



**PLAGIARISM IN STUDENTS' THESIS WRITING: A CASE STUDY AT  
THE ENGLISH EDUCATION DEPARTMENT  
AT UNIVERSITY OF MATARAM**

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**Abstract:** This study aims to analyse plagiarism in student thesis writing: A case study in the English Education Study Program at the University of Mataram. This research focused on analysing the types of plagiarism and the sources most used by students of the English Education Study Program in writing their thesis. The sample for this study was five students who wrote a thesis at the English Education Study Program in the first quarter of 2023. Document analysis was used as a research instrument. In collecting data, researchers used Turnitin as a medium to find plagiarized texts in the research samples. From the data analysed, it was found that 77 sentences were included in the plagiarism samples. Of the ten types of plagiarism detected by Turnitin, four types of plagiarism were found, including: 33 types of Clone, 35 types of Control-C, 3 types of Find-Replace, and 6 types of Recycle. Data tracked as plagiarism was taken by students from various sources, they are: Journals (38%), Theses (35%), Websites (26%), and Articles (1%) out of 100% of the data. Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that students of the English Education Study Program still commit acts of plagiarism in their thesis writing. Student awareness of plagiarism is still low, so it is very important for students to improve their writing skills, especially in avoiding plagiarism.

**Keywords:** academic writing, thesis, plagiarism, Turnitin

## **INTRODUCTION**

One of the essential skills required by an English student is writing. It is one of the four common language skills that is intensively learned at the university level. Mustafa (2016) states that university students must be able to write in the academic genre. At the University of Mataram, especially in the English Education Study Program at the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, writing has become one of the compulsory subjects that must be mastered by students to finish their studies. Writing skills are learned at several levels, starting with Writing 1, 2, and 3 and finishing with Academic Writing Subject. Even though it is studied in four semesters, most EFL learners still find it difficult to produce good academic writing. Following the Academic Writing subject, the student's ability in writing is then proven by writing a thesis as their final assignment and also as a graduation requirement to finish their study program.

Writing a thesis is one of the challenges that students must overcome to finish their bachelor's degree. It's challenging because many of the students have failed to finish their thesis writing. Many students find that writing is the hardest skill to study, especially when it comes to foreign languages (Marzaban & Sarjami, 2014). Writing is not done separately; instead, other skills such as grammar, coherence, and cohesion must be applied in writing (Dhanya & Alamelu, 2019). The dictation or taking notes, as well as reading comprehension, will all be part of writing tasks. Writing requires regular practice and must be done in steps due to its complexity (Nguyen, 2016). Therefore, in order to do this final project, many students use a variety of methods, including dealing with plagiarism terms.

Plagiarism itself is a serious problem that exists in the education field nowadays (Heckler & Forde, 2015). Park (2003) speculates that this problem has occurred since the internet began to grow rapidly in various parts of the world. The internet already exists in almost all aspects of human life, including school life, such as online classes and so on. The advancement of world technology, such as the internet, has had both positive and negative impacts on students. Since online learning is considered more practical than offline learning, several universities are starting to offer online classes. However, as Castao-Muoz, Duart, and Sancho-Vinuesa (2014) point out, online learning does not always imply better results. The development of the Internet increased the level of student cheating higher than before; this happened because there are many sources and materials available on the Internet (Park, 2003). This makes it easier for students to copy and paste another person's work without paraphrasing or citing it properly. With easy access for everyone to various sources of data or knowledge on the internet, there are several types of plagiarism checkers made by experts to deal with these problems. In this research study, Turnitin was utilized by the researcher to check for plagiarism among the samples.

Turnitin is one of the most popular plagiarism checkers due to the high quality of the results, which makes this app famous and is usually used in colleges as a student's plagiarism checker. Rolfe (2011) stated that the use of Turnitin in universities lowers the number of students' plagiarism in thesis writing. Moreover, Turnitin checking results can help students increase their knowledge about plagiarism (Zeman, Steen, & Zeman, 2011). This is due to the rules prepared by the University of Mataram in terms of plagiarism, where students' thesis writing plagiarism must be below 25% checked by the Turnitin application (Mataram University, 2020). In fact, learning writing for four semesters doesn't guarantee students' Turnitin checks on thesis writing are directly below the standard. Many of them had to check several times in order to ensure that their Turnitin check on their thesis writing met the standard prepared.

In line with the importance of academic writing and the growing issues related to plagiarism at the University of Mataram which are still high, the researcher was interested in conducting this research study to know the types of plagiarism and sources that are mostly committed by English education students in their thesis writing. In the hopes that the findings of this research can improve students' understanding of plagiarism in writing. The researcher was interested in analyzing plagiarism committed by English Education Program students,

Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, University of Mataram, as EFL learners, in writing theses as an academic requirement to finish a bachelor's degree.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

The researcher used qualitative research methods to analyze the types of plagiarism and sources that were mostly committed by English students' in their thesis writing. Bryman (2012) stated that qualitative research is educational research that is based on participants' experiences and information in the form of words or text rather than the collection of data or analysis. By using qualitative research, the researcher can analyze a small number of individuals or sites to collect information about the problem.

The research data was taken from the English Education Study Program at the University of Mataram. The data used in this study were derived from the theses written by English students who worked in their thesis in the first quarter of 2023. Out of five chapters on the student's thesis writing, the data of this research are taken from chapter one, specifically the background of the study in students' thesis writing. The background of the study was chosen as a research sample because it provided with students' original work and contained fewer expert opinions than other chapters. In collecting the data, the researcher used the document analysis method as a research instrument. The purpose of document analysis in this research study is to analyze the research sample. It is compatible with what Owen (2014) stated that a document can provide background information about something or someone.

The researcher only focused on analyzing the types of plagiarism that were carried out by English students in chapter one of their thesis writing by using Turnitin. Turnitin is a plagiarism checker that is commonly used at the University of Mataram. In collecting the research data through document analysis, the researcher used several steps. First, the researchers purposefully selected the samples for this study. The sample must be English education majors' students who working on their thesis writing in the second semester of 2023. Second, the data was examined with Turnitin to determine the different types of plagiarism that students used when producing their thesis writing. By using Turnitin, the researchers can compare the original text with the plagiarize text done by student to examine the data.

## **FINDING AND DISCUSSION**

The findings of this research showed that the level of plagiarism in students' thesis writing is high. Starting with the first participant, who committed a 27% level of plagiarism and became the lowest level of plagiarism among others. Following the second participant, who committed a 70% level of plagiarism, which became the highest level of plagiarism found in this research study. It is not compatible with the rules prepared by the University of Mataram in terms of plagiarism, where students' thesis writing plagiarism must be below 25% checked by the Turnitin application (Mataram University, 2020). The data analysis

procedure through document analysis showed that there are four types of plagiarism committed by English education students in their thesis writing. They are: 33 Clone type, 35 Control-C, 3 Find-Replace and 6 Recycle. The following examples, as follow:

### 1. Clone

One of the most common types of plagiarism found in student theses writing is the clone type. According to Turnitin, Clone is the act of copying other people’s work word for word as their own. In this research, the researcher found that all of the samples commit this type of plagiarism. Here are the following examples;

Table 1. Extract of plagiarized work from participant A and B

Participant	Original work	<i>Plagiarize work</i>	Place
A	In the term of reading activity, communication happens between the author and the reader.	<i>In terms of reading activity, communication occurs between the author and the reader.</i>	In the fourth paragraph
B	Other factors that cause the problem in here are the students' interest, the material, and the media among others including the technique and strategy in teaching English (Celce-murcia, 1991).	<i>Other factors that cause the problems are the students' interest, the material, and the media among others including the technique and strategy in teaching English (Celce-murcia, 1991).</i>	In the third paragraph

Table 4.1 shows that sample A copied the sentences from <https://journal.uin-alauddin.ac.id/>. From the table, it was clear that sample A copied the sentence word for word without changing the word structure or phrases of the sentence. The same problem with sample B, where sample B took the data from <http://www.eprints.unram.ac.id/> and did not paraphrase the sentence correctly. According to the ten types of plagiarism identified by Turnitin, the clone type is the easiest type to commit, and it is commonly found in research samples.

### 2. Control-C

Control-C is the common type of plagiarism found in student thesis writing, consisting of 36 sentences from all of the samples. According to Turnitin, Control-C is an act of copying other people’s work that contains a significant portion of text without changing the original word.

Table 2. Extract of plagiarized work from participant C and D

Participant	Original work	<i>Plagiarize work</i>	Place
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C	It enables us to signal whether or not we have come to the end of the point we are making; whether we want to keep talking or are ready to give another speaker a turn.	<i>It enables us to signal whether or not we have come to the tip of the purpose we are making; whether we wish to stay talking or can give another speaker a turn.</i>	In the second paragraph
D	There are four basic skills that have to be mastered by the students. The four skills are reading, listening, speaking, and writing. All four skills are expected to do as a whole, but the emphasis is on reading. Vocabulary is also taught to support language skills.	<i>There are four basic skills that have to be mastered by the students. The four skills are reading, listening, speaking, and writing. All four skills are expected to do as a whole, but the emphasis is on vocabulary. Vocabulary is also taught to support language skills.</i>	In the fifth paragraph

The data in Table 4.2 by sample C were taken from <http://www.tourschile.cl/>. It showed that there was a significant difference between the original work and the plagiarized work. It shows that sample C is changing a few words, such as point became purpose, and we want to keep became we wish to stay. Then, sample D was taken the data from <https://journal.lppmunindra.ac.id/>. The data showed that sample D changed the word reading into a vocabulary so that it could fit with the topic that related to their theses. From the data, it can be concluded that students are changing or removing a certain word according to their needs before copying and pasting it into their thesis writing.

### 3. Find-Replace

According to Turnitin, find-replace is a type of plagiarism when the writers are copy all the sentences but change the keywords and phrases so that it is still the same sentence but with a different topic.

Table 3. Extract of plagiarized work from participant A and B

Participant	Original work	Plagiarize work	Place
A	Students' reading material in English classroom situation requires proper reading for nursing that constructs students' comprehension and always deals with other subjects in the nursing major.	<i>However, the students' reading material in English subject require proper reading to constructs students' comprehension and always deals with to other subject in junior high school.</i>	In the third paragraph
B	Through role-play, L2 learners can experience many kinds of	<i>Also, language learners can experience many kinds of</i>	In the third

	situations in which they will use the language and as they develop a sense of mastery in them, they should be able to apply the language more easily to new situations (p. 213).	<i>situations in which they will use the language and as they develop a sense of mastery in them, they should be able to apply the language more easily to new situations (Stern, 1983).</i>	paragraph
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The research findings above show that find-replace was only found in samples A and B (see Appendix 2 p. 31). Sample A took the data from <https://journal.uin-alauddin.ac.id/> and the data in sample B were taken from <https://riuma.uma.es/>. The data showed that there was a clear difference between the original work and the plagiarized work. Sample A and B were changed and added a new word but still retained the original sentences, so it changed into a different sentence.

#### 4. Recycle

Recycle is one of ten types of plagiarism, according to Turnitin. These types of plagiarism are different from all the others that have been discussed above. In committing this type of plagiarism, students usually copy the idea of the sentence, then rewrite it into a new sentence before writing it on their thesis.

Table 4.4 Extract of plagiarized work from participant A and B

Participant	Original work	Plagiarize work	Place
A	To fulfil this aspect, the teacher needs to apply a method or an approach that can lead students to their comprehension and reading motivation.	<i>Alternatively, to be able to complement an aspect, the teacher needs to apply methods or approaches that can influence students on their reading comprehension and interest.</i>	In the fourth paragraph
B	One of the most important communicative ability that the learners need to be taught is speaking skill. Because it is frequently used in daily communication, but teaching speaking 36 is not easy.	<i>One of the basic language skills that students have to learn is speaking skill. Because it is frequently used in daily communication, but teaching speaking 36 is not easy.</i>	In the third paragraph

The data in Table 4.4 were taken from <https://journal.uin-alauddin.ac.id/> by sample A, while sample B was taken from <http://www.eprints.unram.ac.id/>. The name of this type is recycled, which means creating a new sentence using other people's ideas. Based on the table above, it can be seen that the samples made a new sentence but still retained the original word structure of the sentence.

Furthermore, most of the students did not even try to paraphrase the sentence. Especially for students who committing Clone type and Control-C, which is the most frequent compared to others. This finding is quite similar with what Nechita Olivia-Dumitrina, Montserrat Casanovas and Yolanda Capdevila (2019) found in their research study with title Academic Writing and the Internet: Cyber-Plagiarism amongst University Students. They found out students do not perceive this as a serious problem. They considered Copying and pasting from a website with no author is not plagiarism. Lack of knowledge and understanding about plagiarism could be one of the reasons why students conducted these types of plagiarism. Regarding to the result of the data that has been analysed by using Turnitin, the researcher found out that there are multiple sources where students taken the data from. They are including: website, thesis, journal, article and exact.

## CONCLUSION

Plagiarism in thesis writing is a serious problem nowadays. Turnitin classifies plagiarism into 10 types, which consist of Clone, Control-C, Find-Replace, Remix, Recycle, Hybrid, Mashup, 404 Error, Agregator and Re-Tweet. From the data that has been analyzed, the researcher found four types of plagiarism in the student's thesis writing, which include 33 Clone type, 35 Control-C, 3 Find-Replace, and 6 Recycle. The data showed that Clone type and Control-C were the most frequent compared to others. There are various sources from which students took the data, they are: Journal (38%), Thesis (35%), Website (26%), Article (1%) out of 100% of the data. It turns out that journals are the sources that are mostly referred to by students' in their thesis writing.

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