginners or second language writers because of their lack of confidence in their phraseology (Flowerdew& Li, 20027). The anxiety to write in English for ESL learners can contribute to copy and paste other's work while not considering the policies of their works.

As the plagiarism detection software particularly Turnitin have growing importance, despite it's advantages of promoting academic integrity, improving learning about proper citation practices, developing writing skills by providing feedbacks, enhances quality of work, facilitates research and supports institutional policies; it does have drawbacks of using plagiarism detection. The major disadvantage of plagiarism detection is that it has a negative impact on ESL learners behaviour as they wouldn't understand the importance of research and proper use of citations and paraphrasing; also most of the ESL learnersfind it discouraging if they have been criticised or they have been given feedbacks by their instructors for their written works. The fear of being caught for plagiarism can increase stress and anxiety among learners especially those who struggle with poor English and writing skills.

This study aims to understand the impact that plagiarism detection can have on ESL learner's behavior and writing skills. By examining these impacts, the study can identify effective strategies that can promote positive attitude and academic integrity for ESL learners.

Literature Review:
This paper, seeks to explore how Pakistani ESL students are affected by the plagiarism detection tools. With a general consensus, it has been observed that though plagiarism detection tools are a double-edged sword, they serve an important function in improving learner awareness on academic integrity. Such an influence brought by these technologies, however, has been underreported, especially within the ESL writing context. The paper, with a small-scale case study into the immediate perception of ESL students on the effect of using a commercial plagiarism report, seeks to find out first its pre-usage attitudes and secondly how post-usage

attitudes and perceptions actually shape writing and referencing skills of learners with regard to academic writing. We argue that ESL students' attitudes get shaped through the deployment of a report provided by plagiarism detection programs, very much reflected in effective academic practice.

Although it is a truism that learners have varying attitudes towards the use and action on plagiarism reports, understanding their motivations and apprehensions would help writing instructors and administrators to craft meaningful orientation resources and policies.

Some varied research has investigated the influence of plagiarism-detection software on student academic honesty and on improving the quality of students' compositions. Some of the broad themes of the studies include the pedagogical benefits of enhancing students' understanding of plagiarism and its components and how detection software shapes students' attitudes toward plagiarism, paraphrasing, and citation skills. Considering this is an international phenomenon where the number of students, for their written assignments, is increasingly using online translators, studies that place the focus on English as a second language learners offer an interesting perspective. The latest data indicate that the use of plagiarism detection tools has a profoundly positive impact on the improvement of writing for these students, and following instruction regarding plagiarism, an overwhelming majority is found to understand not only what plagiarism constitutes but also how to identify and avoid plagiarizing. In this respect, this review discusses major findings about the effectiveness of employing plagiarism detection technology and offers a forecast of benefits promised for ESL learners.

For examining the reasons that triggers Plagiarized behaviours based on students perceptions related to plagiarism, a number of studies have been conducted. Straw (2002) as cited in (Rets & Ilya, 2018) gave a framework of those reasons. The major and first reason among the top three is the lack of understanding about the difference between 'common knowledge' and 'previously reported information' and also not knowing the

proper use of citations which is qualified as unintentional plagiarism. The other second reason indicate students being efficient in order to save time or to get good grades by finding shortcuts. Last but not the least, the students attitudes can also contribute to plagiarism as they are not aware of the consequences of plagiarism and might not take plagiarism as a serious misconduct.

There have also been studies that investigated students of what majors tends to plagiarize the most. It has been found that students of technical fields are more likely to plagiarize than students of non-technical fields BavaHarji et al. (2016) as cited in (Rets & Ilya, 2018). Although, ESL students can also move to plagiarize as they are involved in non-native or foreign language because they are not as proficient as the native language writers are (Rets & Ilya, 2018). Many softwares such as Turnitin and Grammarly have been developed for teachers to counter plagiarism and punish students. Teachers should consider the challenges that ESL learners run into like, incompetency in language or cultural differences. As punishing the students can have negative impacts on students behaviours and attitudes, being caught for plagiarism can also discourage them to not participate in any kind of research writing. Also, ESL students can be anxious of submitting their writing works because of getting criticism from the instructors.

Amsberry (2010) as cited in (Bodi, 2019) evaluates that students involved in Plagiarism are the ones who may not receive proper guidance on Plagiarism. When students are aware of not just the forms of it but also it's severity they are more likely to not involve in unintentional plagiarism. It has been examined that paraphrasing and citation errors were common in both ESL

and Non-ESL students (Keck, 2014, as cited in Bodi, 2019). It points out to the lack of instructions by teachers on how to cite sources or could be due to lack of student's experience in writing (Bodi, 2019). Hodgkinson et al, (2016), Hirvela and Du (2013), and Bruton and Childers (2016) all shared a thought that student's experience in writing determines whether they are going to plagiarize or not as cited in (Bodi, 2019).

The ability of ChatGPT to generate fluent text that are difficult to differentiate if they are human written ones or not has raised a great concern about plagiarizing in University assignments or exams through the misuse of technology as students present AI-generated text as their own work (Francke& Bennet, 2019; Haque et al., 2022; Yeadon et al., 2022; Cotton et al., 2023; Susnjak, 2022; King &ChatGPT, 2023; Khalil &Er, 2023; Gao et al., 2023 as cited in Ibrahim, 2023). Also Yeldon et al. (2022) as cited in Ibrahim, (2023) conveys:

> "We may be at the beginning of an AI revolution. In order to facilitate authentic assessment it is vital that we are aware of the capabilities of this technology and its ramifcations on the way that credited work is assessed. In the present case, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that non-invigilated assessments based on short-form essay questions are already no longer ft for purpose; they are simply too vulnerable to current AI text-completion technologies, which can produce creditable content cheaply and quickly" (p.11-12).

AI-assisted Plagiarism does not only affect educational assessment but also is difficult to detect by the traditional detection approaches. To maintain the academic integrity it has become necessary to train instructors in a way that they can educate students about the ethical use of other's writings and the consequences of conducting misuse.

The purpose of this literature review is twofold: first, to educate learners the proper use of citations and utilising feedbacks given to them by their instructors to produce coherent, well-structured papers free of unacknowledged, misleading phrases lifted from internet-based sources; and second, it helps instructors address the needs or weaknesses of their students, ensuring that students maintain positive attitudes and behaviors while considering their writing anxiety in an ESL context.

Methodology:

The present study suggest that plagiarism detection tools act as a pedagogical tool in shaping student attitudes and reduce plagiarism practices among learners. This paper, therefore, argues that such tools used in pre-assessment can shape better writing skills in the learner within an ESL context. The qualitative research approach was adopted to explore this claim, by conducting interviews to gather insights from both students and instructors.

The research was designed to understand how plagiarism detection tools are used by instructors and students and what results it has shown in academic writing integrity especially in ESL learners writing and also how it impacts on students anxiety and attitudes. For the primary method of data collection, semi-structured interviews were chosen to explore in-depth perspectives of participants.

The participants involved were two key groups: the students of BS English Literature Department who were working on writing their first research article, and their instructors who were guiding them related to research article writing, with experience of using plagiarism detection tools.

Interviews were covered over a period of two weeks. Each interview was of 20-30 minutes long and covered topics such as: the perceptions towards the use of plagiarism detection tools, how

these tools can have an impact on ESL learners writing skills and integrity, and lastly how plagiarism detection can shape students attitudes and writing anxiety. Interviews were audio-recorded and then transcribed for research analysis.

Thematic analysis was considered appropriate, as it help identify common patterns and ideas within the responses. This process involves categorizing data, bringing similar ideas together, and finally, understanding such groups in light of the research question. Focus was on the student and instructor comparison of their ideas in order to find similarities and differences among these groups' views.

Research ethics were considered while conducting interviews. The participants were fully aware of the study's purpose, their privacy was protected and they had the freedom to withdraw at any point and each participant voluntarily decided to participate by providing informed consent.

Research questions:
1. How do ESL learners perceive plagiarism detection?
2. Does plagiarism detection improve ESL learners writing skills?
3. What are the effects of plagiarism detection on ESL learners motivation and anxiety?
4. How do plagiarism detection influence ESL learners attitudes towards academic integrity?
5. How do instructors view the impact of plagiarism detection on ESL learners?

Results:

The interviews conducted with the ESL students and instructors were subjected to a thematic analysis, which yielded four dominant themes: 1. Understanding and Awareness about Plagiarism; 2. Plagiarism Detection Tools Affect Attitudes; 3. Impact on Improvement of Writing Skills; 4. Challenges and negative perceptions. These reveal elaborately how plagiarism detection tools exert an impact on scholarly development and on the impression these ESL learners build regarding their higher education experience.

1. Plagiarism Awareness

Most participants reported that plagiarism detection tools increased their knowledge of plagiarism. Students reported that, prior to the use of plagiarism detection tools, they only had a partial idea of what constituted plagiarism, in particular with regard to paraphrasing, citation, and legitimate use of sources and some students were not aware of plagiarism at all.

As one student explained:

"I never knew reusing parts of a text without citing them properly counts as plagiarism. Turnitin highlighted what I was doing wrong, and now I check myself more often."

The other student said:

"I have not been familiar with plagiarism and always copy pasted my assignments untill our instructor imposed rigid rules in order to create original works on our own."

Instructor also made the same observations that students who earlier displayed careless attitudes towards correct academic conduct became more cautious and aware. He reported: "In the Department of English at the University of Okara, I use Turnitin to evaluate students' work, especially essays, term papers, and research projects in English Literature and Linguistics. I guide students on how to use the tool for checking their drafts, ensuring proper referencing for literary and linguistic texts, and avoiding over-reliance on secondary sources."

However, both said that awareness of the plagiarism issue depends on proficiency level since advanced learners were more aware of its meaning and its consequences than the beginners.

2. Attitudinal Impact of Plagiarism Detection Tools

The tools were considered to be a double-edged sword in shaping attitudes toward academic integrity. Students indicated that although tools such as Turnitin or Grammarly made them feel responsible, they also created anxiety.

One student said:

"The red of Turnitin makes me feel stressed, even if it's something insignificant like common phrases."

The other also highlighted:

"Whenever I submit my assignments or other written works to instructors, I always get panicked when the instructor is giving feedbacks and plagiarism report of our work."

Instructor reported that students often perceive plagiarism detection tools as punitive rather than instructive. The instructor indicated that they work actively to reframe the tools as learning aids. The instructor commented: "some students, especially in English Literature, worry that their use of quoted poetry or prose will be flagged as plagiarism. Similarly, Linguistics students might feel stressed about the originality of their analysis. To mitigate this, I explain the acceptable use of quotations and proper referencing to reduce unnecessary anxiety."

One instructor shared, "I encourage students to use the similarity reports to identify their mistakes and improve rather than fearing penalties."

3. Impact on Writing Skills Development

Most students and instructors believed that plagiarism detection tools had a positive effect on writing skills. Students indicated a conscious effort to improve paraphrasing, citation practices, and originality in their writing.

One student said:

"I now think about how to phrase ideas in my own words. It has improved my writing style."

The other student explained:

"Since the instructor has implemented strict rules to produce plagiarism free work, it has made my paraphrasing skills improve, and I have also build stronger vocabulary and lessened my grammar mistakes."

Instructors corroborated this observation by adding that over time, students' drafts actually improved significantly in terms of maintenance of academic tone and coherence.

Instructor observed:

"Students have improved the quality of writing to some extent. In Literature, students now focus on crafting original analyses of texts instead of copying existing critiques. In Linguistics, they strive to present their own interpretations of data or theoretical concepts while citing sources properly. However, true improvement requires continuous guidance in academic writing techniques."

4. Challenges and Negative Perceptions

Despite the benefits, several challenges arose. For instance, students had to balance originality with academic standards, especially in using technical terms. Many ESL learners considered the tools too rigid because they would flag legitimate citations or common phrases.

An instructor noted, "There's a tendency to over-rely on these tools, which can discourage creativity and critical thinking."

He also highlighted, "In Literature, these tools sometimes flag common literary expressions or well-known analyses as plagiarism, even though they are part of academic discourse. In

Linguistics, the tools might not always recognize technical terms or standard phrasing in research, leading to misleading similarity reports."

Students also felt frustrated when high scores of similarity appeared for unavoidable overlaps in wording, which, as they said, was not fair. Some participants suggested that clear guidelines and training in using plagiarism detection tools effectively should be provided.

The results also show that plagiarism detection tools greatly affect ESL learners in terms of building awareness and perfecting their writing skills but simultaneously create issues with anxiety, over-dependency, and negative perceptions. Students and instructors alike pointed to the greater integration of the tools into pedagogical practice for maximizing benefits while reducing drawbacks. These findings underline the need for a balanced approach that encourages academic integrity without compromising creativity or confidence.

Discussion:

Results obtained in this study indicate how plagiarism detection tools influence ESL learners. Such a tool, on one hand, can raise students' awareness of plagiarism, improve their writing, and enhance their attitudes towards academic work. On the other hand, it causes stress for some students and leads to misconceptions. This section discuses the results and their meaning for students, instructors, and teaching practices.

The study proved that plagiarism detection tools raise awareness in ESL learners about what constitutes plagiarism. Many students mentioned not knowing how to use the sources appropriately before the employment of tools such as Turnitin. When they saw what these tools flag, then they learn how to cite sources and avoid plagiarism.

These findings confirm other studies identifying a need for explicit plagiarism teaching. Tools alone cannot do the work; explanations of plagiarism rules by instructors are needed. For example, beginners need extra support because they are less aware of the rules than advanced learners. The learning process of all students can be smoothed by using workshops, tutorials, or giving step-by-step feedback.

Plagiarism detection tools shape how students feel about their work. On the positive side, these tools encourage students to take responsibility for their writing. However, many students also said the tools made them feel nervous, especially when they saw high similarity scores.

This mixed reaction indicates that students essentially view these tools as punishments rather than learning aids. Instructors can help change that by teaching students how to take advantage of similarity reports in building their writing, not trying to avoid penalties. By seeing these tools as aids to learning, students should feel less stressed and actually more confident.

The tools also help students improve their writing skills. Many said they became better at paraphrasing, citing sources, and writing in their own words after using plagiarism detection tools. Instructors agreed, noting that students' drafts became clearer and more original over time.

However, the study also found that some students rely too much on the tools. Instead of focusing on understanding writing rules, they focus on reducing their similarity scores. This can lead to shallow changes, such as replacing words, without truly improving their writing. To address this, instructors can ask students to explain the changes they make after reviewing their similarity reports. This approach encourages deeper learning and helps students build long-term skills.

While the plagiarism detecting tools help, they too have become a challenge to students. Many students struggle in balancing originality with academic requirements, especially in using technical terminologies. Sometimes, they flag off common phrases and correctly cited texts, which students feel is unfair.

This frustration underlines the need for the tools to be further improved to accurately capture differences in context. The developers should refine the tools further to be more accurate at recognizing proper citations or unavoidable overlaps in phrasing. It is also an instructor's role to teach students how to contextualize similarity scores and successfully address flagged issues.

Another challenge is that students often see these tools as rigid or punitive. They feel the tools constrain their creativity and make them even afraid to try things with the language. Instructors are able to reframe these tools as co-agents in the learning process-one that helps students grow instead of police them.

Conclusion:

This study shows how plagiarism detection tools impact ESL learners awareness, their writing skills and promotes responsibility.On the other hand, it can also be a source of stress, especially when students find it hard to balance originality with academic rules.

In this regard, plagiarism detection tools should be introduced, together with clear supportive teaching methods. Teachers should also present these tools as useful learning tools and not punishments; in this way, students will focus on skill building, not reducing the percentage of similarity.

Besides this, it can be effective, teaching that combines these to really help the students get the most from them. In such a way, ESL learners can improve their writing, develop more confidence, and acquire better understanding regarding issues on academic honesty. All these can make these tools useful to promote a favorable learning environment for ESL students.

Recommendations:

These findings would suggest the following in terms of improvement:

1. Awareness of plagiarism detection: The institutes should consider the needs to improve the content quality of their students and should focus on conducting seminars or research workshops to tackle this concerning matter of plagiarism.
2. Couple Tools with Teaching: Plagiarism detection tools should be used coupled with teaching on the principles of paraphrasing, citation, and originality. The students need assistance in learning from what the tool flags, including how to correct those mistakes.
3. Less Stress: Instructors should introduce the similarity reports as processes, not as a target to punish the students. The non-punitive use of these detection devices would allow students to shift the focus towards learning.
4. Emphasize Deep Learning: Rather than merely achieving low scores, students need to be encouraged to think more reflectively about the writing they submit. Activities in peer review will let students understand the types of changes they make.

Plagiarism detection tools are having a huge impact on ESL learners. While the tools help students comprehend plagiarism and improve their writing, they also simultaneously build fear and create misunderstandings among them. Instructors should employ these tools within a greater strategy of teaching, focusing both on learning and building confidence. It is by creating this supportive environment that such tools become powerful aids in helping ESL learners succeed.

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