

Reasons of plagiarism in undergraduate academic writing and benefiting from Turnitin

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Abstract

Recent studies highlight that the implementation of plagiarism detectors is beneficial in both detecting and preventing plagiarism which is defined as “the practice of claiming credit for the words, ideas, and concepts of others (APA, 2010, p. 171). For example, a Turnitin report (2012) examined 39 independently published plagiarism studies in which Turnitin was regarded as an effective tool in the prevention and detection of plagiarism. As a plagiarism detector, Turnitin also provides feedback to students from several sources. Within this scope, the present study aimed to model how to incorporate Turnitin into undergraduate academic writing classes as a tool to provide feedback from several sources.

In this respect, first of all, the incidents of plagiarism in undergraduate academic writing in the English Language Teaching Department of Canakkale Onsekiz Mart University, Turkey in the last four consecutive years were considered. For the last three years, Turnitin original reports were used. The reason for incorporating Turnitin reports was Turnitin’s superiority at plagiarism detection over the other plagiarism detectors (e.g. Hill & Fetyko Page, 2009). A total number of 881 students who enrolled in the Advanced Reading and Writing Skills course between 2010-2011 and 2013-2014 academic years participated in the study. The results indicated that before the implementation of Turnitin students plagiarised at the ratio of 58%; however, this reduced to 14% by the implementation of Turnitin. Therefore, Turnitin seems to be effective in the prevention of plagiarism. Yet, the ration of non-submitted assignments increased amazingly. This was due to the deterrent impact of plagiarism detectors which prevented students from submitting assignments which were plagiarized.

Later, the study mainly focused on the incidents of plagiarism in 2013-2014 academic year by dealing with Turnitin similarity reports on students’ final assignments. Twenty-eight students were accused of plagiarism and interviewed individually by the lecturer, and also the researcher of this study, to reveal their reasons of plagiarism. During the interview session, the lecturer instructed them how to benefit from *digital feedback*, a fairly new term proposed by the researcher with reference to reports retrieved from plagiarism detectors. Although university students are supposed to be digital natives, this does not necessarily mean that they can interpret reports of plagiarism detectors. Therefore, familiarization on digital feedback, in other words reports of plagiarism detectors, is essential specifically for those who are prone to plagiarize. Then, they were encouraged to revise their papers and submit them for make-up examination within two weeks. Seventeen of them managed to submit plagiarism-free assignments in the make-up examination and succeeded the course.

Apart from the feedback provided by the lecturer in the interview sessions at the end of the term, this study aimed to model how to manage process writing by retrieving self, peer, tutor and digital feedback. Moreover, the study reported the implementation of anonymous peer review as a way of proofreading in process writing. To conclude, although the results indicated a decline in the number of plagiarism incidents after the implementation of Turnitin; precautions should be taken to encourage students to prepare

plagiarism-free assignments and to submit them since the implementation of plagiarism detectors increases the number of non-submitted assignments. In this respect, providing feedback from multiple sources seems to facilitate the process of academic writing by encouraging the development of self-autonomy. Thus, academic writing teachers should design their courses in which students can benefit from several types of feedback throughout the semester.

Keywords: *academic writing; anonymous peer review; digital feedback; multiple types of feedback; Turnitin*

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Outline


- ◆ Plagiarism increase
- ◆ Detection
- ◆ Interpreting similarity reports
- ◆ The study
 - ◆ Methodology
 - ◆ Findings and discussion
 - ◆ Conclusion and implications
 - ◆ Ongoing research



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Plagiarism Increase

- ◆ "[T]he practice of claiming credit for the words, ideas, and concepts of others" (APA, 2010, p. 171).
- ◆ "Although plagiarism may occur incidentally, it is often the outcome of a conscious process" (Barron-Cedeno et al, 2013).
- ◆ Estimations of plagiarized content in student papers:
 - ◆ Around 30% (Association of Teachers and Lecturers, 2008)
 - ◆ More than 40% (Comas et al. 2010)





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Detection

- ◆ Why to use a plagiarism detector?
 - ◆ To check student papers against plagiarism.
 - ◆ To provide more effective feedback.
- ◆ Advantages:
 - ◆ Instructors: Saves time.
 - ◆ Students: Provides rich feedback.

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75% similarity

Interpreting similarity reports

- ◆ Detectors cannot solve the problem on their own (Carroll, 2009).
- ◆ Detecting genuine academic plagiarism requires a systematic approach (Meuschke & Gipp, 2013).
- ◆ Reliability of similarity reports (Brown, Fallon, Lott, Matthews & Mintie, 2007).
- ◆ Variations in interpreting similarity reports
 - ◆ Strict legalistic interpretations vs. More contextual interpretations (Hayes & Introna, 2005)
- ◆ Discriminate students who accidentally plagiarise from the ones who intentionally do so.
- ◆ The final responsibility for detecting plagiarism belongs to the lecturer, not to a plagiarism detector (Ellis, 2012).

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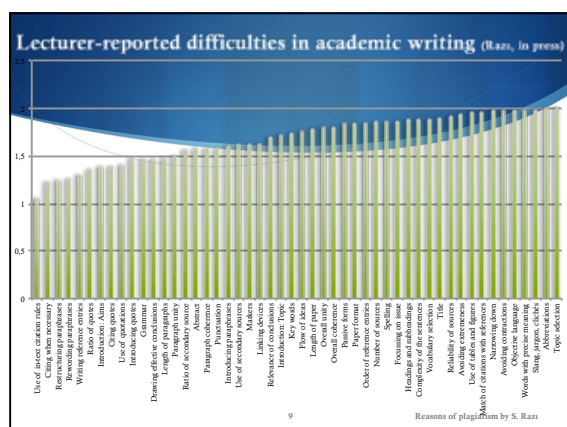
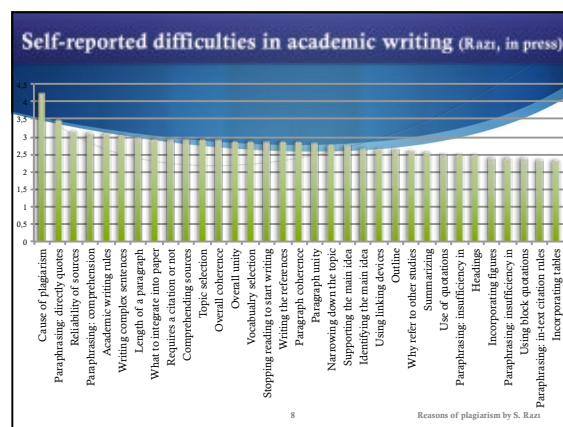
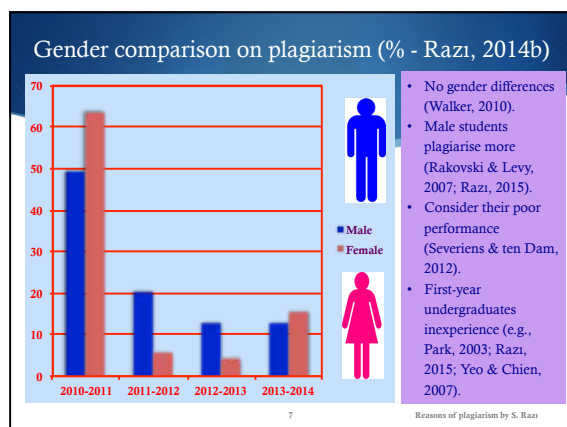
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The case of COMU ELT Advanced Reading and Writing Skills Course

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Student submissions (Razi, 2014b)

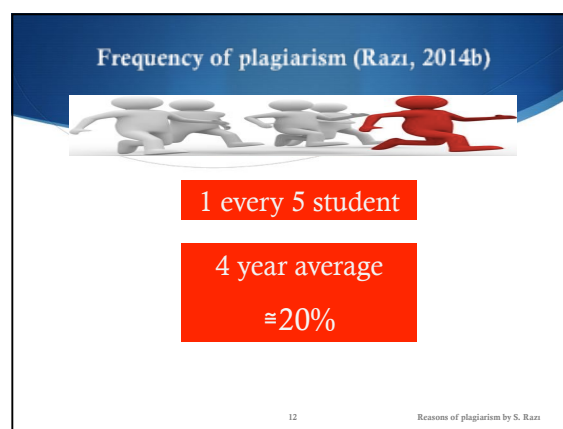
Year	Gender	Status	Group	Plagiarism	Submission	Accepted	Total	Total
2010-2011	male	regular	day	26	8	32	32	172
		evening	day	9	7	16	19	
		repeat	day	3	3	6	7	
		evening	day	0	0	0	0	
2010-2011	female	regular	day	39	4	43	54	272
		evening	day	26	4	30	46	
		repeat	day	1	1	2	2	
		evening	day	0	0	0	0	
2011-2012	male	regular	day	8	11	19	23	243
		evening	day	13	13	26	30	
		repeat	day	6	9	15	17	
		evening	day	4	4	8	12	
2011-2012	female	regular	day	13	23	36	50	194
		evening	day	2	16	18	28	
		repeat	day	0	12	12	12	
		evening	day	6	4	10	14	
2012-2013	male	regular	day	5	18	23	28	194
		evening	day	3	4	7	11	
		repeat	day	3	14	17	21	
		evening	day	0	6	6	6	
2012-2013	female	regular	day	0	16	16	25	194
		evening	day	0	5	5	5	
		repeat	day	1	24	25	26	
		evening	day	2	15	17	22	
2013-2014	male	regular	day	12	14	26	30	194
		evening	day	5	9	14	18	
		repeat	day	0	0	0	0	
		evening	day	3	23	26	32	
2013-2014	female	regular	day	13	11	24	28	194
		evening	day	0	0	0	0	
		repeat	day	2	17	19	23	
		evening	day	3	7	10	14	

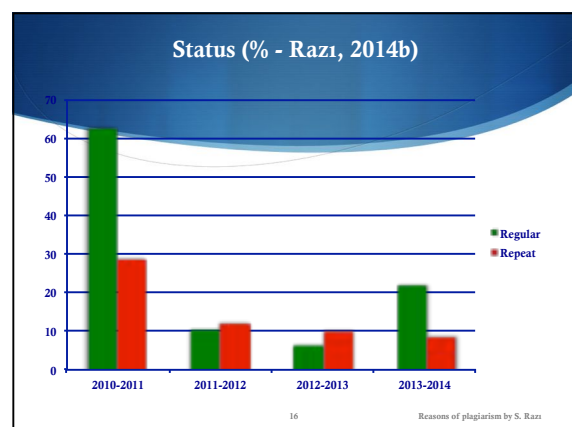
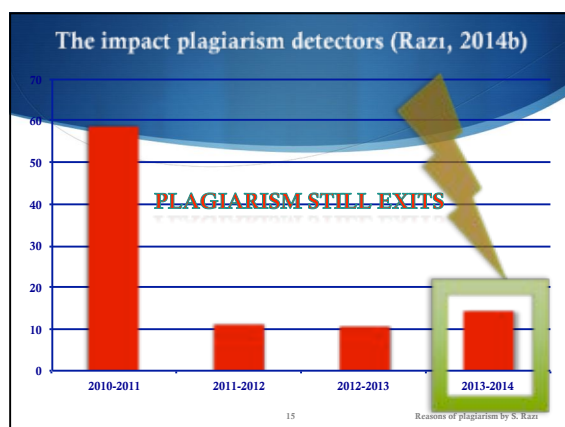
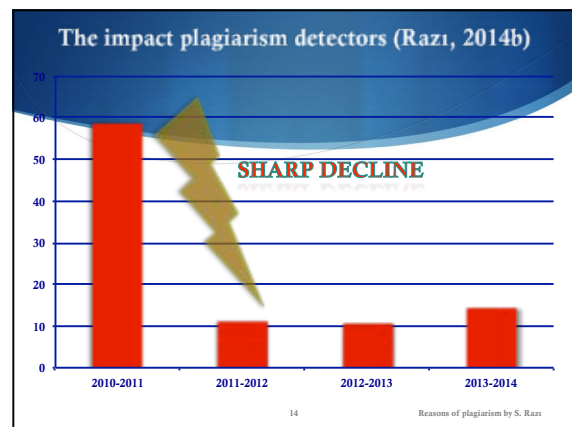
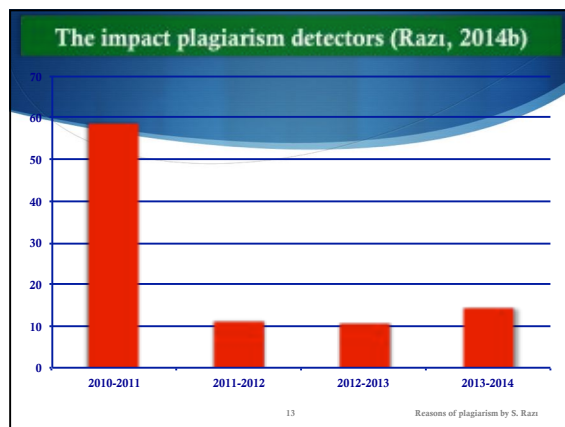
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Plagiarism incidents (Razi, 2014b)

Year	Gender	Status	Group	Plagiarism	Total
2010-2011	male	regular	day	20	32
		evening	day	9	19
		repeat	day	0	7
		evening	day	39	54
2010-2011	female	regular	day	26	46
		evening	day	1	4
		repeat	day	8	23
		evening	day	13	30
2011-2012	male	regular	day	6	17
		evening	day	4	12
		repeat	day	2	38
		evening	day	13	50
2011-2012	female	regular	day	0	47
		evening	day	5	35
		repeat	day	3	40
		evening	day	12	29
2012-2013	male	regular	day	3	14
		evening	day	3	24
		repeat	day	3	25
		evening	day	4	53
2012-2013	female	regular	day	0	30
		evening	day	1	26
		repeat	day	2	29
		evening	day	5	20
2013-2014	male	regular	day	0	39
		evening	day	0	26
		repeat	day	13	61
		evening	day	0	0
2013-2014	female	regular	day	2	25
		evening	day	2	28
		repeat	day	17	88
		evening	day	3	23

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Problem Statement

PLAGIARISM STILL SURVIVES IN UNDERGRADUATE ACADEMIC WRITING!

WHY???

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THE STUDY

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Aim of the study

- ◆ **Revealing the reasons of plagiarism.**
- ◆ **Research question:**
 - ◆ How do plagiarizers explain their reasons to plagiarize?

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Setting

- ◆ **Turkey:**
 - ◆ Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University
 - ◆ ELT Department
- ◆ **2013-2014 academic year**
- ◆ **Spring semester**



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Participants



- ◆ **Advanced Reading and Writing Skills Course:**
 - ◆ 194 students enrolled.
 - ◆ 28 plagiarized.
 - ◆ 11 male
 - ◆ 17 female

	regular	day	5	20
	evening	0	0	
male	repeat	day	5	39
	evening	3	26	
	regular	day	13	61
	evening	0	0	
female	repeat	day	3	25
	evening	2	23	
			179	881

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INSTRUMENTS

- ◆ **Semi-structured individual interview questions.**
- ◆ **Transparent Academic Writing Rubric:**
 - ◆ Valid and reliable (Razi, 2015).
- ◆ **Turnitin:**
 - ◆ Institutional license and
 - ◆ Superiority (Hill & Page, 2009).



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PROCEDURES OF DATA COLLECTION

Advanced Reading and Writing Course Contents suggested by Razi (2011).
 Accused students were interviewed.
 They were instructed on benefiting from similarity reports.
 After the interview, they revised and resubmitted within two weeks.

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PROCESS WRITING AND TYPES OF FEEDBACK



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PRE SCREENING

- ◆ The length
- ◆ The quotation ratio
- ◆ Similarity reports
- ◆ **Not all students can proceed further.**



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Limitations

- ◆ Concerns Turnitin similarity reports:
 - ◆ Sources not exist in databases.
 - ◆ May not report actual plagiarism (McKeever, 2006; Walker, 2010).
- ◆ Generalization:
 - ◆ Data from a single university in the Turkish tertiary context.



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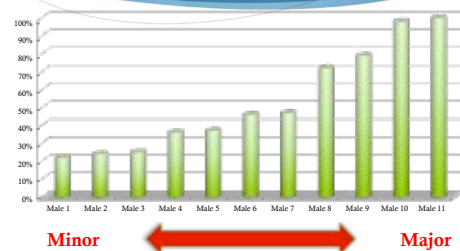
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Findings and Discussion

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FINDINGS: MALE SIMILARITY



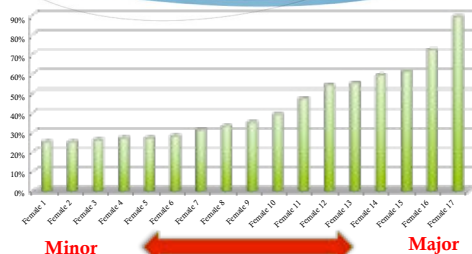
Minor

Major

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FINDINGS: FEMALE SIMILARITY



Minor

Major

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Findings: Male

- ◆ **3 accidentally; 8 on purpose**
- ◆ Male₁₀: "One of my class mates told me that she had an assignment that she hadn't submitted on Turnitin previously. I decided to submit her assignment since there was no risk but she was mistaken since she didn't remember that she had submitted it on Turnitin last year."

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Findings: Reasons male



- M1: Did not know how to paraphrase.
- M2: Forgot to use quotation marks.
- M3: Tried to catch deadline.
- M4: Did not know how to paraphrase: Problems in restructuring.
- M5: Bored and then tried to catch deadline.
- M6: Cited like paraphrase to reduce quotation ratio.
- M7: Did not know how to paraphrase.
- M8: Did not know how to cite.
- M9: Insufficient number of sources. Cited a single source poorly.
- M10: Submitted a friend's assignment since she told him that she had not submitted it on Turnitin.
- M11: Submitted the same assignment for two courses.

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Findings: Female



- **1 accidentally; 16 on purpose**
- Female₉: "I realized that attending tutorials helped me avoid plagiarism as I had the chance of directly asking to you [the lecturer] but I got bored towards the end of the semester and did not attend the tutorials. To finalize my paper I simply copied expressions from other sources."

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Findings: Reasons female



- F1: To catch deadline, borrowed some expressions from a friend.
- F2: Since it was difficult to paraphrase, she avoided paraphrasing.
- F3: Thought that mentioning the author would be enough to copy the sentence.
- F4: Bored and then tried to catch deadline.
- F5: Tried to catch deadline.
- F6: Did not how to paraphrase.
- F7: Tried to catch deadline.
- F8: Bored towards the end of the paper and did not paraphrase carefully.
- F9: Bored in some parts of the paper and did not paraphrase carefully. Non-attendance to tutors resulted in weak paraphrase.
- F10: Tried to avoid submitting a short paper and integrated weak paraphrased expressions.
- F11: Tried to avoid spoiling meaning in restructuring so only changed some words.
- F12: Non-attendance to tutors because of illness and then tried to catch the deadline.
- F13: Did not how to paraphrase.
- F14: Thought that mentioning the author would be enough to copy the sentence. Tried to avoid spoiling meaning in restructuring so only changed some words.
- F15: Did not how to paraphrase.
- F16: Tried to catch deadline.
- F17: Did not accept being interviewed.

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FINDINGS

- Accused students were instructed on benefiting from similarity reports.
- After the interview, they revised and resubmitted within two weeks.
- 17 of 28 of them submitted plagiarism-free assignments.

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Discussion & Conclusion

- ◆ There exist several reasons of plagiarism.
- ◆ Reasons of female and male students might be different.
- ◆ Students seem to adapt themselves to new situations and behave accordingly.
- ◆ Consider first-year undergraduates inexperience (e.g., Park, 2003; Razi, 2015; Yeo & Chien, 2007).
- ◆ Provide awareness on plagiarised expression.
- ◆ Teach how to benefit from **digital feedback**.
- ◆ Encourage resubmission rather than penalizing.

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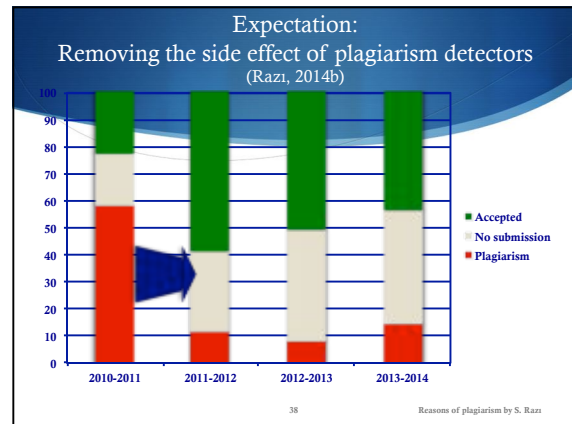
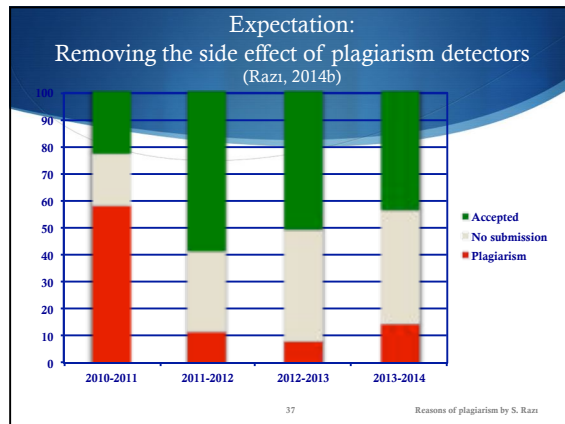
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Implications: On-going research

- ◆ In 2014-2015 academic year
 - ◆ **Teach how to benefit from digital feedback (Razi, 2014a).**
 - ◆ **Multiple submissions:**
 - ◆ Consider drop in plagiarism incidents from the 1st to the 2nd assignment (Ledwith & Rsques, 2008).
 - ◆ **Peer review:**
 - ◆ 3 anonymous peer reviews for each student:
 - ◆ An invaluable experience both for the author and the reviewer (Aghaee & Hansson, 2013).

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Recent citation!
URKUND's (2015) attitude

- The best and the worst scenarios may not be valid for every case!
 - Best scenario:** "They would delete."
 - Worst scenario:** "We would be helping the students get away with plagiarism."
 - Students learn from their mistakes and correct.
- Aim of the lecturer:
 - Penalizing??? Receiving zero on the assignment, Failing the course, Suspension, Expulsion???

OR

- Develop awareness against plagiarism.
- Students might not feel that cheating on assignments is a serious problem (Brent & Atkinson, 2011).

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