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## The EFL Students' Perceptions on the Plagiarism in Writing Thesis Proposals: A Case Study

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### Abstract

This study aimed to investigate the plagiarism phenomenon in thesis proposal writing by EFL students of UIN Raden Fatah Palembang through their perceptions. The data of this qualitative case study were obtained through interviews with the research participants. They were selected based on the results of the Turnitin plagiarism checker for their thesis proposals. Thematic analysis was carried out to analyze the research data. We found that the students had similar perceptions of plagiarism, both in general and academic writing contexts, but they had various perceptions of the forms of plagiarism. Some of them were unaware of committing plagiarism in their thesis proposals. They were familiar with the term paraphrasing to avoid plagiarism, but they could not paraphrase the quotations properly in writing their proposals. Unawareness about plagiarism, lack of knowledge and practice for proper paraphrasing, getting stuck while writing, laziness in writing, and easiness of *getting* information from the internet were the main contributing factors why they committed plagiarism in their works.

### Keywords

internet, students' perceptions, plagiarism, thesis proposal writing

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## Introduction

In today's world, the accessibility to find pieces of information is wide open so that theories from experts can be obtained through technological assistance. But unfortunately, it means the possibility of being a plagiarist is wider too. Moreover, digital sources are a double-edged tip (Robert, 2008). In this case, students are not only easy to find the supporting data that is provided from the digital sources but also it may facilitate the academic writing product to be detected as plagiarism. However, the internet has provided short-cut access in helping them collect their research data. Therefore, the researchers must be knowledgeable in avoiding plagiarism as academic misconduct throughout their research writing project.

In academic writing, dishonesty is considered one of the significant issues of academic dishonesty that might be widespread to be conscious or unconscious actions among the students. For example, Bretag et al. (2011, as cited in Orim, 2017) determined academic dishonesty as the acting of collusion, malpractice on examination, cheating on someone's task, taking other students' assignment, presenting incorrect data, paying another person service to finish the task, and taking an assignment from the online source. In this case, taking someone's work means stealing someone's ideas through their work which is part of plagiarism. Furthermore, Ampuni et al. (2019) research proved that plagiarism is the second most common type of academic dishonesty among university students. To this point, this phenomenon might be possible to be rampant unexpectedly in the students' writing works, with no exception, including among the EFL undergraduate students. In brief, plagiarism is becoming the most prevalent challenge in academic writing. For example, when students construct their writing assessment, such as in the students' writing essays, papers, reports, thesis proposal writing, thesis, and dissertations.

There have been several factors contributing to this behaviour happening all the time. Equally important, Devlin and Gray (2007) argued in their finding of why university students in Australia are becoming plagiarists and have discovered some supporting reasons such as inadequate admission criteria, less understanding about plagiarism, weak academic writing skills, and learning factors, laziness, and external pressure. All those results of the research give us the fact that the native speakers who speak and write English correctly as their mother tongue is possible to behave plagiarism. In other words, the native speakers are struggling and having some difficulties in the academic writing practice to avoid plagiarism in their task. As a result, it is not close to the chance of the same plagiarism factors that can also exist in the EFL students' scope.

Besides, concerning the factors supporting the plagiarism attitude, there must be a problem faced by the EFL students while constructing their research work. In this phase, language turns out to be a difficulty for the EFL writers in academia. Heitman and Litewka (2011) argued that many non-native English speakers have problems with their writing because of plenty of English writing sources and articles (as cited in Maimunah et al., 2018). Therefore, the plagiarism attitude is potentially easier to capture in a higher percentage of the EFL students' works since they have to avoid it due to their limited English proficiency skills.

In connection with the plagiarism phenomenon in academia, we conducted a preliminary study at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang in the English Education Study Program. The preliminary study aimed to confirm the plagiarism behaviours occurring in the students writing assessment, particularly the thesis proposal writing. In practice, it was conducted by having a personal, informal interview with one lecturer of English Education major at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang, who is responsible for checking all the thesis proposal writing data by using the plagiarism checker Turnitin. The checking process is obligated to all the EFL undergraduate students as one of the requirements before they begin to perform the seminar proposal. In the interview, the EFL lecturer mentioned that many EFL undergraduate students checked their proposals in Turnitin's plagiarism checker and were detected as plagiarists. The data showed that in the academic year 2020/2021, 46 percent of students submitted their proposals which got more than 30 percent of the maximum plagiarism allowed in that major. English Education Study Program regulates the policy of 30 percent as the maximum percentage of plagiarism allowed. Furthermore, some students can decrease the percentage of their plagiarism by having the checking process repeatedly (Personal communication, June 28 2021). Based on the interview results, it was assumed that many EFL undergraduate students were not yet aware of the crucial issue of plagiarism in their thesis proposal writing.

To ensure the lecturer's statement, English Education major of UIN Raden Fatah Palembang about plagiarism in EFL undergraduate students' thesis proposal writing. Therefore, we randomly conducted the informal interview with two students who were still constructing their proposals. The interview questions explore the students' points of view on the concept of plagiarism in the writing context. The first interviewee stated that she knew the definition of plagiarism in general, but she had no strong feeling about the whole plagiarism concept in the writing field. Furthermore, the second interviewee argued that she doubted the plagiarism concept. In addition, they could not ensure their work would be free from a higher percentage of plagiarism. (Personal communication, March 17 2021). Hence, in this research, we analyzed the perceptions of EFL undergraduate students majoring in Education major of UIN Raden Fatah Palembang about the existence of plagiarism in their writing proposals. The guiding question was: What were the EFL students' perceptions of the plagiarism detected in their final thesis proposal writing?

## **Methodology**

### ***Research design, site, and participants***

We used a qualitative approach to answer the research question in this study. Creswell (2014) described qualitative research as investigating and understanding the meaning of a particular issue in a human's life explained by the group or somebody's point of view. Also, Yin (2011) stated that the researchers represent and capture the participants' perspectives through the phenomenon in qualitative research. The qualitative method may describe someone's understanding of a specific thing or problem based on their experience. Hence, we used the qualitative method in this research because it aimed at our need to investigate the students' perceptions of plagiarism in their thesis proposal writing.

English Education Study Program of UIN Raden Fatah Palembang was the site of this study. Purposeful sampling was chosen to determine the appropriate participants for this research. Cresswell (2013) argued that purposeful sampling enables the researchers to select the research site and participants to get specific information from the participant's understanding of the study's research question. Raco (2010) argued the small scope of the individual as the sample will help collect in-depth analysis results of the study. It emphasizes that purposeful sampling acquires credibility, quality, and detailed information needed in this research.

The participants were taken from the ninth-semester students of the English Education Study Program of UIN Raden Fatah Palembang who have completed their thesis proposal for the seminar on research proposal. They were selected based on the random rate of plagiarism in their proposals. Therefore, the researchers interviewed five students with more than 30% Turnitin plagiarism detected in their proposals (the maximum plagiarism percentage allowed by the English Education Study Program of UIN Raden Fatah Palembang) for this study. Therefore, we investigated the students' perceptions of plagiarism in their final thesis proposal writing.

### ***Data collection and analysis***

To conduct this research, we collected the data by interviewing EFL students of the English Education Study Program of UIN Raden Fatah Palembang. The interview questions saw the aspects of students' understanding of the plagiarism concept, such as their knowledge of defining plagiarism behaviour, their experience in the plagiarism action, and factor affecting plagiarism. Furthermore, from their point of view about the plagiarism concept in general, there was also a link to see their perceptions about plagiarism in academic writing, which was detected in their final thesis proposal.

A semi-structured interview was used to obtain the research data. Galletta (2013) defined the semi-structured interview as the interview design in which the list of questions has already been organized. Still, it does not close a chance of the interviewer to create some unplanned sub-questions which direct on the spot wisely and based on the theory. In a semi-structured design, the interview questions were used to collect the data needed about the students' perception of plagiarism in their thesis proposal writing. We used a mobile phone recorder to record all the discussions during the interview. Besides, there was some documentation taken in the form of pictures.

Then, some experts interpreted and linked the data from students' answers to the basic concept theory about plagiarism. Finally, thematic analysis was used to process the findings of this study. Thematic analysis is the strategy of analyzing the data in detail by recognizing the themes to interpret the meaning of the data into descriptions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Maguire and Delahunt (2017) explained six steps in thematic analysis: familiarizing with the data, coding the data, classifying the themes, reviewing the themes, and writing up the finding. Therefore in analyzing the findings of this study, we used these six steps of thematic analysis.

The first step was becoming familiar with the data. In this step, we became familiar with the data collected in the interview session. Creswell (2014) argued the transformation of

data audio recording into text is called transcription. We wrote the transcriptions of the interview data recorded in the audio recording. We read the transcripts to identify the data as the preliminary ideas of the student's perception of plagiarism in their thesis proposal writing.

The second was generating the initial code. In this step, we coded the data to point out the outline of each statement from the participants in the interview. Rossman and Rallis (2012) described organizing data by selecting chunks and putting data in the same category as coding procedures. Therefore, through this step, we organized all the answers by giving the outline. We identified the idea of each statement from the participants. The codes given helped us to view at a glance the relation of the students' answers to the research questions of this study.

The third step was searching for the themes. In this step, we separated the codes into the same theme categories that link to the students' perceptions of plagiarism behaviour. First, the theme perceptions about plagiarism were discussed in terms of the students' knowledge of the plagiarism concept, factors contributing, and the students' experiences with plagiarism. Then, we gathered previous codes that link to the appropriate theme classification. The fourth step was reviewing the themes. In this step, we reviewed each theme classification provided in the previous step that has been clear to construct. Then we ensured each element of the theme linked to the research questions of this study, and each code was associated with the appropriate theme. On the other hand, we also removed and added some other themes or sub-themes which were needed. Besides, this phase determined the theme overview representing the data's deep meaning. The fifth step was defining the themes. In this step, the final themes provided were interpreted in detail. This step was aimed at understanding and identifying what the themes mean. It also indicated the data of each participant's perceptions of plagiarism in their thesis proposal writing. The last step was writing up. In this final step, we wrote up the result of the analysis as the report of this study. The findings were about all the participants' perceptions toward plagiarism in their thesis proposal writing. Therefore, in this session, we wrote the perceptions in well-organized descriptions.

### ***Trustworthiness***

Trustworthiness was used to ensure the accuracy of the interpretation of the findings. Bloomberg and Volpe (2019) concluded that trustworthiness emphasizes the value and consequence of qualitative research. Trustworthiness was used to convince the accuracy of the study's findings. Creswell (2014) argued that validity strategies must be used to check the accuracy of the findings in the qualitative study. There are eight elements of strategies in terms of triangulation, member checking, thick description to convey the finding, clarifying the writer's bias in the study, presenting negative or discrepant information, spending prolonged time, peer debriefing, and the external auditor. In this study, we used the member-checking strategy to cross-check and interpret the validity of the finding. This term means the practice of the researcher's return back the summary of the interview result to the informant to check and confirm the interview session report (Raco, 2010). In the same way, Creswell and Creswell (2018) clarified that member checking enables offering the

informant chance to ensure the meaning of the data interview's correctness and value along the analysis process. We used a member-checking strategy to interpret the findings of this study to become accurate and credible.

### Findings

Based on the data gathered from the interview, we discovered some perceptions of the EFL students about plagiarism detected in their thesis proposals.

#### *EFL Students' perceptions of the plagiarism detected in their thesis proposal*

We found some perceptions of the students about plagiarism detected in their final thesis proposal. Thus, in analyzing the interview data, we classified the themes and codes as follows.

**Table 1.** *Themes and codes of EFL students' perceptions of the plagiarism detected in their thesis proposal*

No	Themes	Codes
1	Students' understanding of plagiarism	Most students had the same understanding of defining plagiarism in general and academic writing contexts. All of them agreed that committing plagiarism was considered an adverse action. Some of them believed that in academic writing, plagiarism occurred with intention. However, some others said that it could occur without intention.
2.	Students' knowledge about plagiarism forms	Most had no idea and were doubtful about plagiarism in general and in-text forms. All of them agreed that copying and pasting were plagiarism of text forms. Some of them were aware that they started conducting plagiarism when they started to work on their thesis proposal. Most of them felt that they never conducted plagiarism in their works. Most of them thought that the act of copying and pasting was a common plagiarism form in their works. Most of them could clearly define the meaning of paraphrasing, but they could not paraphrase properly. Most of the students had no idea about the patchwriting term.
3	Students' perceptions of plagiarism factors	Most of them lacked awareness about plagiarism and knowledge of proper paraphrasing. Most of them were lazy to do their writing work. Most of them lack time to do their writing work. Most of them got stuck during writing. Most of them could get information or data from the internet quickly.
4	Students' plagiarism experiences in writing their thesis proposal	Most of them admitted that they plagiarized in writing their thesis proposals. Most of them realized that Turnitin, a plagiarism checker, would detect the act of plagiarism in their thesis proposals. Most did not paraphrase the quotations properly when working on their thesis proposals.

*Students' understanding of plagiarism contexts*

It showed that the EFL undergraduate students had the same understanding of defining plagiarism in general. Most of them had the same idea to explain what plagiarism is. They delivered their understanding in various statements, as quoted from the interview session,

YL: "In my view, plagiarism is the act of imitating an existing concept. There are few examples of plagiarism such as plagiarism that occurs in the writing field, composing the song, designing something, etc."

SE: "Okay, I think that plagiarism, in general, is defined as the act of duplicating someone's work. It includes the act of copy-pasting and taking other people's work and claiming it as their own. We can consider that the action of someone duplicating a whole idea of somebody is called plagiarism."

NP, EM, and NB had the same explanation. They had the same point in understanding and defining plagiarism. They considered the main idea of plagiarism as the act of imitating, copying, pasting, and taking the existing concept from others who claimed that idea as their own while putting aside the source. In addition, most of them could give several examples of plagiarism actions in various fields. It showed their understanding of plagiarism. Plagiarism could occur in the academic writing field. Most of the students had the same understanding of the definition and examples of plagiarism in academic writing. However, one of the students gave a clear answer about plagiarism in academic writing.

NP: "It is the same as my previous statement, but if the plagiarism in academic aspect may refer to the act of plagiarism that occurs primarily in the writing field. We could define it as the act of copy-pasting other's writing work and claiming it as our own without paraphrasing and giving credit to the real author. For example, it occurs in writing the thesis, journal, paper, and other academic writing products.

A similar answer came from two students. They did not state the example of plagiarism in the academic writing context; they just mentioned the term plagiarism in the academic writing context as the act of copying and pasting or imitating without giving credit to the original. The student named YL said that,

YL: "In my opinion, plagiarism issue in academic context refers to the plagiarism in the writing field. It is the act of copying and imitating someone's writing work without giving credit to the original author. For example, imitating a few lines or a whole work of others is considered plagiarism."

The student, SE, provided the same explanation. Other participants only stated that the action of plagiarism in academic writing referred to the plagiarism that occurred in the

writing works. They did not give a precise definition, but they gave some examples to support their vague statement about the definition. For instance, one student, EM, said that,

EM: "I think plagiarism existed in the academic context refers to the plagiarism detected in someone's written work such as in thesis, journal, essay, or paper. It is terrible if there is a lot of plagiarism in our academic writing."

Furthermore, a similar answer came from a student called NB. From all of their answers in the interview session, we assumed that they understood the term plagiarism in the academic context enough. However, they were confused and doubtful to give a clear and complete explanation related to the definition and example of it. Related to the act of plagiarism in the writing field, all students agreed and stated that plagiarism in the writing context is considered an adverse action. For example, student YL said,

YL: "Plagiarism is a negative behaviour that must be avoided. In addition, it is detrimental to the person who has the original written work. Therefore, I believe that plagiarism actions in the academic writing context could be considered as the criminal acts of piracy and thievery."

In addition, the students called EM, SE, NB, and NP deal with the same point of view, the existence of plagiarism action in writing could not be justified. In another perception, two out of five students believed that plagiarism action in writing occurred only because of the intention of the writer. As the student called SE said,

SE: "I disagree if plagiarism unintentionally occurs in someone's writing work. I think that the writer has realized what they write. They know that their contents are taken from many references, but they use quotations without paraphrasing them in their work. They are lazy to paraphrase and afraid that their paraphrasing will change the meaning. These reasons make me believe plagiarism occurs with the writer's full awareness and intention."

In addition, the student's initial YL stated the same opinion as SE. On the other side point of view, three out of five students believed that the action of plagiarism in the writing work might occur intentionally and unintentionally from the writer. For instance, the student, NP said,

NP: "I disagree. I think we could consider this behavior to happen in both conditions. It could be with or without intention. We tend to get stuck in developing the idea in our writing. While seeing some references, we decide not to paraphrase a few lines or maybe in whole and directly put it in our writing. On the other case, plagiarism can also occur in our writing unintentionally. Sometimes we have already tried our best to develop the idea in our writing, trying to do paraphrasing. We think it will not be detected as plagiarism."



Unfortunately, a plagiarism checker detects similarities between our writing to other people's work."

Further, EM and NB also deal with the same idea. Hence, it could be concluded that all the students had different perceptions about the existence of plagiarism in their writing works.

### *Students' knowledge about plagiarism forms*

Based on the data gathered from the interview, only one student could mention the correct form of plagiarism in the general context. However, it could be seen from her answer that she was also doubtful about what they had stated. As explained by the student initially, YL.

YL: "I do not understand the exact kinds of plagiarism. Suppose I could say that the kinds of plagiarism are divided into two categories. It may be plagiarism that occurs in the writing context and plagiarising somebody's idea in all aspects." (Personal communication, September 1, 2021).

Furthermore, most of the students did not make sure if the actions of plagiarism could be classified into several forms. As student EM said,

EM: "I do not know if the plagiarism actions are classified into several forms. I know that plagiarism occurs in the writing context."

On the other hand, another answer showed that two out of five students had stated that they indeed had no idea about the general forms of plagiarism. As the initial student, SE said,

SE: "I am sorry; I think I have no idea that plagiarism actions could be categorized into several types."

Most students are only familiar with the form of plagiarism in the writing context. Only one student could mention all of the plagiarism forms. In another issue about plagiarism in writing forms, the data gathered showed that all students agreed to mention that the act of copying and pasting is the form of plagiarism in writing. Some of them could mention the forms of plagiarism in the academic writing context. As stated by the students, YL and EM,

YL: "Perhaps, the categories of plagiarism of text include copy-pasting a few lines from the text, literal copying, and paraphrasing the text without the attribution to the real author."

EM: "The same idea as the previous question, I do not know if the plagiarism of text type is also divided into several categories. I think the action of copy-pasting a few lines of somebody's quotation and literal copying duplicates a whole statement without modifying them with or without citing the source."

Furthermore, one student could mention the two types of plagiarism in writing. This student, NP said,

NP: "I see. In my opinion, first is the act of copy-pasting a few or complete statements in somebody's written work without paraphrasing and giving the attribution to the writer. Second, the act of taking a whole of somebody's work, publishing, and claiming it as our own."

Three students could mention only one form, copy-pasting term, without specific explanation. In short, the students' answers showed they had less knowledge of the exact forms of text plagiarism. We also discovered that most students admitted they committed plagiarism by copying and pasting their writings. The student YL argued,

YL: "I will not deny that I did plagiarism through some of my writing tasks during my university year. I think that I frequently did the copy-paste type. I liked to copy-paste a few lines from someone's writing work which I got from my friend's work or the internet."

In contradiction to the previous answers, one student did not think that she did plagiarism action within her all her writing projects. As argued by the student of EM said,

EM: "I do not think that I did plagiarism in all my writing works. Well, I have no idea about that."

Furthermore, three students admitted they had had plagiarism experience writing their thesis proposals, especially in chapters one and 2. They had difficulties in paraphrasing the quotations. Thus, copying-pasting was the solution to help them out. They realized copying and pasting would cause high plagiarism in their proposal. The student named NP said,

NP: "I start to realize myself doing plagiarism while constructing my thesis proposal, especially in writing chapter 2. I have difficulties in paraphrasing the theories from the experts. So, I decided to copy-paste the statements without doing the paraphrasing, but I still put the credit to the real author. As a result of what I have done, the plagiarism checker detects the plagiarism in my proposal."

Most of the students' answers showed the fact that most of them realized that they conducted plagiarism consciously in writing their thesis proposals. They admitted that they copied and pasted someone's statement directly through their projects. All the students had the same idea in defining the term paraphrasing, in which they focus on the keyword modifying somebody's, people, or expert statements to be quoted by stating into their sentences. On the other hand, all of them forgot to state putting credit to the source part of paraphrasing the term definition. For instance, the students YL and EM said,

YL: "As far as I know, paraphrasing is modifying somebody's statements by using our sentences and new grammatical structure."

EM: "In my opinion, I could define paraphrasing as modifying the quotation to be quoted within our work without changing the meaning of the statements from the expert."

The last, more complete explanation came from a student named NB, who said,

NB: "Paraphrasing is the action of the writer modifying the quotation from the experts or other writing work by changing the grammatical structure and some words into synonyms. Paraphrasing is needed to avoid our work having the same content as others. We modify the quotation, but we need to keep the statements with the same point delivered from the source."

Patchwriting or improper paraphrasing had the same meaning as paraphrasing in the writing context. The interview sessions showed that most students had no idea and had never heard about the patchwriting term. For example, as YL and EM said,

YL: "This is the first time I hear about patchwriting. Therefore, I cannot explain it."

EM: "I have not heard about that. Well, I am sorry. I have no idea about that."

Similarly, SE, NP, and NB came up with the same arguments about the patchwriting term. Thus, the students' answers concluded that they were unfamiliar with the term patchwriting as part of plagiarism of text form.

### *Students' perceptions of plagiarism factors*

Based on the data gathered, one of the students mentioned three main factors that could be considered as the background of somebody to plagiarism in their work. Such as being lazy to finish the writing work, lack of time, and being stuck to developing the idea for their writing content. The student YL said,

YL: "If I could mention the factors why someone does plagiarism because they are lazy and like to postpone their writing task. Therefore, the easiest thing they could do to finish their writing work by copy-pasting the information and data from others' writing. The other factors are lack of time to do the writing work and having no idea about the topic being discussed. So they take the data needed from the internet and put them on as their original writing."

In addition, the internet, which provides a lot of data and sources, could be the factor that contributed to the plagiarism action. The student, SE said,

SE: "The person doing the plagiarism is lazy to do the paraphrasing. We are afraid to modify the quotations. In this technological advancement era, the internet has provided us easy access to get data for our work."

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Lack of awareness and knowledge to paraphrase correctly could contribute to plagiarism. It was mentioned by EM and NB that said,

EM: "Perhaps lack of knowledge of how to do the proper paraphrasing, lazy to do their task, have no enough time to brainstorm about what is going to be discussed in their writing, and have no idea about the fatal risk of committing plagiarism."

NB: "Perhaps, we have a lack of knowledge about paraphrasing terms. We just know the term but do not know how to do it."

One student had a complete and clear explanation of the plagiarism factors. It was explained in one student's statement.

NP: "I think it happens because we have less knowing how to do the proper paraphrasing and the concept of plagiarism in this technological advancement era. We are easy to find the data needed from the internet. But unfortunately, it makes us copy-paste directly when we get stuck in writing. We just directly take from many sources without paraphrasing."

#### ***Students' plagiarism experiences in writing the proposal***

Most of the students admitted that they conducted plagiarism in writing their thesis proposals. They did not realize the impact of the plagiarism score percentage in their proposal. For instance, the student NB said,

NB: "Yes, I admitted it was challenging to paraphrase the theories for my proposal. I was afraid to change the points if I did not paraphrase them properly. I realized that the plagiarism checker would detect it. I felt guilty and disappointed when my proposal was getting more than 30% plagiarism."

Furthermore, in specific clarification, the student called NP said,

NP: "To be honest, in writing my proposal, especially chapter 2, I did not paraphrase the statements from others. I was shocked and regretful when the plagiarism checker detected many plagiarisms in my proposal."

EM: "I was shocked when the plagiarism checker indicated that my proposal had many plagiarisms because, in the process of writing that proposal, I have tried my best to paraphrase the quotation to avoid plagiarism."

Most students stated that their lack of knowledge of proper paraphrasing could be the main reason behind the plagiarism detected in their works. The student's initial EM said,

EM: "Sometimes, I felt confused about paraphrasing the quotation within the writing process. Therefore, if I got stuck in paraphrasing, I only changed some words

from the quotation by using the synonym and changed the grammatical structure."

Getting stuck to finding the appropriate word choice and changing the statement without modifying the meaning became part of the difficulty in paraphrasing the quotation. The students were afraid to paraphrase the statements from the expert, but they still put credit to the expert in the proposal. NB and SE said,

NB: "The first thing is that I was confused about how to paraphrase the original theory. I was getting stuck on finding the appropriate word choices while modifying them into my own."

SE: "I have difficulty paraphrasing the statements that I quoted. When I tried to paraphrase using my sentences, I was afraid to change the meaning of that statements."

### **Discussion**

The first perceptions deal with the student's understanding of plagiarism's meaning in general and academic writing. The students had various statements in defining plagiarism. Generally, most students agree plagiarism is the action of imitating, copying, and stealing the existing concept of others' work without acknowledging the sources. This result was almost in line with Morris et al. (2013), who that argued plagiarism presents the act of claiming somebody's work to be used by do not put the attribution, and this term consists of the written forms, photos, charts, and ideas that can be plagiarized. The research result also showed that most students agreed to state plagiarism in academic writing refers to the action of copying and pasting, imitating somebody's written work without giving credit to the source. Concerning this understanding, however, it argued in different terminologies, and the result was in line with the experts' definitions of plagiarism in the writing context. Pecorari (2008) stated plagiarism in writing context points as textual plagiarism, which means reproducing another person's ideas and words without attributing the proper source. Park (2003) argued plagiarism is stealing another person's thoughts and publishing that work as their own without citing the source. Those students' perceptions indeed were not having the same statements as the experts, but what the student tried to clarify was having the same point toward the experts.

All of the students believe that plagiarism is an adverse action. Some of them believed that plagiarism occurred in students' writing intentionally. Some other students believed that plagiarism could happen with or without intention. Regarding this result, Carrol (2002) defined plagiarism as an action that is either on purpose or accidentally taking advantage of handing over someone's work. In short, plagiarism may happen in somebody's written work in both ways.

Most students stated that they did not know about the forms of plagiarism in general. It was in line with Roig (2015) that two familiar categories of plagiarism must be recognized in the academic scope. First is the plagiarism of ideas. In addition, they discussed their understanding of the form of plagiarism in the writing field. Most students were

doubtful and had no idea about that. They could only guess that copy, and pasting terms are part of plagiarism in writing. Debnath (2016) stated that copying-pasting, literal copying, improper paraphrasing, and text recycling are part of plagiarism of text forms. Thus, it showed that the students have less knowledge about the type of plagiarism, either in general form or in the form of text plagiarism.

The findings revealed that most students defined paraphrasing as modifying somebody's, people's, or experts' statements to be quoted by stating them in their sentences. Unfortunately, none complete their definition by inserting the phrase of putting credit to the source. Forgetting the statement of putting credit to the source might refer to the type of plagiarism of text about improper paraphrasing. It was in line with Debnath (2016), who stated one of the plagiarism of text form is improper paraphrasing which is slightly reproducing somebody's written work by having verbatim paraphrasing to the statement without any changing of the meaning and putting aside the credit to the original author. It was also explained by Hirvela and Du (2013) that proper paraphrasing is the activity of presenting the statement of someone's ideas by rewriting them with different phrases to create a new type of writing form while putting the original citation. Most students had no idea about patchwriting terms. Roig (2015) argued that restating statements from one or some sources, adding, removing, and changing some words in synonyms. However, building a new grammatical structure without any significant changes to the actual source is patchwriting. Thus, it could be concluded that most students were confused about paraphrasing and had less knowledge about patchwriting. Their ideas about these two terms might link to one of the leading causes of their high plagiarism rate.

Most of the students believed that they had a lack of knowledge to do proper paraphrasing, were too lazy to paraphrase their writing, lack of awareness about plagiarism and how to avoid it, lack of time to finish the writing, being stuck to developing the idea in their writing and easy to get the data from the internet were considered as the contributing factors of their plagiarism. Some of the factors revealed were in line with Husain et al. (2017), that concluded five factors influencing plagiarism such as institutional, academic, external, personal, and technological factors. In the explanation, lack of time, laziness, lack of awareness about plagiarism, and avoiding that plagiarism link to the explanation of the personal factors. In addition, easy to get the data from the internet refers to the explanation of the technological factors.

Most of the students were aware of the plagiarism existence in their proposals. Some of them admitted that they committed plagiarism through their writing, but some other students were unaware of committing plagiarism. It indicated that plagiarism could happen consciously and unconsciously in the students' writing. It is in line with Carrol's statement that plagiarism could exist on purpose or accidentally take advantage of handing over someone's work (2002). Most students were shocked, knowing their proposal had a high plagiarism rate. In contrast to the previous perceptions that showed their awareness of plagiarism in their writing, they were still shocked knowing that their works got a high rate plagiarism score from the Turnitin plagiarism checker. Most students mentioned their paraphrasing strategies, such as omitting some words, changing the words to be quoted with synonyms, and modifying the grammatical structure. These were not the proper paraphrasing strategies. Roig (2015) stated restating statements from one or some sources

while only adding, removing, or changing some words in synonyms. However, building a new grammatical structure without any significant changes to the actual source is patchwriting. Copying statements from several different sources to be quoted with some modification on one or two is called inappropriate paraphrasing. To sum up, the perceptions of the students toward their difficulties in paraphrasing showed that they had a poor understanding of paraphrasing practice which led to the high rate of plagiarism scores in their thesis proposal.

### **Conclusion**

Some conclusions could be drawn about students' perceptions of plagiarism in their thesis proposals. First, the students had similar perceptions about plagiarism in general and in academic writing contexts. Second, most of them had various perceptions of plagiarism forms. Third, some students were aware, while others were unaware of committing plagiarism within their thesis proposal. Third, they were familiar with the term paraphrasing to avoid plagiarism in their writing, but they could not paraphrase the quotations properly. Fourth, there were several contributing factors to plagiarism in the students' works, such as lack of awareness and knowledge about plagiarism and strategies for proper paraphrasing, getting stuck while writing, laziness in writing, and easiness of *getting* information from the internet.

We pointed out some suggestions, such as the students should be more aware and knowledgeable about plagiarism and must learn how to paraphrase quotations properly in their writing. The lecturers should ensure the students' comprehension of plagiarism and paraphrasing and give strict punishment for those who have more than 30 % plagiarism in their works. Future researchers interested in this study's topic could explore the forms of plagiarism in students' academic writings. Thus, the findings would be more varied, and plagiarism studies would be more profound and developed.

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