

PORTRAYING ACADEMIC WRITING APTITUDE AND THE PLAGIARISM ISSUES AMONG EFL STUDENTS

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Abstract: This article is the research result of teaching-learning Academic Writing to English Students Department, UNG in the fourth semester of 2020. This research objective is to enrich applying theories accessed from online books and international Journals by avoiding plagiarism in students' writing essays as theoretical bases of their research. Besides, they would be able to communicate in the target language of writing skill as a maximum standard. A qualitative rubric was used to assess 25 students' essays. The rubric had three categories: (a) the ability to choose relevant ideas in introductory sentences before quoting, (b) the accuracy of diction selection, and (c) the ability to link ideas in well-written sentences after choosing quotations or paraphrases. The results showed that 15 students (60%) received A, followed by 5 students (20%) received A-, 3 students (12%) received B+, and 2 students (8%) received C.

Keywords: *academic writing; plagiarism; teaching.*

INTRODUCTION

Students who wish to earn a bachelor's, master's, or doctoral degree at the college level are typically required to complete some form of scientific work. This may involve conducting original research, writing a research paper, or completing a laboratory course. Writing scientific papers is a common task for students in higher education. Students are often required to write essays, conduct research, and report their findings in the form of academic papers. These papers may include skripsi, thesis, or dissertation, which are all types of scientific work.

The research papers that students write have multiple chapters, one of which is a chapter that includes the opinions of experts in the field, known upon its several terms such as Theoretical Basis/Framework of Review of Literature chapter, and background chapter. Students are required to record the experts' viewpoints relevant to their research in these chapters. These experts'

opinions are intended to reinforce existing theories and organize knowledge to serve as a roadmap for future research. However, it is usually an issue for students to arrange the experts' ideas as Page (Lihawa, 2022) argued that students are struggling to write history essays, they are often knowledgeable about the subject matter well but unable to write in a coherent way. This can be because they do not know how to connect facts and information they have jumbled in their thoughts to form a narrative. As a result, their essays can be dry and boring, and they may not communicate their ideas effectively. Wilang et al. (2018) revealed that students were worried about the process of research paper writing including writing theoretical chapters and their purposes, and most were not sure how to start writing them. It is also found (Lihawa, 2022) from the information of previous research evaluation conducted on the 1st March 2022 that 19 students' writings of class E in the second semester were

dominated by 12 students writing 2 to 5 sentences in an hour. Besides, they were confused about what ideas were written.

In line with the problem, most EFL students of the English Language Department of UNG prefer the easiest way to take ideas from most other students' theses on the internet. Some of them only changed the research object and slightly reformulated the title, copying and pasting most of the paragraphs in their theoretical basis. When a thesis is submitted for examination, the examiner may use a plagiarism detection tool like Turnitin to check for unoriginal content. If the examiner finds that the thesis contains plagiarized material, the student's work will not be accepted. This can cause the student to have difficulty repairing the thesis, as they will need to compile new ideas and rewrite large sections of the paper. This can take a significant amount of time and may delay the student's study completion. It was stated by King (2023) that as more students use the internet for research and information, plagiarism is becoming a bigger problem in higher education. The quantity of readily available information online has made it simpler for students to copy and paste information from other sources without properly attributing it. Due to this, there has been an increase in instances of plagiarism, which can have detrimental effects on students such as failing grades, expulsion, and harm to their reputation in the workplace. In order to combat plagiarism and maintain academic integrity, higher education institutions are enacting stricter standards and stronger sanctions. Mutalib, *et al.* (2023) conclude that a significant number of EFL students misapplied sources and citations in their theses, therefore education and awareness are essential to addressing the plagiarism issue (Roig, 2018). Thus, it is imperative for lecturers to expose students to theories in arranging sources of ideas in academic writing class. Scientific works have certain characteristics in terms of several aspects, including a variety of language, objective, systematic, logical, and based on facts, and following this recommendation students' works can meet the demands of good academic writing (Braslauskas, 2021).

In general, from a technical point of view, many students have writing problems. First, one of the challenges students face is the drawn-out process of developing a topic for a written scientific report. Page (in Lihawa, 2022) argued some writers spend so much on their introductions that they lose readers' interest before they get to

the main point of the essays. As Hoang *et al.* (2023) in their research result on the analysis of errors and survey data revealed that the most common organization errors were incoherence which made up the highest percentage, and then poor topic sentence, disunity, poor conclusion, and no conclusion at all. Additional reasons were due to lack of writing practice and local language influences.

These writing problems and complex ideas of avoiding the long process of starting this skill are determined by knowledge and skills of writing and students' experience and responses in language communication. The more language communication students have, the more experience and easier they get to start writing scientific works.

The second problem for students is avoiding plagiarism in writing. Most of the time, students unknowingly engage in plagiarism; for instance, they occasionally use the phrases and concepts of experts when coming up with introduction lines. For even more serious offenses, students take large sections of text from someone else and pass it off without acknowledging the main source. Ashikuzzaman *et al.* (2018) explained that plagiarism can range from a minor offense, such as failing to cite a source, to a more serious offense, such as duplicating large sections of a text. Moreover, one of the key causes is the development of technical tools that make it simpler to copy and paste information from the internet, which results in the development of screen-based thinking (Chaika, 2023). The emphasis on the same idea from Doostyar and Sujatha (2023) that plagiarism in written form is also known as textual plagiarism. Students and researchers both frequently engage in this type of plagiarism when writing coursework and research articles.

The effects of freely using technology, the almost same problems occur to some English Language Department students of UNG, either undergraduate or postgraduate students who do not have adequate ability to compose introductory sentences using their own words prior quotations to bridge their ideas and the experts'. It is because ESL students often face a number of challenges with things like minor vocabulary mastery, poor grammar and spelling, preparedness, and exposure to books and reading materials (Moses & Mohamad, 2019). These English students find it difficult to connect the quotes they select and the key point's explanation of the notion because

they have a limited amount of accurate vocabulary with which to express their ideas.

The third issue is insufficient reading materials as sources, either form of books or journals, to support the theoretical basis chapter which might cause a scientific work less logical and reputable (Djehatu et al., 2022). This problem can be overcome by the students with the help of cutting-edge technologies, specifically, internet resources where they can access online journals and books. However, the reliability of online references can be a problem since some online sources may not be credible, and it can be difficult to verify the accuracy of the information they contain. Similarly, Vieyra and Weaver (2023) put forward that the main cause of plagiarism is sometimes attributed to students with an unclear understanding of how to properly incorporate and cite sources in their writing when they first enter college.

It is imperative that researchers, writers, and authors of books and journals must go through a process of revision and editing before their work is published to ensure that the work is accurate, well-written, and easy to understand, and also incorporate technologies. Davies et al., (2022) in their research revealed that students' writing skills improve when teaching and learning instruction is assisted with technology.

Based on the learning issues faced by the students in general and they are in English Department of FSB UNG particularly, it is paramount that researchers must reduce the issues currently associated with writing scientific papers and make use of current technologies in order to increase students' ability to write background and theoretical basis, which are significant chapters on scientific works. In line with that, Kumar et.al. (2022) put forward that teachers and students can benefit from using hardware and software technology in English language instruction and learning in a variety of ways, including the capacity to access resources at any time. Besides, Momchilova (2021) stated that Artificial intelligence (AI) and Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) have significantly altered teaching strategies and learning environments, as well as how they are perceived and set up. Moreover, the finding of research by Rahman et al., (Rahman et al., 2020) indicated that the students' enthusiasm for studying English writing, self-esteem, and written communication skills are all developed through blended learning which combines face-to-face instruction with online learning.

Students can easily access experts' opinions on a particular theory by accessing citations on the website of Scimago or Google Scholar, for example. However, when it comes to writing supporting sentences that refer to the citation, students still run into problems, or they even fail to include any previous sentences as an introduction to the quotation. In addition, they occasionally fail to establish a connection between their chosen quotation and the rest of their own writing. To avoid this, students must form conclusions as a writer in order to establish this connection and support the experts' viewpoint. It is supported by the argument of Twumasi & Afful (2022) that writing should be concise and precise, free of slang and other informal expressions. It should constantly strive to be objective and considerate of other people's perspectives, also academic writing is not the place for sentimentality or strongly held personal opinions.

METHOD

This research used a descriptive qualitative of development model by Sugiyono (2012), the actions are as follows: Step 1: Analyzing the Potential Data i) How well students are able to cite the theories of experts in their papers; ii) how well they are able to put together introductory lines before pouring in the theories and demonstrate how to offer arguments. 2) overcoming the problem i) putting into practice teaching in-class for four months in accordance with the course syllabus and utilizing Scimago to facilitate citation theory, ii) providing students with opportunities to practice their writing skills and to learn about citation theory, iii) evaluating the students' learning outcomes by assessing their ability to paraphrase publisher's work, one source is a rubric by Mahmoudi & Bugra (2020) that assesses students' ability to formulate ideas in three categories: a) selecting ideas in introductory sentences prior to taking quotations of paraphrases; b) accuracy of diction selection; and c) linking ideas in well-formulated sentences following the quotation. These supported and used criterion-referenced decisions in their evaluation. The next four processes of designing module, validation, the experts' revision of product then testing a limited and large group are not described here.

Conducting this research is in English Department, Letter and Culture Faculty, Gorontalo State University, focussed on the 'Writing for Academic Purpose' subject. The

techniques used to collect the data were observing how well students can write theoretical bases, discussing with students about planning future actions, recording information as the instructor provided lessons based on the Writing for Academic Purposes course syllabus in the fourth semester, evaluating students' writing outcomes based on their capacity to incorporate theory into their writing in a scientific manner, and examining students' writing outcomes using the theories of experts from the journal as referenced on the Scimago website.

The procedure of data collection was during the teaching of 'Writing for Academic Purpose' course at 4th semester totaling 25 students in English Department of FSB-UNG in the academic year of 2021/2022 based on the syllabus of 14 meetings. Those covered the four kinds of essay organization and its generic structures, including developing critical thinking, paraphrasing, footnoting, and writing 2 to 3 pages of background and theoretical basis chapters of research. Besides, one important thing was focussing on learning materials on how to use Scimago journal website which they applied and suited to the idea in each of their theoretical bases or background. A student had to go to www.scimagojr.com and chose 'journal ranking' and 'country rankings'. They found data based on the rankings through the following picture.

This website provides journals that have been indexed nationally and internationally. In addition, this website also provides ranking data for each journal based on total cites, self-cites, citation per document, international collaboration, citable document, non-citable document, cited document, and uncited document.

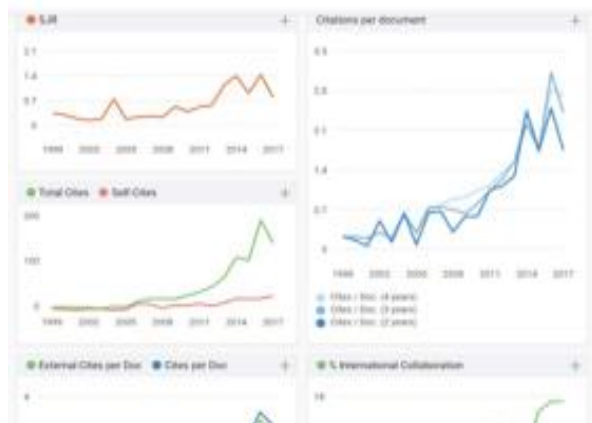


Figure 1. Scimagojr

Then, they used the search field to choose the kind of journal they wanted to look up by clicking on it, i.e.

Table 1. *The search field*

No	Content	Name of Journal	ISSN	Publisher	Year
1	Language and Linguistic	Applied Linguistic	1477520X, 01426001	Oxford University Press	2019

The criteria used to evaluate the formation of ideas fall into three categories: a) selecting ideas for introduction sentences before selecting paraphrased quotations, b) choosing accurate diction, and c) linking ideas in well-crafted sentences after selecting the quotation, i.e.

Table 2. *Rubric for assessing ability to compile introductory sentences, selection of diction, and the arrangement of linkages of ideas with quotation*

No	Items of Formulating Ideas and Diction Selection	Not Clear 25% or D	Less Clear 50% or C	Clearer 75% or B	Clearest 100% or A
1.	Having an Introductory Sentences with Clear Ideas				
2.	Accuracy of Diction Selection				
3.	Linkage of Ideas in the Formulation of Sentences with Quotation/ Paraphrase				

The essay was ultimately graded using criteria used in UNG guideline for students' attainment level and the letter grade range as follow:

Table 3. *Letter grade range*

Level of Achievement	Score	Qualification
85-100 %	A	Excellent
75-84 %	B	Good
60-74 %	C	Average
45-59 %	D	Less
0-44 %	E	Failed

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The outcome of students' use of Scimago to write experts' opinions has a good impact on their essay-writing abilities. The outcome of their writing provides evidence of this. Of the 25

students' writing results, 15 received A (60%), 5 received A- (20%), 3 received B+ (12%), and 2 received C (8%).

The analysis used the following rubric in

evaluating each participant to assess the ability in compiling introductions, diction used, and the way concepts are linked together using quotations.

Table 1. *The assessment result of students' writing essays based on the level of clearest 100% or A, clearer 75% or B, less clear 50% or C not clear 25% or D fail or zero <25% or E*

Participant	Having an Introductory Sentence with Clear Ideas (HIS_CI)					Accuracy of Diction Selection (ACD)					Linkage of Ideas in The Formulation of Sentences with Quotation/Paraphrase (LlitFS_Q/F)					Total Value
	A	B	C	D	E	A	B	C	D	E	A	B	C	D	E	
1	√					90					85					85%
2	100					100					100					100%
3		80				85					90					85%
4	100					100					100					100%
5		82					82				85					83%
6		78						50				77				68%
7	100					100					100					100%
8	100					100					100					100%
9			60				80					80				73%
10		84				95					91					90%
11	85					85					85					85%
12		84				97						74				85%
13	90					90					90					90%
14	85						82					82				83%
15	100					92						84				92%
16			65				82				85					77%
17	100					100					100					100%
18	100					100					100					100%
19	100					100					100					100%
20	100					100					100					100%
21	90					100					90					93%
22	85					85					85					85%
23		84				95					95					91%
24	87					100					100					96%
25	90					100					100					97%

The assessment result of 25 Students' writing essays show that the students in the level of A category or 100% are 8 students, 97% is 1 student, 96% is 1 student, 93% is 1 student, 92 is 1 student, 91% is 1 student, 90% are 2 students,

85% are 5 students, 83% are 2 students, 77% is 1 student, 73% is 1 student, and 68% is 1 student. In brief, their level of category is presented below:

Table 2. *Students' writing essay category*

Level of Achievement	Amount Students	Score	Percentage %	Category
85-100 %	20	A	80%	Excellent
75-84 %	3	B	12.%	Good
60-74 %	2	C	8%	Average
45-59 %	0	D	0%	Less
0-44 %	0	E	0%	Failed
Total	25		100%	

The description of the assessment of the students' producing background and theoretical basis chapters in their essay writing skills is based on the determination of the number of citations and paraphrases made in the essay. The focus of the assessment is to count the number of sentences with grammatically correct structures in English and a good choice of diction prepared by students before and after the quotes and

paraphrases. To find out the results of the writings in question, the assessment of three categories is carried out. Those are i) Having an Introductory Sentence with Clear Ideas (HIS_CS), ii) Accuracy of Diction Selection (ADS), and iii) Linkage of Ideas in The Formulation of Sentences with Quotation or Paraphrase (LlitFS_Q/F) (Janssen et al., 2015)

The ways in which the sentences were formulated before and after the quotations and paraphrases by the 25 participants varied greatly and really depend on the students' own imagination and the process. As Cheong et al., (2022) mentioned that reproductive imagination, which is the ability to recreate or reproduce ideas that have been encountered previously, is one factor that contributes to writing performance.

The link to this issue happened to Participant 6's essay. It is a short and clear essay as well but there are only 2 DQs (Direct Quotations) with its 2 PSF (Previous Sentence Formulation) and one LlitFS_Q/F on the first quotation. The second DQ only contains one PSF and one sentence as LlitFS_Q/F or the linkage at the conclusion of the second quote. His writing proficiency is average at only 68% or C category.

Yet, in the process of conducting research on teaching Academic Writing, it applied different methods and techniques to help students to find the aim of learning as a qualified writer at maximum standard, one of which is incorporating technology to enhance language learning and foster effective learning (Zhang & Zou, 2022) where students can use real language and complete their task in the target language which promotes their self-regulated and motivation in learning (Han et al., 2021). However, It is not only limited to these references sourced from technology used in asking students to compose essays, but also the role of teachers and pedagogical competence is paramount (Strobl et al., 2019) in allowing students the ability to practice writing an effective outline, structuring information using a variety of rhetorical devices, avoiding logical fallacies while presenting a position with support, and understanding how to cite and paraphrase sources.

Based on the notion above on how to quote certain knowledge to support the ideas of the writer for academic writing, there are strategies commonly used to paraphrase or summarize data from published sources, they are: (1) Using synonyms (Alvi et al., 2021; Çeşme, 2022) where students could replace some terms from the original section with similar meaning of the words. This strategy is mostly used in paraphrasing. (2) Altering active sentences to passive or vice versa (Sulistyaningrum, 2021). And, (3) converting direct quotes to indirect ones.

In implementing these strategies in organizing the background and theoretical basis parts, students are required to organize good sentences

as the representation of his/her ideas and integrate them into his/her works by summarizing, quoting, and even paraphrasing the ideas to seamlessly unite them into the source materials. This way, plagiarism can be avoided. In the end, students who are the writers must allude to these quotations in connection with the overall thesis of the articles. Thus, well-structured and related ideas from introduction sentences to the paraphrased ideas to the illustration are stated as part of the theoretical bases they are derived from.

To be able to do this, there are three points that should at least be addressed, 1) the author requires to have the ability to compose an introductory idea prior to making the quotations, 2) the selection of accurate vocabulary, and 3) The author must be able to create compelling concluding thoughts from their writing of the opening notion before the citation, connecting to the quotations presented, and coming to their own decision.

The application and support of experts' opinions in this study resulted in accurate research data, including assessing the three categories in the essay as in the previous table. The results of the evaluation contained several things as exemplified in the short essay by Participant 6. However, of the 25 participants, only one student experienced the case of writing a short essay. Furthermore, the great variations in the students' writing results are described in general perspective in three levels of high, good, and average of formulation direct quotations and paraphrases. The high level is projected in students who formulated 5 to 8 DQc (Direct Quotation) or Ph (paraphrase), the good level is the students who formulated 3 to 4 DQs and Phs, and the average level is the student who formulated 1 to 2 DQ and Ph. Each level presented three participants' writing results is as follows.

The first of high category

In writing the essay, there are found high formulation DQ (Direct Quotation) toward 3 participants; they are participant 17 with 8 DQs and one paraphrase, participant 12 with 6 DQs, and Participant 9 with 5 DQs and 3 paraphrases. The description is as follows:

Participant 17. This participant had 8 DQs and one phrase. Each of all direct quotations and paraphrases had 3 sentence formulations as LlitFS_Q/F (sentences of linkage of ideas in The Formulation of Sentences with Quotation/Paraphrase). Even though there were

no previous sentences as HIS-CI (Having an Introductory Sentence with Clear Ideas), the participant used precise language in each of her sentence descriptions. This participant performed at 100% or an exceptional level.

Participant 12. The participants' essays had 6 DQs, but only one reference was listed in her bibliography. All of the sentences in her essay were excellent in terms of expressing and creating concepts clearly, as well as establishing solid paragraphs. The essay was then evaluated and assigned an ability level of 85%, or the A- grade.

Participant 9. Her essay contained 3 paraphrases and 5 DQs. Only three of them, nevertheless, were precisely organized because they included references with the original quotations, but the expert was not credited. The three of 2 paraphrases and one DQ were the first paraphrase that had one PSF (Previous Sentence Formulation) and 3 LlitFS_Q/F sentence formulations as its linking ideas. The second paraphrase did not have PSF (previous sentence formulation), but it had 3 LlitFS_Q/F, and the last one was the DQ with one PSF and zero LlitFS_Q/F. The participant's overall score was 73%, or a C category because of making quotations without acknowledging the expert.

This plagiarism issue was made by Participant 9 in which she did not state the name of the expert. The sophistication of technology in the present era, such as the internet and websites that can be accessed by anybody regardless of their trustworthiness, is one of the reasons why plagiarism in writing is on the rise. Smith (in Cheers et al., 2021) states that plagiarism is a complex concept, and it can be deceptive, thus in an ideal world, students should be aware that there is a high chance of being caught for plagiarism and that the consequences are severe (Abraham & Torunarigha, 2020; Lata & Mondal, 2021).

This is in line with the basic concept that plagiarism is the act of using someone else's thought or language without acknowledging the author, regardless of whether you do it on purpose or unintentionally due to a variety of reasons (Mehta & Mukherjee, 2022), it is seen as a form of theft and is considered an academic crime. Even though there is still happening in most schools and universities, plagiarism has recently become a highly visible issue in academic journals (Bautista & Pentang, 2022); and many papers, books, and seminars have been written about how to prevent plagiarism in academic publications. In teaching Academic Writing and

its syllabus, students were directed to the best ways by being obliged to avoid plagiarism in writing. This control was carried out individually by lecturers to students during essay writing exercises in class. The result can be seen in the second category of students' abilities below.

The second of good category

In writing essay, there are found good formulation DQ (Direct Quotation) toward 13 participants; they are the participants 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10, 11, 13, 15, 20, 21, and 24. The three participants of 2, 3, 4 are the representative illustration as below.

The participant 2. This second participant had 4 direct quotations (DQs) and 2 paraphrases (Phs). The first DQ has PSF (previous sentence formulation) as HIS-CI and 2 LlitFS_Q/F. The second DQ has 6 PSF without LlitFS_Q/F, but the third one had 2 PSF and 3 LlitFS_Q/F in that formulation. It was also the fourth DQ that had 3 PSF with HIS-CI and 2 LlitFS_Q/F.

This essay also contained 2 paraphrases, the first had 1 PSF and 3 LlitFS_Q/F. The second one had 3 PSF and 2 LlitFS_Q/F. The participant's writing abilities can be classified as A level or 100% qualification due to this essay's accurate choice of DQs and Phs and its high-quality concepts for sentence construction.

Participant 3. This participant's essay had 3 DQs and 1 Ph. The first DQ had 1 PSF and 3 LlitFS_Q/F following the quotation and the 2 clear paragraphs illustration. However, Without PSF or linking, this essay contained one direct quotation. After the citation in the third DQ, there was one PSF and three LlitFS_Q/F. One paraphrased sentence had 1 PSF and 2 LlitFS_Q/F after it. Taking into account that this essay is worth A-, or 85%.

Participant 4. This essay demonstrated a clear understanding of quoting and paraphrasing, excellent diction, and precision. It had 3 DQ and 1 Ph. The first DQ had 2 LlitFS_Q/F and 2 clean PSF. Following this quotation were 1 sentence and 9 LlitFS_Q/F in the second DQ. The third one contained 6 LlitFS_Q/F and 2 PSF phrases. It also included 1 paraphrase, which had three LlitFS_Q/F and 4 PSF. She received an A grade, or 100%, for her essay.

The third of average category

In writing essay, there are found good formulation DQ (Direct Quotation) toward 9 participants; they are the participants 1, 6, 14, 16, 18, 19, 22, 23, and 25. The three participants of 1, 14, and 16 are the representative illustration as below.

This participant 1. The participant used 2 direct quotations (DQs) and 2 paraphrases (Phs) in the essay she wrote. The HIS-CI and LlitFS_Q/F at the end of the quotation were zero, yet there was 1 LlitFS_Q/F in the second quotation. There was 1 HIS-CI in the first and fourth sentences in each of the paraphrases. There was no LlitFS_Q/F at the end of the second paraphrase, despite the fact that those formulation principles were apparent. The student's writing grade was 85, or A-.

Participant 14. There were 5 PSF before this 14th participant's Ph, and she had two paraphrases. She discussed the risk of smoking in general terms as a supporting idea for her essay topic. However, because the participant's general statements of ideas refer to information from WHO, it is difficult to determine whether they were her own words, and that led to a grade of B+, or 83% level of skill for her essay. After using paraphrases in her article, she made a strong argument.

Participant 16. The sixteenth participant finished writing his essay with 2 DQs. His DQ had HIS-CI but lacked clarity of thought and diction precision. The participant followed the quotations with LlitFS_Q/F, yet the linkage or LlitFS_Q/F was also not entirely obvious. As a result, the participant's essay received a grade of 77% or a level of B+.

Since the internet has become a major source of information, it is crucial to get students accustomed to integrating technology into their learning (Vallez et al., 2022), however, they need to make use of it in a responsible way, particularly in academic circumstances. Therefore, it is the lecturers to teach plagiarism, citation, and referencing skill, especially in academic writing which lead to academic integrity (Bautista & Pentang, 2022)

CONCLUSION

Providing the availability of internet websites that supply online journals and books is one technique to address the difficulty students have in selecting experts' theories to support their own idea and concept in composing articles and research proposals. Citing sources such as from books or journals can help students who are unaware that they are engaging in plagiarism. In other words, teaching students about plagiarism ethics in academic writing can help them hinder the conventional practice of copying and pasting expert words and ideas. Instead, students can learn how to formulate their own opening

sentences, link ideas with quotations, and paraphrase effectively.

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