

Writing Portfolios In The Classroom: Policy And Practice, Promise And Peril

Article

Development of a Rubric to Assess Academic Writing Incorporating Plagiarism Detectors

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Abstract

Similarity reports of plagiarism detectors should be approached with caution as they may not be sufficient to support allegations of plagiarism. This study developed a 50-item rubric to simplify and standardize evaluation of academic papers. In the spring semester of 2011-2012 academic year, 161 freshmen's papers at the English Language Teaching Department of Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University, Turkey, were assessed using the rubric. Validity and reliability were established. The results indicated citation as a particularly problematic aspect, and indicated that fairer assessment could be achieved by using the rubric along with plagiarism detectors' similarity results.

Keywords

academic writing, academic writing scoring rubric, assessing academic papers, plagiarism, plagiarism detector, Turnitin

Writing academic papers is regarded as a complicated task by students and their assessment is also a challenging process for lecturers. Interestingly, the problems in assessing writing are believed to outnumber the solutions (Speck & Jones, 1998). To overcome this, lecturers have referred to a range of theoretical approaches. To achieve a systematic evaluation process, lecturers normally use a scoring rubric that evaluates various discourse and linguistic features along with specific rules of academic writing. However, recent technological advances appear to contribute to a more satisfactory or accurate assessment of academic papers; for example, "Turnitin" claims to prevent plagiarism and aid online grading. Although such efforts deserve recognition, it is still the lecturers themselves who have to score the assignments; therefore, they need to be able to combine reports from plagiarism detectors with their own course aims and outcomes. In other words, their rubric needs to result in accurate assessment through a fair evaluation process (Comer, 2009). Consequently, this study aims at developing a valid and reliable *academic writing assessment rubric*, also known as a *marking scheme* or *marking guide*, to assess EFL (English as a foreign language) teacher candidates' academic papers by integrating similarity reports retrieved from plagiarism detectors.

In this respect, the researcher developed the "Transparent Academic Writing Rubric" (TAWR), which is a combination of several essential components of academic writing. Although available rubrics include common characteristics, almost none deals with the appropriate use of in-text citation rules in detail. As academic writing heavily depends on


incorporating other studies, students should be capable of administering such rules appropriately themselves, as suggested by Hyland (2009). TAWR included 50 items, each carrying 2 points out of 100. The items were grouped in five categories under the subtitles of *introduction* (8 items), *citation* (16 items), *academic writing* (8 items), *idea presentation* (11 items), and *mechanics* (7 items). These items together aimed to assess how reader-friendly the texts were with specific emphasis on the accuracy of referencing as an essential component of academic writing (Moore, 2014).

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is defined as "the practice of claiming credit for the words, ideas, and concepts of others" (American Psychological Association [APA], 2010, p. 171). The challenges caused by plagiarism are becoming more important in parallel with developments in Internet technology. In general, plagiarism may occur in any aspect of daily life such as academic studies, computer games, journalism, literature, music, arts, politics, and many more. Unsurprisingly, higher profile plagiarizers receive more attention from the public (Souza-Silva, 2014). Recently, in the academic context, more lecturers have been complaining about plagiarized

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