

## Plagiarism and Intertextuality: RA Authors' Sociocultural Perceptions and Mainstream Practices

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Received: 2017/12/30

Accepted: 2018/05/07

**Abstract:** This study reports on research article (RA) authors' definitional understanding and sociocultural perceptions of intertextuality and plagiarism in academic writing. To meet this end, a questionnaire, consisting of three sections, was constructed and emailed to Iranian RA authors who have published in leading international and local applied linguistics journals. The findings of the first two sections suggest that authors recognized the crucial role intertextuality plays in RAs; however, they had a flimsy understanding of the concept and its cultural bearings. On the other hand, unacceptable, as most of these respondents may find it, plagiarism was seen as an unavoidable part of academic research at least in initial steps of academic writing. This was shown to be mainly the function of the authors' sociocultural perceptions of plagiarism. The third section of the questionnaire addressed the authors' departure from plagiarism and gradual proximization to intertextuality. The findings imply that plagiarism, intertextuality and their concomitant sociocultural perceptions ought to be discussed, re-examined, and put to trial in local contexts.

**Keywords:** Plagiarism, Intertextuality, Sociocultural Perceptions, Plagiarism-intertextuality Continuum.

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ISSN (Online): 2322-5343, ISSN (Print): 2252-0198

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## Introduction

Academic writing and research articles (RAs), in particular, must abide by certain agreed-upon conventions and practices which are sanctioned and recognized by members of discourse communities, who more or less pursue shared goals (Swales, 1990, 2004; Bhatia, 1993; Berckenkotter & Huckin, 1995). Some of these conventions are local in the sense that they address local audience and are influenced by home cultures, whereas other norms have wider scope and address a larger audience (Pennycook, 1994, 1996; Canagarajah, 2002; Connor, 2004). From among the numerous conventions that writers need to bear in mind, intertextuality (Hyland, 2009; Bazerman, 2004a, 2004b) and its close-knit but ill-advised concept, plagiarism (Pecorari, 2001, 2003, 2006; Crocker & Shaw, 2002; Pecorari & Shaw, 2012), act as determinants of representing an academic text as original or unauthentic. Intertextuality is roughly defined as mixing different genres, discourses, and voices that are others' property to form a new text with mentioning the original sources, and adding to them one's own voice (Bazerman, 2004a, 2004b). This amalgamation of texts, as this study argues, can be used as a strategy to produce effective discourse if the novice writers are apprised of the value and functions of intertextuality as a source of credibility. In fact, combination of different texts as intertextuality and different discourses as an interdiscursivity strategy (Fairclough, 1992, 1993) display appropriate social practices and ideologies (Momani, Badarneh & Migdadi, 2010). Plagiarism, in technical terms, refers to the intentional disposing of citation or reference to the source materials (Pecorari, 2001, 2003; Hyland, 2009). Assuming the definitional attribute 'intentional' as a decisive criterion for understanding plagiarism, Howard (1995, 1999) further separated plagiarism into two practices: (a) deliberate adoption of others' texts and ideas as one's own, with the intent to deceive and (b) inadvertent or faulty referencing, which included "patchwriting" (p. 166). Elsewhere, Howard (1992) first coined the term "patchwriting" to describe instances where students take ideas and words from a number of sources and put them together as their own. Patchwriting is sometimes contrasted with plagiarism on the account that it is often due to lack of skills and awareness of in-text citation practices.

Areas of overlap abound when we discuss the differences between intertextuality and plagiarism from a cultural and intercultural point of view. This may suggest that people from different parts of the world with diverse literacy traditions have different perceptions of intertextuality and plagiarism and, as Bazerman (2004a, p. 59) argues, cross-cultural studies can "provide useful apparatus for reorienting teaching of writing and literacy studies away

from the isolated, individual writer toward the writer placed within a complex social, textual field". Chandrasoma, Thompson, and Pennycook (2004) argued that it would be preferable to look at the intertextuality-plagiarism dichotomy as transgressive and nontransgressive intertextuality. This means that not all inappropriate intertextual applications should be classified as plagiarism. For instance, novice writers may have limited understandings about when and how to signal the role that a source has played in a new text. As such, many researchers like Howard (1999), Pecorari (2001), Shi (2004), Share (2006), and Pecorari and Petrić (2014) maintain that intention should be a key factor in deciding cases of plagiarism. Sutherland-Smith (2005) and Klitgard (2009) found that novice writers tremendously associated plagiarism with the act of copying; this implies they may not perceive other sorts of inappropriate source use as plagiarism. Recently, there has been quite a large body of research into this area, drawing on a wide range of data from student assignments to interviews with staff and students (Crocker & Shaw, 2002). But treating the issue requires a framework that does depend on fair judgments since, as Sutherland-Smith (2005, p. 83) points out, "plagiarism is a multi-layered phenomenon encompassing a spectrum of human intentions. Cultural background has also been widely recognized as a main cause of problematic source misuse, stretching from using differential experience with academic writing tasks (Connor, 2004) to varying attitudes (e.g., Shi, 2006).

The way writers perceive plagiarism probably depends on how important or serious they perceive plagiaristic act, estimation of the odds of being caught, and the induced attitudes from instructional environment (Martin 1992; Carroll, 2002; Marshall & Garry, 2005). These perceptions of the norms of the academic discourse community are different since differences exist within and between disciplines and from culture to culture (Martin, 1992). Several interview-based studies have confirmed the existence of cross-disciplinary and cross-cultural variations in perceptions (Deckert, 1993; Pennycook, 1996; Flint, Macdonald, & Clegg, 2005; Gu & Brooks, 2008; Borg, 2009; Pecorari & Shaw, 2012). In an inquiry aimed to discover how well students can recognize plagiaristic writing, in what terms they perceive it as inappropriate, and how they view students who plagiarize, Deckert (1993) administered a questionnaire-based study where he found that freshmen had little familiarity with the notion of plagiarism and poor ability to recognize it. The questionnaire also determined that these students view persons who plagiarize as pathetic and indolent. On the other hand, advanced students were more able to recognize plagiarism and showed greater concern for the original writer and the issue of honesty. Pennycook (1996) disagreed with Deckert (1993) on the account that Deckert's study

was based on Western notions of academic writing. Pennycook considers that Western notions of plagiarism are not cross-culturally applicable. He argues that in cultures where rote learning and memory recalls are regarded as intellectual advantage, notions of Western plagiarism or intertextuality look irrelevant.

Following Atkinson (2003, 2004) and Connor and Moreno's (2005) ideas regarding cross-cultural writing, as well as the evolutionary potential of culture (Atkinson, 2003, 2004), this study views culture as a dynamic combination of social actions and the communicative relations between them. With this in mind, and considering the fact that academic genres like RAs essentially depict dynamic communicative settings where members of a particular community share mutual understanding (Bhatia, 1993; Swales, 1990), we need to pay more heed to the evolutionary nature of cultures and the changes they might undergo. That is, what was recognized as a norm a decade or two ago is likely modified or removed depending on the needs and demands of the expanding international current academic milieu. Studies concerning plagiarism from a cross-cultural point of view (e.g., Matalene, 1985; Deckert, 1993; Gu & Brooks, 2008) have focused on perceptions of plagiarism and intertextuality in isolation, but their pendulum on a continuum of possibilities and the associated differences have not been examined in one single study, which is the driving thrust behind the current study. Cultural studies and second language writing research have contributed to the increasing body of knowledge about plagiarism but not intertextuality. This paper tries to fill the gap and contribute to this area by using text-based questionnaires. This study adds to the existing body of knowledge by distinguishing plagiarism from intertextuality via taking participants' sociocultural perceptions into account. In addition, the process of moving from reliance on plagiarism to adroit use of intertextuality by prolific authors is paid due attention too. Given this, this article is guided by the following research questions.

1. What are the Iranian RAs writers' perceptions of plagiarism and intertextuality?
2. How do Iranian writers move from reliance on plagiarism to intertextuality?
3. What are the effects of the Iranian writers' sociocultural background on the use of plagiarism and intertextuality?

In this study, taking Bazerman's (2004a) characterization of intertextuality as the theoretical bedrock, we assume intertextuality as a constructive and appropriate social practice in academic writing which enriches the process of text production and gives credibility to text producer. We also assume the view that intertextuality is a craft that cultivates in a cumulative fashion. That is, one can only gain insight in intertextuality and apply intertexts with practice

and abiding by established rules and conventions. In our study, an impartial stance toward plagiarism is taken on the grounds that we want to exert an unbiased perspective when devising the questionnaire. We should grant that in any endeavor to probe into the plagiarism and intertextuality discussion, there is always the risk of leaning towards either condemning plagiarism as wrong or justifying it as unavoidable writing practice. We try to avoid this by reminding ourselves of the fact that we can learn more by observing.

## **Methodology**

### **Participants**

New forms of communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991) are appearing and technology advances have bridged all the gaps in bringing members of discourse communities closer to each other and thereby has made access to these members easier. Using Telegram application, we could collect preliminary data of 176 members from 323 of an Iranian academia group, all English teachers and university instructors holding Applied Linguistics, Literature, Translation, and Theoretical Linguistics degrees, who were willing to participate in the study. Then, these volunteers were inquired if they had majored in Applied Linguistics and if they already had any publications. Only did 100 members holding degrees in Applied Linguistics claim to have such publications which were verified by searching different databases like Google Scholar Citations, Academia, LinkedIn and Researchgate on the Internet. The other volunteers were excluded from the study owing to the fact they had no published work. Next, when these 100 members were sent a questionnaire via email, only 53 (31 males and 22 females) of them filled in the questionnaires and sent them back within a time interval of a month August 2016. It is important to note that the remaining participants majored or have been majoring in Applied Linguistics; hence, most likely they share a similar set of academic conventions governing their writing practices. As to a sample of this size, it is claimed that it is adequate to allow for tentative generalizations (Mackey & Gass, 2012). All the participants were Iranian teachers and university instructors of English. From among the final sample, eight members were permanent faculty members of Applied Linguistics. The other members were either part-time university instructors, part-time and full-time teachers at schools. The youngest participant was 27 and the oldest was 66 years old. The average age was 37.4. Table 1 displays details of the sample. Their years of experience in teaching ranged between 5 years and 27 years. Almost all the participants have published and are still carrying out research projects.

Disciplinary academic publication was a prerequisite to this study which stipulated the inclusion or exclusion of the respondents based on their authorship status with regard to their local and international publications. To identify the local Applied Linguistics journals, we obtained an official list of Iranian journals that are assigned the status of ‘academic’ by the Ministry of Higher Education in Iran. The same procedure was followed for selecting the international journals. That is, a number of well-known accredited, accessible journals addressing the same audience in the field were chosen based on impact factor and indexing. These international journals are said to share the same aims and scopes by and large. Thus, we counted only those articles as accredited that belonged to the list we obtained and excluded those articles that did not.

**Table 1.** *Specifications of the participants*

	Level of education	Number	Publications in local journals	Publications in international journals
Faculty members	Instructors	3 (2 males and 1 female)	34	1
	Assistant professors	3 (3 males)	51	5
	Associate professors	2 (2females)	87	11
Non-faculty members	Ph.D. holders	9 (6 males and 3 females)	63	7
	Ph.D. candidates	13 (9 males and 4 females)	92	6
	M.A. holders	23 (11 males and 12 females)	81	0

## Instrumentations

### Questionnaire

To address the issues in concern, a questionnaire was constructed, consisting of three sections with the following objectives. The first section, which is mainly an extraction of Marshall and Garry (2005) and some touches from Bazerman (2004a, 2004b) requests participants to provide their biodata regarding their age, gender, major, experience of learning and/or teaching, and elicited any prior experience with the concept and practice of plagiarism and, by implicit reference, intertextuality, viz. what does not count as plagiarism can be taken as an approximation to intertextuality. This section contained 14 closed items requiring *yes/no/I don't know* responses. These three options were adopted to make the questionnaire more respondent-friendly (Dörnyei, 2010), thus encouraging them to take the time to complete it. The second section contained items targeting the evolution of the participants' citation skills and their effort to create personal research space along the plagiarism-intertextuality continuum. This section drew more on Fairclough (1993), Bazerman (2004a, 2004b), and

Pecorari (2001, 2003, 2006) because our intention was to probe into how the respondents moved toward intertextuality as an appropriate academic conduct. This section included 14 scenarios that required participants to select responses that explicitly characterize their movement from plagiaristic practices to appropriate intertextuality. These scenarios consisted of inappropriate and appropriate behaviors that were generated through discussions among the authors of the current study and also discussions with academic staff, as well as with reference to the existing literature (mainly Marshall & Garry, 2005; Bazerman, 2004a). Behaviors were reported on a scale of frequency ranging from 'never, once or twice, to occasionally, and finally often'. The reason why we chose these categories is that frequency of an action can indicate its evolutionary formation; as a result, the movement from total dependence on plagiarism can be expressed by 'often' and complete disposal of plagiarism can be shown by 'never'. The same applies to intertextuality; however, the other way around. This means that relying on intertextuality can be expectedly expressed by 'often', whereas distance from it is described by the adverb of frequency 'never'. The third section included 10 items relating to the respondents' sociocultural perceptions of the plagiarism-intertextuality dichotomy. This section was constructed for the most part based on Deckert (1993), Pennycook (1996), and Gu and Brooks (2008) that addressed a variety of possible manners which might or might not involve plagiarism and intertextuality from a cross-cultural standpoint. The respondents' answers to the items of this section were reported based on a 6-option Likert scale, starting at 'I strongly disagree' on the far most left, followed by 'I disagree, I slightly disagree, I partly agree, I agree and ending in I strongly agree' at the other end.

Moreover, there was an open-ended part at the end of the questionnaire which made it possible to gather verbal data about why RA writers commit plagiarism and how they gradually managed to shift from plagiarism to intertextuality. Our line of justification for implementing a questionnaire and an open-ended section at the end rather than definition-based instruments goes hand in hand with Marshall and Garry's (2005, p. 458) argument that "dissociating the respondent from their personal position" can help us better survey their perceptions. The main reason for inclusion of the open-ended section was that we needed to unshackle the participants from the confines of the questionnaire items and let them freely express what they could not have the chance to see there. Dörnyei (2007, 2010) warns researchers that in many questionnaires, respondents do not always give true answers about themselves; that is, "the results represent what the respondents report to feel or believe, rather than what they actually feel or believe" (2010, p. 8). Highlighting the value of genuine



answers for the respondents in an open letter and addressing the need for their straightforward answers, we granted the respondents the legal pursuit in case any leak in confidentiality of the data would arise later on. The most difficult step in constructing the questionnaire was ascertaining its reliability. The constructed questionnaire was piloted and subjected to Cronbach (1951) alpha to estimate the reliability. The reliability coefficient was .76 which secures a satisfactory level of reliability. The estimated twenty to thirty minutes was enough for an average participant to complete the questionnaire.

### Procedures

For the purpose of the study, a purposive sample was selected through the following procedures; identifying the target population, choosing members that met the requirements compatible with the purpose of the study, pruning unqualified members, and verifying the qualifications of those whom were selected. A questionnaire, consisting of three sections, was emailed to the participants and the filled-in ones were recollected within a month. The received responses were analyzed quantitatively. The participants' responses to the questionnaire items and the open-ended section were analyzed and some general themes were extracted. Summarizing the students' responses, the researchers coded and categorized the data into ten main themes. A framework for categorizing qualitative data was developed based on Consta's (1992) components of categorization, that is, *orientation* of responsibility or authority of categorization and verification of the connection between the categories found in the data with the research questions. In the present study, authority of categorization was inherent in: (1) researchers' purpose of the study and (2) the literature on the definitions and characteristics of each concept. On the basis of the categorization procedure, the following themes were obtained.

- a) The inherent variations in the definitions and practices of plagiarism;
- b) The alien nature of the concepts to the Iranian discourse community;
- c) The stated or unstated obligations to conform to the academic mainstream in the West;
- d) The role of experience and reviews in the transition from plagiarism to intertextuality;
- e) The cultural background and its bearings on the use of plagiarism and intertextuality;
- f) The desire to move from the periphery to the center of the discourse community;
- g) The role of technology in the escalation of "plagiarism epidemic" (Bloch, 2008, p. 225).
- h) Adding creditability to papers as the main reason for plagiarism to;
- i) Liability to plagiarize due to linguistic inability to convey meaning properly;
- j) Intertextuality as a form of masqueraded plagiarism.



## Results and Discussion

The purpose of this study was three-fold. RA authors' knowledge and sociocultural perceptions of intertextuality and plagiarism in academic writing were examined. In addition, the authors' detachment from plagiarism and their approximation to intertextuality was elicited in the questionnaires. In the introduction of his book, Marsh (2007, p. 1) says "plagiarism continues to draw the attention of scholars and educators in part because the problem, while often dismissed as a simple matter of textual misuse, betrays a range of complexities not easily managed via simple, straightforward solutions". This can be understood as part of the driving thrust behind pursuing this issue in our study too. Concerning the first research question of the study, Marshall and Garry (2005) and Bazerman's (2004a) definitions were used. Moreover, intertextuality was implicitly included in the questionnaire to ward off any favorable responses to the positive connotation of the term. On one extreme of the continuum, fraudulent act of plagiarism stands against the other end, that is, the appropriate source use and intertextuality. Table 2 shows the percentages of the respondents' familiarity with the notions of plagiarism and intertextuality.

**Table 2.** *Familiarity with plagiarism and intertextuality (some items are modified for this paper)*

Items	Yes	No	I don't know
1. Copying the words from another source without appropriate reference or acknowledgement.	96%	4%	0%
2. Copying the words from another source with an acknowledgement.	11%	87%	2%
3. Resubmitting an article submitted earlier elsewhere in another journal.	75%	22%	3%
4. Creating a new piece of work structured according to a documentation standard, by referring to existing work of the same type.	68%	15%	17%
5. Using a published work to identify important secondary citations that make a particular logical argument and then citing only those secondary sources to support your own use of the same logical argument.	32%	57%	11%
6. Copying the organization or structure of another piece of work without appropriate reference or acknowledgement.	39%	40%	21%
7. Changing the words of material from another piece of work and representing it as your own.	89%	11%	0%
8. Buying a complete piece of work in order to submit it.	100%	0%	0%
9. Copying the ideas from another piece of work without appropriate reference or acknowledgement.	53%	46%	1%
10. Copying a web site and putting your own words and name into the content part of the pages.	84%	13%	1%
11. Creating a new piece of work on the same theme as an existing one but in a new context and without copying the existing one.	35%	39%	26%
12. Using another piece of work to identify useful secondary citations that you cite in your own work without reading the cited material.	42%	44%	14%
13. Quoting from an existing piece of work with a reference to the source.	0%	93%	7%
14. Copying short sentences (less than 50 words) from another source without appropriate reference or acknowledgement.	39%	51%	10%

As it shown in Table 2, we found four patterns in the data. The first pattern is perceived in items 1, 7, 8, and 10 where almost all participants unanimously agree that these items are closely related to the definition of plagiarism, and; accordingly, in stark deviations from the concept of intertextuality. These items insinuate that our participants are familiar with the acceptable intertextuality practice, and they are aware of the practices that lead to either extreme. It is clear that knowing something does not guarantee its proper implementation because after all contextual factors and sociocultural contributors sometimes militate against idealistic realities. We believe that responses to these items are probably influenced by the presence of some words like *without*, *own*, *complete*, and *name* in the items. On the other hand, items 2 and 13, representing the second pattern of the data, indicate the other extreme of the continuum. A high percentage of the respondents disagreed that copying and quoting are problematic if they are accompanied by proper acknowledgements. This can be interpreted by the presence of the word *with* in both items. These two items also show that participants do not associate the acts of copying and quoting as illegible unless they are used by intentional overlooking of their references. The third pattern emerges from items 5, 9, 12, and 14. These items constitute a special case in that a lot of disagreements were detected in the respondents' answers. To account for these discrepancies, we can postulate that writing one's RA based on another similar work in terms of rhetorical organization, general conceptualization, or identifying one's voice through secondary sources are equivocal for half of the participants. These practices are likely found in the authors' native culture and are considered acceptable. Last but not least is the fourth pattern of uncertainty which is found in items 4, 6, and 11 with the key words *structure*, *organization*, and *context* that might have led respondent to be ambivalent. The reason for this uncertainty can be ascribed to the fact that most writers consider exact copying of an original source as the most evident case of plagiarism and organizational imitations are less indicative of plagiarism practice but rather a kind of intertextuality in the form of replication.

Generally, most of the findings in this section are rather similar to those found in Marshall and Garry (2005). In their study, participants showed relative familiarity with plagiarism; however, it seems our participants' knowledge of plagiarism as well as intertextuality is proportionally higher. This can be explained by reference to the level of education and the publishing profile of the participants. In Marshall and Garry (2005), the participants were junior students, while in our study the participants are all RA writers. What follows is a detailed analysis of the first section of the questionnaire.

More specifically, as Table 2 shows, almost all participants know that “copying the words from another source without appropriate reference or acknowledgement” (item 1) is an absolute realization of plagiarism, while other items (5, 12, & 14) which indicate surreptitious instances of plagiarism were not recognized as plagiaristic acts. Item 5 should be interpreted as misunderstanding of citing secondary sources. “Resubmitting an article that was submitted in another journal” (item 3) demonstrates a special case in that although most participants knew that if disclosed, the odds are all against having an RA published, still 22% of them considered it as not necessarily plagiarism. As explained by some respondents in the open-ended section, they are forced to resubmit a manuscript of their work to another journal because the review time might take longer than expected; therefore, to raise probabilities of publication they resubmit the same manuscript to two or even three journals. Items 6 and 9 were considered to be somewhat legitimate by the participants because they would see transferring ideas and rhetorical organization as common strategies to decrease plagiarism.

Carroll (2002) notes that the formal definition of plagiarism provided to students in many cases varies according to the discipline, the context, and the expectation of what is meant by common knowledge, institutional regulations, and professional codes of ethics. But it remains unclear how well these are understood and normalized by academics and students, and how effective staff and institutions are at communicating what these definitions actually mean (Walker, 2008). Marshall and Garry (2005) point out that some of the confusion may be explained, if not excused, by students. Writers' lack of knowledge of how the assessment process takes place is another reason. The results for the definitions of plagiarism are of particular concern, suggesting that participants have a mixed understanding of the concept of plagiarism and the many different ways in which they can plagiarize. This suggests that education programs need to decode the more formal definitions of plagiarism into specific examples that illustrate the range of activities that are not permitted and how this misconduct can be avoided. In line with previous studies (Deckert, 1993; Marshall and Garry 2005; Bloch, 2008; Gu & Brooks, 2008; Pecarori & Shaw, 2012), our findings showed that unclear instructions during academic programs and inadequate attention to the issue of plagiarism in academic community can result in unfamiliarity with practical dimension of plagiarism and intertextuality. This suggests the need for clarifying these concepts and illuminating the differences and areas of correspondence between the two poles of the spectrum in research courses at M.A. and even at Ph.D. programs which can minimize the possibility of deliberative commitment of the malevolent plagiarism.

The second section of the questionnaire centered on how the participants' RA writing skills, particularly their citation practices and intertextuality, gradually evolved from plagiaristic dependent stage to intertextual-rich text production stage. Patterns of responses to these items were similar for all respondents whether university staff, down to M.A. graduates. Thus, the data and the findings refer to all respondents' skills. Table 3 shows the frequency of the respondents' responses regarding the strategies contributing to plagiarism and intertextuality.

**Table 3.** *Participants' self-report behaviors related to plagiarism and intertextuality (by percentage)*

Items of behavior	Never	Once or Twice	Occasionally	Often
1. As a novice writer, I used to use an entire academic RA and change the title and key words to submit it under my name.	90%	8%	2%	0%
2. I have carbon copied sections of RAs or books and pasted them onto my work without proper citation.	73%	12%	8%	7%
3. I have changed the wordings of headings and subheadings of an academic work but have kept the general structure of the original work intact.	79%	11%	10%	0%
4. I have paraphrased parts of other writers' works semantically or syntactically to fit my work without reference to the original works.	32%	6%	19%	43%
5. I am still doing the malpractices mentioned in the previous items to write an RA though I know they are wrong.	92%	8%	0%	0%
6. I have used the numerical data of other studies to save time and to avoid the practical shortcomings.	77%	13%	9%	1%
7. I began to pay heed to plagiarism and the importance of intertextuality since my M.A. supervisor picked on me while I was doing my Master's degree.	38%	22%	0%	40%
8. As I gained better insight into my field, I could include my opinions along with others' ideas with appropriate references to the original authors.	4%	16%	26%	54%
9. I have studied the universally accepted styles of referencing and citations in RAs to comply with the conventional format.	24%	12%	16%	48%
10. When I hear about the disgraceful defamatory stories about plagiarism punishments, I reproach myself for having done so.	6%	12%	30%	52%
11. I have relied on institutions that provide help with regard to detecting plagiarism before submitting the RA to a journal.	6%	12%	0%	72%
12. More recently because I know what plagiarism is, I try my best to avoid including quotes without references.	10%	0%	13%	77%
13. I include primary sources in my RA to avoid being trapped in plagiarism and at the same time to observe intertextuality.	0%	0%	23%	77%
14. Using appropriate citations, I clearly separate my ideas from others' ideas to enhance intertextuality in writing RA.	14%	0%	23%	63%

The items in this section were arranged in such a way that those on the top would imply a tendency to plagiarism, while the items further down the questionnaire gradually approximate intertextuality. As it can be clearly seen in Table 3, except for items 4, 7, and 11, there is a general descending trend in most of the items under the heading 'never', beginning at high percentages (70% or more) for the items at the top of the questionnaire and low percentages moving downwards. A conspicuous ascending pattern of behavior can also be seen under the frequency categories 'occasionally' and 'often'. Looking at the percentages representing the frequencies of the participants' patterns of behavior under these headings, we can cautiously suggest that the participants reported gradual independence of copying and patchwriting and shifted to intertextuality instead. Our results corroborate Bazerman's (2004a) point that progress toward intertextuality does not happen overnight. Our results allow us to propose that the shift to intertextuality is only possible through passing several stages before writers obtain authorship recognition in academic circles. Juxtaposing the data in this section with our interpretations may give rise to biased outcomes; therefore, it is preferable to interpret the findings in light of the existing literature.

Crocker and Shaw (2002, p. 40) maintain that intertextuality can manifest itself in three ways: "quantity, closeness of the wording to the source, and documentation". Quantity refers to how frequently a writer makes use of other sources to lend support to their arguments. The respondents' answers in our questionnaire revealed that they had fairly frequently relied on plagiaristic acts in their early stages of academic writing. However, as their works underwent peer, journal blind, and other gatekeepers' reviews, they gained better insights into the academic community expectations and conventions; hence, their RAs improved in later stages. An interesting finding in this regard is the rather insignificant role the M.A. or Ph.D. theses and dissertation supervisors played in providing the novice writers (item 7) with proper training in citations and documentation. The second element, the amount of paraphrasing a source or word-for-word copying, can be another scale which determines how far a writer has gone toward intertextuality. If copying is done, it is obvious it can be done in large or small chunks. The small percentages observed in items 1 and 2 show that our respondents almost unanimously agree that copying large portions of others' works is illegal or ethically unacceptable. This is what Howard (1995) calls 'patchwriting' for a practice which interweaves sentences copied directly from one or more sources with original writing. In general, items 1 and 2 indicate that our respondents had not relied on patchwriting as a primary strategy. As to documentation, the third element put forth by Crocker and Shaw

(2002), writers must be equipped with appropriate means to document a source; otherwise, they would be intentionally or inadvertently trapped by plagiarism. Item 9 is quite pertinent to this issue, where half of the authors (48%) admitted that they had not studied or received instruction on a universally accepted agenda on citation and referencing practices. This would undoubtedly jeopardize the documentation of their RAs. Item 10, in which the participants express regret about their plagiarizing in the past, stands in stark contrast with the first three items in that most the respondents claimed they had never committed plagiarism. We may cast doubt on the responses given to these three items since we believe this feeling of remorse (item 10) could be the result of earlier wrongdoing, i.e., plagiarism.

As stated earlier, items 4, 7, and 11 do not comply with the descending and ascending patterns of behavior we found in the data. As for item 4, this incompatibility can be explained by the Iranian RA writers' perception of paraphrasing. It seems that they do not associate paraphrasing with plagiarism but rather consider it mainly a convenient strategy to augment a text and relate it to intertextuality although they negligently or cogently overlook proper citations. Item 7 required the respondents to contemplate on a specific point in the course of their academic studies when they began to appreciate the inappropriacy and illegitimacy of plagiarism and instead started to value intertextuality. The distribution of the percentages for this item indicates that the respondents could not determine either a definite time when this shift in academic behavior appeared or they might have adapted to these academic requirements through other sources like peers, self-studies, journal peer reviewers, etc. with no single stage or turning point. Plagiarism detection, item 11, is a new wave of academic appraisal which enables writers to judge their writings before it is judged by actual reviewers. However, the 72% of the Iranian writers who rated they have 'never' used these online applications implies that the trend has not dominantly taken over in Iran yet. This is probably because they have little trust in these applications or because the process of plagiarism detection is yet to be taken seriously in the Iranian context. The heading 'once or twice' did not constitute a controversial issue. The likely germane explanation for this finding is that the words 'once' and 'twice' are too definitive and diminutive in semantic terms that left participants undecided whether they have done the practices described in the items or not. These findings confirm Marsh (2007) who asserts that with the advent of technology, the means to plagiarize are easily accessible and it is the task of academic staff to inform novice writers of the consequences of this academic misconduct. Moreover, the need for a course on the differences between local and international communities of practice, discourse



communities, and discourse or generic conventions is strongly felt. This finding is in consistence with Pennycook's (1996) stance with regard to illuminating the differences in the local culture and international culture expectations and norms through direct intervention.

The third research question aimed at finding out how sociocultural factors and perspectives, having collectivist views knowledge production, relying on subjectivity in judgments, and viewing self as a foreigner to the English world, for instance, might have bearings on the Iranian RA writers' perception of plagiarism-intertextuality polarity. Ten items referring to manners of plagiarism and intertextuality implied in sociocultural propositions were designed to detect the respondents' (dis)agreement on a 6-option Likert Scale basis. Issues concerning the construction of this section of the questionnaire and its reliability and validity are discussed in section 3.2.1. Table 4 shows the percentages of responses to each item.

**Table 4.** *Writers' sociocultural perceptions of plagiarism-intertextuality*

Items	I strongly disagree	I disagree	I slightly disagree	I partly agree	I agree	I strongly agree
1. It is quite acceptable to copy others' words without mentioning their names in Iran.	86%	3%	0%	8%	3%	0%
2. In Iran, plagiarism is understood as stealing others' words and violating the international academic conventions.	0%	0%	6%	0%	4%	90%
3. I know plagiarism is unacceptable but I may want to commit it at times because it is a simple way to write scholarly.	56%	23%	2%	11%	8%	0%
4. The concepts of plagiarism and intertextuality belong to Western cultures.	34%	30%	6%	12%	13%	5%
5. Intertextuality is an alien concept to our culture and I have scant understanding of what it is in practical terms.	63%	18%	12%	7%	0%	0%
6. Intertextuality is teachable and comes with practice.	13%	21%	3%	23%	25%	15%
7. There is an urgent need to raise Iranian RA writers' awareness of the illegitimate plagiarism and the legitimate intertextuality	0%	0%	3%	12%	18%	67%
8. I think female RA writers conform to citation norms just as much as men do.	77%	19%	4%	0%	0%	0%
9. L1 writing practice has an effect on the writers' act of plagiarism and intertextuality in L2.	0%	2%	8%	33%	13%	42%
10. Imitation will lead to creativity. So it is okay to plagiarize at initial stages if one wants to develop writing skills in an L2.	8%	2%	12%	14%	46%	18%



Overall, the respondents had a negative perception of plagiarism (item 1) by 89% disagreement; but viewed it as an indispensable means in the process of becoming an autonomous author in academic communities. This is shown by the 64% of the respondents' agreement (item 10) who admitted that, as an initial step, plagiarism can enhance their writing skills and it can boost their authorship visibility. According to Table 4, the only two items which had the highest agreement rates are items 2 (90%) and 8 (67%). The high percentage of agreement for item 4 can be explained by the fact that the word 'stealing' is a close literal rendition for 'serghat-e adabi' in Persian which connotes a negative meaning regarding theft in literary works. That is why the majority of the respondents agreed that plagiarism is a pernicious act. Another explanation can be the indirect contrast made between the local (Iran) and international contexts in the item. Accordingly, when respondents consider the local context as opposed to the international one, in which there is a fierce competition for publication, they would perceive plagiarism more serious and malignant. This has already been supported by Canagarajah (2002) who envisages a direct relation between context of situation and cultural perceptions of linguistic phenomena in the society. Item 8 represents an acknowledgement that a considerable body of the Iranian academia admits its insufficient familiarity or expertise in telling plagiarism from intertextuality without guidance or training. However, a call for training does not necessarily indicate lack of knowledge but it might be an indication of a need for consolidating scattered bits and pieces of an issue. Whatever the motivation is, it is important to note that even academic members with HE degrees sometimes continue to commit a mistake, say, plagiarism, unless they are apprised of the current changes and developments in the international conventions and expectations of their fields of study. This can be explained by the notion of 'genre evolution' proposed by Swales (2004). This means that some instances of plagiarism are due to the fact that RA writers are not abreast with changes and new directions of the discourse communities in which they seek membership.

Item 3 associates the act of plagiarism with the ability to write scholarly. As it can be seen from the percentages for this item, Iranian writers on the whole disagree that plagiarism is the way to scholastic writing; however, the 20% of agreement is an alarming sign that there is still a misconception among novice writers that by copying others' words or ideas they can achieve higher levels of authorship. Another explanation can be the indulgent punishment most plagiarizers receive in Iran. Items 4 and 5 are generally concerned with the Westernized nature of plagiarism and intertextuality to the Iranian context. Our data show that the majority

of the respondents disagreed with this idea that the two concepts are alien to our culture. In fact, they have permeated the Iranian local academic community practices that the geographic boundaries of the terms have blurred and thus they are not considered imported Western commodities anymore. This shift in outlook, as Canagarajah (2002) describes, can be ascribed to the expanding circle of English as the language of science with all the disciplinary delicacies and conventions. Item 6, which is related to the potential for teachability of intertextuality as an acceptable writing norm, represents a unique case because the responses are distributed fairly equally along the agreement-disagreement continuum. This uncertainty emanates from the fact that most writers have little, if any, clue of what intertextuality is and how it is differentiated from plagiarism (This was verified in the first section of the questionnaire). The percentages given to the eminent need for raising writers' awareness of plagiarism and intertextuality in item 7 confirms the need for teaching such concepts which constitute an obstacle to original creative RA writing. Our result in this item is in agreement with Pecorari and Petrić (2014) who warned that without constant and institutionalized instruction, novice writers might commit plagiarism unintentionally.

The remarkable consensus (96% disagreement) among the participants in response to item 8 clearly shows that Iranian RA writers view female writers less liable to commit intentional plagiarism probably because it is generally believed that women exert much heed and prudence when they quote others in their own writings. This is in line with previous studies carried out in contexts other than Iran (for instance, Deckert, 1993; Bloch, & Chi, 1995; Carroll, 2002; Gu, & Brooks, 2008; Borg, 2009; Klitgard, 2009). Item 9, where almost half of the respondents recognize L1 effect as the main contributor to their success or failure in L2 academic writing, is in keeping with findings of other studies that maintain, more often than not, lack of linguistic ability equal to that of native speakers' (Bloch & Chi, 1995), cross-cultural discrepancies in L1 and L2 writing such as rhetorical organization (Bhatia, 1993; Canagarajah, 2002; Connor, 2004), generic features (Swales, 1990, 2004; Berkenkotter, Huckin, & Ackerman, 1991; Berkenkotter & Huckin, 1995; Atkinson, 2004) have been the point of merger among many researchers working in the area of cross-cultural academic writing and contrastive rhetoric. This body of research has yielded a conclusive finding that L1 effects should not be understated when non-native writers' L2 academic writing is in question. However, as our study demonstrates, the responses given by the respondents unravels the fact that it is not the linguistic ability per se that matters, but it is the lack of familiarity with the related discourse community conventions and the importance that

different writers from diverse cultural underpinnings ascribe to these conventions that creates a huge hiatus.

Following the writings on cross-cultural writing proposed by Atkinson (2004) and Connor and Moreno (2005), as well as the evolutionary potential of culture (Atkinson, 2004; Swales, 2004), our study views culture as a quest for ongoing coalescing of international homogeneity and, at the same time, the survival effort made by individual cultures. With this perspective, and considering that academic genres essentially depict dynamic communicative settings where members of a particular community share mutual understanding (Bhatia, 1993; Swales, 1990), we propose a flexible re-examination of the phenomena in our own context, otherwise we may be lost in seeking what plagiarism and intertextuality actually are. It is clear from the literature (Howard, 1995; Pennycook, 1996) that the category 'plagiarism' is a complicated social construct which after all depends on a particular location (our time) and place (our culture), by restraint. Nonetheless, we agree with Crocker and Shaw (2002) that there is little evidence to support the idea that there is a huge cross-cultural gap regarding plagiarism. Instead, we believe there is a huge chasm among writers with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds in terms of intertextuality and how it is realized.

## Conclusion

There is a given genre knowledge for any discourse community that novices within the community must learn in order to perform effectively (Berkenkotter, Huckin & Ackerman, 1991). A piece of genre knowledge which seems to privilege or deprive non-native writers of international recognition is the knowledge of how to avoid plagiarism and advocate intertextuality. These academic conventions were chosen to be examined from a sociocultural perspective in an academic discourse community. More specifically, RA writers' perceptions of plagiarism and intertextuality, their actual practice in the process of composing a scientific work, and their sociocultural perceptions of the dichotomy were investigated through a questionnaire-based study. The perceptions of plagiarism-intertextuality dichotomy show that these two concepts are so intertwined that one can hardly adhere to one side to the exclusion of the other extreme. In other words, patchwriting is a natural initial step through which every writer resides for a period of time until he/she is ready to embark on a departure from it. As years of experience increase, writers would become more cognizant of their identity in their writings. This finding lends support to Deckert (1993) and Atkinson (2003, 2004) who highlighted the role of the socio-cultural factors in identity formation in writing practices.

The scarce attention given to raise awareness regarding the inappropriateness of plagiarism and the need to educate correct intertextual practices was a major finding in our study. Like students, academic staff were found to have diverse views on plagiarism and had little to offer as to what constitutes appropriate intertextuality.

For the first question, the findings of the study indicated the participants held abhorrent attitudes to plagiarism, while accepting intertextuality as an acceptable academic practice. The second question of the study concerned the expert writers', who by definition had at least 15 publications, transition from imitation to originality across the plagiarism-intertextuality spectrum. They acknowledged that imitation can act as a support resource in developing academic writing skills, but overreliance on this habit, as they claimed, can have detrimental effects and can lead to plagiarism in later stages. The third question sought to delve into the participants' cultural perceptions of the phenomena in concern. Several themes were extracted through the respondents' answers in the questionnaire. Plagiarism and intertextuality were not purely recognized as Western commodities imported from Anglo-academia into the Middle-Eastern academic community of Iran. Unlike the Western individualist societies, Iranian writers, like their Chinese collectivist counterparts, had a moderate view toward plagiarism as an instructional aid. This article is a partial attempt at understanding the status quo of plagiarism and intertextuality among a sample of Iranian RA writers. A contrastive study of this type can better disclose the intercultural differences around the attitudes and perceptions toward the two concepts. Other genres than RAs like books, advertisements, brochures, seminars, lectures, etc. might reveal facts that may bear other issues than those found in this study. Still another line of research can shed light largely on gender differences with reference to plagiarism and intertextuality. We need to acknowledge the caveats of this study because like any questionnaire-based and self-report studies, there is the possibility of hasty and inexact responses which make our findings look exaggerated or understated. This shortcoming was compensated by administering an open-ended section at the end of the questionnaire to support the findings and substantiate the tentative generalizations put forward in this study. Another limitation is that this study bases the definitions and references to plagiarism and intertextuality on Western roots which in turn may affect the unbiased judgments we purported to exert (of course this was only for the first section of the questionnaire). At the end, we assert that gaining a better understanding of writers' perceptions of plagiarism and intertextuality can remarkably enhance the effort to communicate the appropriate norms of discourse communities. It is prudent not to make any

representations or warranties with respect to the completeness of the contents of this study. We tend to disclaim any implied warranties of suitability for a particular purpose. There are no such warranties that extend beyond the descriptions contained in this study.

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