

ELT students' attitudes towards plagiarism: Their correlation with academic success and externalization

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Abstract:

The linking of attitudes towards plagiarism with contextual and individual factors has recently been a focus. Knowing those factors seem helpful in reducing plagiarism. Especially any relation between the personal locus of control and attitudes towards plagiarism may give pedagogical insights as it is possible to change one's locus of control through education. In that stance, the purpose of this mixed-method case study is twofold: (1) to discover students' attitudes towards plagiarism at the English Language Teaching Department in a state university in Turkey and (2) to discover if there are any relations among students' attitudes towards plagiarism, academic externalization, and academic success. The participants are 58 undergraduates / post-graduate students and three instructors. The student participants were purposively selected volunteers who declared that they had heard about plagiarism before. Trice's (1985) Academic Locus of Control Scale for College Students and Mayrinac et al.'s (2010) Attitudes' towards Plagiarism Scale were used to collect data. Eight students and 3 instructors were also interviewed. The data reveal that students do not hold positive values towards plagiarism, yet Mann-Whitney U test results along with the interview data indicate that there is a significant difference between undergraduates and postgraduates. Moreover, there is a significant moderate positive correlation between the level of externalization and level of subjective norms of plagiarism and a small negative correlation between negative attitudes towards plagiarism and the level of externalization. No significant correlation was identified between academic success and attitudes towards plagiarism. Qualitative data also reveal that students report mostly contextual factors that result in plagiarism besides few individual factors. It is also noteworthy that the necessary precautions against plagiarism proposed by the student and instructor interviewees match and give insights about how to eliminate those factors.

Keywords: Attitudes towards plagiarism, externalization, locus of control, plagiarism.