

INVESTIGATING THE USE OF EDUCATIONAL INTERVENTION TO REDUCE PLAGIARISM ACT IN ESL UNDERGRADUATES' ACADEMIC WRITING

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SULTAN IDRIS EDUCATION UNIVERSITY

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INVESTIGATING THE USE OF EDUCATIONAL INTERVENTION
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ACADEMIC WRITING

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ABSTRACT

One of the plagiarism acts that commonly occur among undergraduates is the unintentional plagiarism. This could happen due to their lack of knowledge on how to write references correctly. Therefore, this study was conducted to investigate the effectiveness of using the Educational Intervention (EI) (Smedley et al., 2015) to reduce plagiarism act among ESL undergraduates (70 undergraduates) taking the PPU 6022 Academic Writing course at one of the private institutions in Perak. In this study, quasi-experimental design was used to gather the quantitative data by using the Avoiding Plagiarism Test (APT) and collection of exercises and assignments. Meanwhile focus group interview was used to collect the qualitative data. The result of one way ANOVA for the post-tests between the experimental group and the control group are ($F(1,68)=10.593$, $p=.002$) for writing in-text citation, ($F(1,68)=21.975$, $p=.000$) for paraphrasing and ($F(1,68)=8.011$, $p=.006$) for writing a reference list using APA style. The analysis showed that the improvements of the experimental group was higher and significantly different to the control group. Meanwhile, the results of the repeated measures ANOVA for the gathered exercises and assignments of the experimental group are ($F(2,68)=1.139$, $p=.326$) for writing in-text citation, ($F(2,68)=48.561$, $p=.000$) for paraphrasing and ($F(2,68)=.729$, $p=.486$) for writing a reference list using APA style. This showed that the participants in the experimental group demonstrated improvements in their referencing skills however the improvements were not statistically significant except for paraphrasing. Besides, the analysis of focus group interview reported positive response towards the use of EI in improving their referencing skills. Overall, it can be concluded that the intervention was effective in improving ESL undergraduates' referencing skills however it can be improved to achieve its optimum capability. This is an important study as it offers an initiative to combat plagiarism acts amongst undergraduates at tertiary education.





MENYIASAT PENGGUNAAN INTERVENSI PENDIDIKAN UNTUK MENGURANGKAN PERBUATAN PLAGIARISME DALAM PENULISAN AKADEMIK DALAM KALANGAN MAHASISWA BAHASA INGGERIS SEBAGAI BAHASA KEDUA (ESL)

ABSTRAK

Salah satu perbuatan plagiarisme yang sering berlaku dalam kalangan mahasiswa ialah plagiarisme yang tidak disengajakan. Ini boleh berlaku disebabkan oleh kurangnya kemahiran menulis rujukan. Maka, kajian ini akan dijalankan untuk mengkaji keberkesanan penggunaan Intervensi Pendidikan (EI) (Smedley et al., 2015) bagi mengurangkan perbuatan plagiarisme dalam kalangan mahasiswa *ESL* (70 mahasiswa) yang mengikuti kursus PPU 6022 Penulisan Akademik. Dalam kajian ini, reka bentuk kuasi- eksperimen telah digunakan untuk mengumpulkan data kuantitatif melalui penggunaan *Avoiding Plagiarism Test (APT)* dan pengumpulan latihan dan tugas. Sementara itu, temu bual kumpulan fokus telah digunakan untuk mengumpul data kualitatif. Keputusan ANOVA sehalu bagi ujian pasca antara kumpulan eksperimen dan kumpulan kawalan ialah ($F(1,68)=10.593$, $p=.002$) untuk menulis petikan dalam teks, ($F(1,68)=21.975$, $p=.000$) untuk parafrasa dan ($F(1,68)=8.011$, $p=.006$) untuk menulis senarai rujukan menggunakan gaya APA. Analisis menunjukkan bahawa penambahbaikan kumpulan eksperimen adalah lebih tinggi dan berbeza secara signifikan dengan kumpulan kawalan. Sementara itu, keputusan pengukuran berulang ANOVA bagi latihan dan tugas yang dikumpul daripada kumpulan eksperimen adalah ($F(2,68)=1.139$, $p=.326$) untuk penulisan petikan dalam teks, ($F(2,68)=48.561$, $p=.000$) untuk parafrasa dan ($F(2,68)=.729$, $p=.486$) untuk menulis senarai rujukan menggunakan gaya APA. Keputusan menunjukkan bahawa peserta dalam kumpulan eksperimen menunjukkan peningkatan dalam kemahiran rujukan mereka dalam latihan dan tugas namun penambahbaikan tidak signifikan secara statistik kecuali untuk parafrasa. Selain itu, analisis temu bual kumpulan fokus melaporkan tindak balas positif terhadap penggunaan EI dalam meningkatkan kemahiran rujukan mereka. Secara keseluruhannya, boleh disimpulkan bahawa intervensi ini berkesan dalam meningkatkan kemahiran rujukan pelajar ESL namun ia boleh dipertingkatkan untuk mencapai keupayaan optimumnya. Kajian ini penting kerana ia menawarkan inisiatif untuk membanteras perbuatan plagiarisme dalam kalangan mahasiswa di institusi pengajian tinggi.



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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

APA	American Psychological Association
APT	Avoiding Plagiarism Test
EAW	English Academic Writing
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
EI	Educational Intervention
eLM	E-Learning Module
ESL	English as a Second Language
F2F	Face to face
LMS	Learning Management System
MCQ	Multiple-Choice Question
MLA	Modern Language Association
TESL	Teaching of a Second Language
UPSI	Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris
USM	Universiti Sains Malaysia
APA	American Psychological Association
ESL	English as a Second Language
EI	Educational Intervention





APPENDIX LIST

- A Avoiding Plagiarism Test
- B Avoiding Plagiarism Test Answer Scheme
- C Focus Group Interview Questions
- D Interview Transcript
- E Weekly Lesson Plan Educational Intervention (EI)
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

As the world is moving forward with the development of technology, education system is constantly adjusting to fit with the current practices. In this new era of technology, information can be accessed easily by everyone from everywhere with the use of Internet. This may facilitate the students to obtain information to finish their tasks however the easy access may also result in making the issue of plagiarism even more challenging especially for educators to cope with.

Chan and Alina Shamsuddin (2014) define plagiarism as the act of stealing words or ideas without giving credits to the original sources. Meanwhile, Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (2018) regards plagiarism as the action of claiming another



person's idea, writing, discoveries as your own findings and creations. In a simpler explanation, plagiarism is stealing someone else's hard work. The educators especially at the tertiary level across the world have long struggled with this issue and continuously searching for the best solution to cope with the problem.

Multiple researchers across continents for example in Pakistan (Ramzan et. al, 2012), South Africa (Singh et.al, 2020) and Australia (Smedley, Crawford & Cloete, 2015; 2019) have reported increasing trend of academic misconducts linked to plagiarism committed by undergraduates at higher institutions. A number of studies in Malaysian universities have also reported that one of the alarming problems higher education institutions are facing is the increasing cases of plagiarism acts amongst the university undergraduates (Al- Shaibani et. al, 2016; Ramlan Mustapha et al., 2017; AbuSafia et al., 2018; Zejno, 2018). These studies proved that this academic crime is universal whereby learners around the world are committing it freely and extensively at their own higher institutions.

According to McGuire & Adams (2011), their lack of knowledge on plagiarism resulted them to continue to plagiarise as they failed to see the consequences of their action. Education on the issue amongst the student is necessary to increase both awareness and knowledge to ensure plagiarism acts can be avoided in the future. However, universities also need to always pay attention in providing clarity in the codes of conduct to the students. The academic guidelines provided to the students involving academic misconducts may lack clarity and details (Roig, 2001; Leask, 2006) which could lead to their confusions on the rules and regulations implemented. University should be objective and straightforward in circulating the codes of conduct especially





that concerns plagiarism and the penalties faced by the students if they are found to be guilty in committing the plagiarism acts.

1.2 Research Background

According to Vuori et al. (2004), plagiarism is not only a matter of following the rules; rather, it is a result of the interaction of culture, context and shifting views on how to govern the education. It should not be viewed as simply breaking the rules but rather a complex interplay of forces and the causes of it may be rooted from a complicated set of issues that needs thorough analysis (Shih- Chieh, 2014). For example, students in Malaysia are having a difficult time transitioning and adjusting to university education since their previous educational system, i.e. school system has not equipped them with the analytical and critical thinking abilities needed for tertiary education (Yang & Lin, 2009). Students had no choice but to turn to the easiest way out by stealing others' ideas to ensure they can submit their work within the deadline. Such condition was triggered due to the constant pressure for them to adhere to not only a more demanding academic system but also to one that requires strict adherence to academic integrity (Cheah, 2015).

In addition to the strict adherence of the academic system, students in Malaysia were also struggling with the demands to write academically at the tertiary level. Irvin (2010) defines academic writing as “a form of evaluation that asks you to demonstrate knowledge and show proficiency with certain disciplinary skills of thinking, interpreting and presenting” (p.8). This form of writing demanded students to be





proficient in presenting thoughts and ideas while conforming to the format required. As English is taught as a second language here in Malaysia, writing academically appeared to be a struggle for some students as low proficiency becomes the barrier for them to express and present their writing. According to Risati & Rahimi (2013), low proficiency of the target language causes students to have a difficult time understanding journal readings that led them to commit plagiarism in their work. Hence, cultural and historical background played its role in the nature of plagiarism. This is in accordance with the view presented by Pennycook (1996) who stated that the issue of plagiarism or what he referred as textual borrowing is far more complex as it involves several factors specifically in second language education namely the role of memory, the nature of language learning, the ownership of the texts, the concepts of the author, the authority, and authenticity, and the cross-cultural relations that emerge in educational contexts. Therefore, as suggested by Sowden (2005), the diversity or the differences between each learner should be considered when analysing plagiarism.

Multiple researchers were carried out in identifying the factors that have contributed toward plagiarism in Malaysia and reported that lack of competence and personal attitudes, lack of awareness, lack of understanding, poor language skills, and misunderstanding of the plagiarism concepts are amongst the reasons why Malaysian students commit the academic misconduct (Smith et. al, 2006; Md Yusof, 2009, Ting, 2013). This study will further examine on the problem to help provide a possible solution to address the issue.

There are two forms of plagiarism namely intentional and unintentional. Park (2004) categorized intentional plagiarism as the plagiarist's state of mind of having





fully aware of what is plagiarism and yet they still choose to plagiarise. The second type is unintentional plagiarism where the plagiarist commits plagiarism unconsciously due to his or her lack on how to cite the sources correctly. This present study focused solely on the issues related to unintentional plagiarisms. Park (2003) citing other scholars' work in her paper reports that students commit plagiarism unintentionally as they are not aware of or do not know how to properly quote, paraphrase and cite the sources. In referencing, skills like citing, quoting, paraphrasing as well as summarising the sources appropriately are important to ensure that plagiarism does not occur.

Sulaiman (2018) in his study reveals that the most reported plagiarism act found in the students' work is randomly quotes and refers terms, words, sentences, data and information from the original source without adequately acknowledging the sources.

He lists students' incapability to paraphrase the original source as one of the reasons why students commit plagiarism. Paraphrase is described as the presentation of ideas and information of someone else's in your own words (Purdue Online Writing Lab, 2010). Paraphrasing requires the writer to rephrase the original sources without changing its meaning and most importantly it must be presented in your own voice. However, changing certain words or the sentence structures or in other word "cosmetic modification" to the original text is still plagiarism and it could mislead the reader on who is the original author of the used sources (Pechnick, 2001; Roig, 2015). Even though writers are presenting the idea using their own words, but the idea is not originally theirs. Writers must still cite the sources from which they acquired their information. Hence it is still considered as the act of referencing as they used of what they have read or heard from sources.





Plagiarism can be avoided if correct referencing is done accurately in an assignment, an article or a report whenever using materials obtained from others. According to University of Otago (2017), in-text citation is placed accordingly throughout the body of the text in order to give credits to the original sources as well as the key to the complete bibliographic details that will later be placed as the footnotes, endnotes, reference list or bibliography. Formatting your paper with the correct standard and rules of citing the sources is important to assure that your work is free of plagiarism, and this includes accurate in-text citation. Another important technique of referencing is the correct formatting of the reference list. Reference list is the full list of references that the writer used in his or her in-text references in the writing (University of New England, 2020). The reference list is important as it provides the readers with the details of the original sources where credits of the sources are due.



Including the reference list in your work implies that you have read the original sources (Reed & Skinner, 2016) which are being presented and cited accordingly in the assignment, article, or report.

Conforming to a standard citation format is a rule that every writer needs to follow especially in writing an academic essay or paper. There are many different citation styles available which are applied according to the academic disciplines. This includes American Psychological Association (APA) style which is used by Education, Psychology, and Sciences, Modern Language Association (MLA) style which is used by Humanities and Chicago style which is used by Business, History, and the Fine Arts (University of Pittsburgh, 2021). These three citation styles are the common styles used in citing sources in writing. APA is chosen as the citation style for this study since APA is the main citation style used in the Malaysian higher institutions for both public and





private institutions. Besides, APA is also the citation style used for educational research which is in parallel with the field of this study. Hence, APA style 7th edition is chosen as the citation style addressed in this study.

Across definitions, the basic characteristic of plagiarism act lies on the action of stealing or using ideas, words, phrases, sentences or paragraphs from another author's work without properly crediting the sources. Another main feature pertaining to the characteristics of plagiarism is on how the sources need to be cited correctly following the standard citation rules. Hence, in this study, the act of paraphrasing, writing in-text citation and writing a reference list using APA style will be referred using a term, referencing skills.



1.3 Problem Statement

Plagiarism is a serious academic misconduct. It is a worldwide problem that is widespread among the students especially in the institutions of higher learning (Whitley & Keith- Spiefel, 2001; Macdonald & Carroll, 2006; Elander et al., 2010; Bilal, 2017). Studies in the west reported that the rate of plagiarism shows an increasing trend among university undergraduates, and it is indeed alarming to the university's management to overcome the problem (Thompson, 2006; Wilkinson, 2009; McCabe et al., 2012; Parnther, 2020). This problem also occurs in the Malaysian education scene. Respective parties of the public universities in Malaysia raise their concerns on this issue as Malaysian undergraduates are submitting plagiarized works for their coursework





submissions and the number of cases does not show any sign of decline in the near future if proper measures to minimize it is not dealt with (Berita Harian, 2018).

The academic misconduct also happens amongst ESL learners. Writing becomes a struggle amongst the ESL learners as they have low proficiency, limited vocabulary and inadequate knowledge of grammar in the target language (Al- Zubaidi & Richards, 2010; Mousavi & Kashefian-Naeeni, 2011; Aisyah Hani & Lee, 2016). As academic writing does not only focus on writing per say, hence unable to understand the sources that used the target language becomes the triggering factor for them to resort to plagiarism. Struggling to understand journals readings due to lack of proficiency in English language even with repeated reading is said to be one of the reasons they resorted to plagiarism (Risati & Rahimi, 2013).



Anxieties in writing in a target language that they lack proficient may lead them to consider plagiarising as an easy way out to complete their assignments. Besides, lack of academic referencing skills also triggers the students to commit plagiarism (Power, 2009; Parfitt, 2012; Teeter, 2015). In addition, Ningtyas et al. (2021) states that plagiarism cases are likely to happen when students struggle in their writing processes especially when they are unable to develop the ideas particularly amongst the ESL and EFL learners as they have hard time in understanding the sources in their target language. Students' tendency to resort to copy and paste the information without acknowledging the sources appropriately is rampant as the lack of knowledge in referencing becomes the barrier of submitting their own original works. Unable to understand the content in addition to lack of referencing skills leave them with no choice but to plagiarise in order to complete their assignments. Hence, one of the best





solutions is to expose and educate them on the topic (Schuetze, 2004; Culwin, 2006; Bennett et al., 2011).

In the scope of Malaysian higher institutions, issues pertaining to plagiarism is also being discussed among Malaysian researchers and educators across disciplines and this also includes the Teaching of a Second Language (TESL) field. Generally, multiple studies reported that students' awareness towards plagiarism is high however the plagiarism acts are still evidently found in their academic writing (Ummul Khair et al., 2012; Mehar Singh & Ganapathy, 2015; Cheah, 2015). Most of the studies in Malaysia only focused on addressing the issue on students' plagiarism and little had been carried out on finding potential solution or intervention to help reduce the plagiarism acts that are found in their academic writing. It is important that awareness and interventions are closely associated to effectively combat plagiarism acts among the Malaysian undergraduates. Educating the students on how to write correct references is important and could be the first step in reducing the plagiarism act at the higher institution. Proper execution and demonstration of correct technique on how to write references using the correct format and rules to the students are needed to ensure that they are fully aware on both discipline and practices that they have to apply in their academic writing.

An intervention called EI by Smedley et al. (2015) which consists of lectures and exercises that focuses on a set of referencing skills namely writing in-text citation, paraphrasing, and writing a reference list is reported to be an effective measure in improving students' ability on the mentioned referencing skills. The intervention focuses on educating students explicitly on the correct way to write references through the utilization of lectures and exercises.





Smedley, Crawford and Cloete, (2015) tested an intervention which called Educational Intervention (EI) that aims to identify whether it improved student's understanding and awareness of plagiarism to help reduce plagiarism acts amongst nursing students. Instructional strategies such as lectures and exercises on plagiarism and referencing skills namely writing in-text citation, paraphrasing and writing a reference list were integrated in their intervention. Pre-intervention and post-intervention surveys were distributed to the participants and the results report that generally, participants showed improvement in both knowledge and understanding pertaining to the aspects of plagiarism including the referencing skills post-treatment. In addition, the researchers also claim that an improvement can be seen in paraphrasing and assignment referencing in the semester following the EI. In fact, the researchers also carried out an extended evaluation of the EI in another study in 2019 and the findings also showed positive outcomes on students' understanding on their reference skills post-treatment (Smedley et. al, 2019). Even though, there are multiple intervention and strategies are being carried out to reduce the plagiarism act amongst the students, but the long-term explicit demonstration and presentation of correct references through lectures and exercises during the EI showed positive results and highly effective as there were less plagiarism acts found in the students' writing task and assignment post treatment.

Therefore, this present study was carried out to help determine the effectiveness of the implementation of EI in improving a set of referencing skills which is selected according to its importance on academic writing which are writing in-text citation, paraphrasing, and writing a reference list using APA style. This present study was





specifically targeting the ESL learners as a measure to help combat the plagiarism acts found in their academic writing that could help to minimize the plagiarism cases specifically in the field of TESL.

1.4 Research Objectives

The objectives of this study are:

1. To investigate the effectiveness of using Smedley's EI (2015) to improve ESL undergraduates' in-text citation abilities.
2. To examine the effectiveness of using Smedley's EI (2015) to improve ESL undergraduates' paraphrasing skills.
3. To explore the effectiveness of using Smedley's EI (2015) to improve ESL undergraduates' abilities to write a reference list using APA style.
4. To find out ESL undergraduates' perceptions on the use of Smedley's EI (2015) in improving their abilities to write in-text citation, paraphrase and write a reference list using APA style.

1.5 Research Questions

Below are research questions that are formulated to guide this research study:

- RQ1 : How far does the use of Smedley's EI (2015) improve ESL undergraduates' in-text citation abilities?
- RQ2 : To what extent does the use of Smedley's EI (2015) improve ESL





undergraduates' paraphrasing skills?

- RQ3 : To what degree does the use of Smedley's EI (2015) improve ESL undergraduates' abilities to write a correct reference list using APA style?
- RQ4 : What is the ESL undergraduates' perception on the use of Smedley's EI (2015) in improving their abilities to write in-text citation, paraphrase and write a reference list using APA style?

1.6 Research Hypothesis

Research hypothesis is a specific, testable prediction of the outcome of a study (Kabir, 2016). Hypothesis testing is needed in order to reject or accept a hypothesis. According to Kolawole and Sekumade (2017), examining the entire population is the ideal way to prove whether a hypothesis is true or false with absolute certainty. However, as it is generally impractical to cover the entire population, researchers usually opt for a random sample to represent the population. As the present study utilised non random sampling, which is purposive sampling, the findings of the study are only to represent solely for the sample involved in the study and not to generalize the findings of the entire population. Hence, research hypothesis is not formulated to guide this study.

1.7 Definition of Terms

Listed below are the definitions that are used in this study.





1.7.1 Plagiarism

Hexham (2005) defines plagiarism as the action of using more than four words from an original source in the author's work without using quote marks or a detailed citation to the original source. Meanwhile, Hannabus (2011) views plagiarism as the exact or near replication of concepts, words or expressions from another person's work that is presented as your own without crediting to the original author. In this study, plagiarism refers to the act of presenting inaccurate presentation of in-text citation, paraphrasing and writing reference list according to APA style of the original sources used in the writer's body text.

1.7.2 In-text citation



Edith Cowan University (2020) describes in-text citation as the "brief form of the reference" that is put into the writer's body of work. Meanwhile, according to University of Otago (2017), in-text citations need to be presented throughout the writing to properly attribute the original sources. In this study, in-text citation refers to the parenthetical documentation which uses parenthesis for citation that is placed appropriately within the whole write-up to acknowledge the outside information or ideas of other authors presented in it.





1.7.3 Paraphrase

Bhagat and Hovy (2013) define paraphrase as a “sentence or phrases that convey the same meaning using different wording” (p.463). According to Purdue Online Writing Lab (2010) paraphrasing is the act of expressing someone else’s thoughts and information in your own words. In this study, paraphrase refers as describing or presenting someone else’s words and ideas using one’s own word but keeping the meaning of the sources intact.

1.7.4 Reference list

The University of Otago (2017) defines reference list as the complete list of references of the sources that are cited by the writers in their writing. Meanwhile, University of New England (2020) describes reference list as the whole list of sources writers use in their in-text references in their writing. There are three main citation styles in academic writing namely Modern Language Association (MLA), American Psychological Association (APA) and Chicago. In this study, reference list refers to a compilation of references that are referred and presented in the body of writing which conformed to the standard rule of APA citation of 7th edition style.

1.7.5 Educational Intervention (EI)

Lestrud (2013) defines educational intervention as a method used to provide necessary supports for the students to acquire new skills through the educational system. The





educational system constitutes of functional skills, academic, cognitive, behavioural, and social skills. In this study, EI refers to the intervention used in Smedley et al. (2015) which consists of instructional strategies that aims to provide knowledge on the theories, concepts, and practices specifically on referencing through explicit teaching to the students. The instructional strategies which consist of lectures and exercises are utilised to enhance students' abilities to do correct referencing, namely in writing in-text citation, paraphrasing and writing a reference lists using APA style.

1.7.6 Academic writing

Irvin (2010) defines academic writing as a form of evaluation that require learners to have certain “disciplinary skills of thinking, interpreting and presenting” in which demonstrate the learners' knowledge as well as their proficiency. Meanwhile Akkaya & Aydin (2018) views academic writing as a practice of sharing original findings which is done according to established guidelines. In this study, academic writing is the formal written work that is utilised in academic setting. It has its own set of rules, including proper reference conventions that students need to abide to avoid plagiarism.

1.7.7 Instructional strategy

Gropper (1973) defines instructional strategy as prescriptive guidelines for structuring instructional activities that create suitable learning experiences to achieve the behavioural objectives. According to Hill and Jordan (2021), instructional strategy is





the teaching tools that help students meet their learning objectives. In this study, instructional strategy refers to the explicit teaching and learning activities through the utilisation of lectures and exercises. Instructional strategies used in this study focused specifically on plagiarism topics namely in writing in-text citation, paraphrasing and writing a reference list using APA style 7th edition.

1.7.8 Referencing

University of the West of England Bristol (2021) defines referencing as the act of recognising the sources of information utilised in the preparation and completion of academic work. According to University of New Zealand (2020), referencing is the process of indicating to the reader where ideas from other sources have been incorporated into the writing. This includes citing the sources of information in the work - i.e, in-text citation and paraphrasing from sources, and compiling an alphabetical list of references at the end of the work - i.e, reference list. In this study, referencing refers to a set of writing skills which are writing in-text citation, paraphrasing, and writing a reference list using APA style 7th edition.

1.8 Limitations of Study

This study has potential limitations which are mode of teaching or teaching platform, experiment duration, frequency of data collection and online learning and are explained as follow:





1.8.1 Mode of Teaching/ Teaching Platform

Due to the inevitable circumstances of Covid-19 pandemic that is currently happening worldwide, the mode of teaching is being replaced from face to face (F2F) to virtual classes. Hence, this study was experimented online. This may be one of the barriers in executing the interventions to the participants. The concern lies on whether online courses could offer the learning opportunities as equal in both quality and quantity as compared to traditional F2F classes (Arias, Swinton & Anderson, 2018). However, even though this study was executed online, the use of Google Meet as the online teaching platform had enabled the instructor to have a “virtual face to face” with the students as users can use their camera to have a similar live interaction as physical classes. Nonetheless, future studies can be carried out F2F once the pandemic is over in order to accurately determine the effectiveness of the intervention.



1.8.2 Experiment Duration

A semester lasts for 17 weeks which is equal to approximately 4 months. Since most of the students will be busy with their preparation to sit for their final assessments for the other courses by the end of the semester hence the time to conduct the study is limited to a period of 14 weeks to ensure students’ full participation during the intervention. To compensate to the short duration of the study, this study used various data collection which are test, documents, and interview in order to present reliable findings. 14 weeks of intervention could help bring out findings however a longitudinal study is better in establishing the effectiveness of the intervention. This is because longitudinal study allows researchers to investigate the changes and developments in the participants’





target behaviour over an extended period of time and helps establish relationship between the study's variables (Singer & Willet, 2003)

1.8.3 Frequency of Data Collection

The quantitative data of the study was collected twice; the first phase of data collection is the pre-test, and the second time is the data for post-test. As for qualitative data, focus group interview was carried out. Various data collection methods and frequency of data collection are important to analyse the sample as differing methodologies and constant monitoring will help resulting findings that can reinforce each other. This helps in data triangulation. Honorene (2017) states that data triangulation is important in strengthening your study as it increases the overall validity and credibility of the data sets and information that are procured. Therefore, future study can opt for frequent data collections such as mid-test data collection for a much rigor comparative data analysis.

1.8.4 Online Learning

This study fully utilised online learning in executing the research as shifting of physical classes to online classes was done due to the Covid-19 pandemic which occurred throughout the period of study. Even though the process of carrying out all the research procedures through online learning was smooth, however websites and applications such as Quillbot, Citation machine and others were easily accessible for the participants to use. According to Kusuma (2020), the use of QuillBot assisted the teachers and





students by providing a paraphrase which they were unable to write it manually. This may help reduce the plagiarism acts in their writing. This was not in the researcher's control to curb the usage due to the nature of an online intervention. To overcome this limitation, this study utilised test that used True or False and Multiple-Choice Question (MCQ) formats as one of the research instruments to gather the data. This helped limit the possibility of the Internet usage as the choices of answers given refrained them to fully rely on the Internet in obtaining answers for the test. However, a similar intervention may be carried out physically to ensure extraneous variable like access to internet can be eliminated hence provide more valid findings to determine the effectiveness of the intervention.



1.9 Significance of Study

The current study is important in order to combat the plagiarism acts that happened amongst the undergraduates at tertiary level. The growing issues involving plagiarism in the educational institutions need to be taken into serious consideration to ensure that the academic integrity of the nation's education system is maintained (Ramlan Mustapha et al., 2014). Thus, a possible intervention is necessary as an initiative to reduce plagiarism acts among the students.

The results of the study added to the body of knowledge in regard to plagiarism issues especially in continuing the efforts to reduce the plagiarism acts among the undergraduates. This study also provided new insights or perspectives to the policy





markers both in the ministry level as well as university level in combatting the act of plagiarism. Tackling the problem by finding the solution instead of just seeing it as an obstacle to get rid of, could help to promote a much well-thought approach towards the goal of zero plagiarism at the higher institutions.

Most importantly, the results from this research helped to verify whether the implementation of EI could help to improve their knowledge on plagiarism and their skills in writing in-text citation, paraphrasing and writing a reference list using APA style hence reducing the plagiarism acts among ESL undergraduates.

If the intervention is proven to be effective in tackling the issues of plagiarism specifically in their academic writing, lecturers could use it as a guide to implement for their own academic writing class in order to promote continuous effort in finding solutions to reduce plagiarism in the students' academic works. Meanwhile, by implementing such intervention in class, students will be able to write better and most importantly conform to the standard conventions needed when writing an academic paper.

1.10 Summary

This chapter provided an overview to the whole study. The scope of the study focuses on investigating the issue related to plagiarism acts at the higher institutions specifically in the Malaysian academic landscape and are further discussed through the findings and views from multiple researchers. To summarize, the aim of this study is to determine





the effectiveness of using the Educational Intervention (EI) by Smedley et al. (2015) to improve ESL undergraduates' referencing skills namely writing in-text citation, paraphrasing and referencing list to help reduce plagiarism act in their academic writing. The results of this study are hoped to enlighten the importance of explicit education on plagiarism to help specifically ESL undergraduates in avoiding plagiarism in their writing effectively

