

Plagiarism in academic writing in English medium universities

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Abstract

Academic writing is regarded complicated by several higher education students. The challenges in academic writing become tighter in the case of learning ELF. Such challenges increase the risk of plagiarism specifically for freshmen who are prone to plagiarism more than the others due to their inexperience in academic writing, even in L1. The majority of plagiarism studies in the literature deal with the incidents in English with regards to its lingua franca role concerning World Englishes notion. Plagiarism incidents in expanding-circle settings are more common, in comparison to inner- and outer-circle settings. Respectively, this study aimed to investigate the issue of plagiarism in English academic writing in an expanding-circle setting by considering plagiarizers' experiences in L1 writing. This enabled to reveal the role of L1 writing in developing English academic writing skills in an expanding-circle setting. To do this, L1 writing background of freshmen who enrolled in Advanced Reading and Writing Skills course in 2014-2015 academic year spring semester were identified. Originality reports from a plagiarism detector were carefully examined and the students who plagiarized were interviewed by the lecturer, also the researcher of this study. Since plagiarizers mainly complained about their weaknesses in paraphrasing skills in a previous study conducted by the researcher, during the interview the main concern was encouraging students to consider their capability in L1 paraphrasing skills. In this way, the researcher aimed to reveal whether plagiarism incidents occurred due to insufficient linguistic knowledge in English or incapability of paraphrasing either in L1 or English. Concerning the huge number of international students in inner- and outer-circle countries, the comparison of results with plagiarism incidents in inner- and outer-circle settings is essential in order to develop more effective curriculums for teaching of academic writing with specific emphasis on its World Englishes function.

Keywords: *academic writing, L1 writing skills, plagiarism, plagiarism detectors, World Englishes*

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Outline

- World Englishes and academic writing
- Illustration of the case for the sample
- Problem statement
- The study
 - Methodology
 - Findings and discussion
 - Conclusion
 - Implications

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Introduction

- Academic writing is complicated (see Matsuda, 2001).
- WEs: academic writing in a FL.
 - Risk of plagiarism???**
- Freshmen, inexperienced, even in L1.
- Plagiarism studies: incidents in English.
- Plagiarism: more common in expanding-circle.
 - Cross-cultural differences with regards to plagiarism (Baurain, 2011).
 - Cultural influences in writing (Kachru, 2009).

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The case for FL learners

- Academic reading: Exposure to authentic reading texts.
 - Different from ELT in Japan (e.g., Matsuda, 2003).
 - Practising World Englishes.
- Writing: The most difficult skill??? (L1 / L2 / FL).
- Academic writing: More challenges.
- Freshmen: inexperienced in academic writing (e.g., Park, 2003; Razi, 2015b; Yeo & Chien, 2007).
- National and institutional attitude towards plagiarism (Razi, 2014b).

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What is World Englishes?

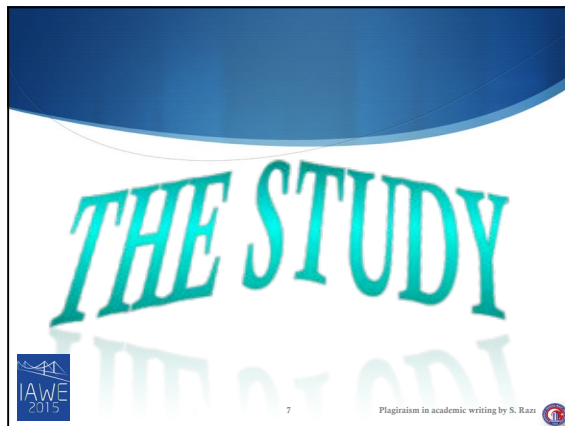
- Broader use:**
 - "[A]n umbrella label referring to a wide range of differing approaches to the description and analysis of **English(es) worldwide**" (Bolton, 2009, p. 240).
- Narrower use:**
 - "[T]he '**new Englishes**' found in the Caribbean and in West African and East African societies such as Nigeria and Kenya, and to such Asian Englishes as Hong Kong English, Indian English, Malaysian English, Singaporean English, and Philippine English" (Bolton, 2009, p. 240).
- In the present study:**
 - Academic English in Turkey by freshmen
 - EFL + EAP + ELF

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Problem Statement

**PLAGIARISM:
IN ACADEMIC WRITING
IN ENGLISH MEDIUM UNIVERSITIES
IN TURKEY AS AN EXPANDING CIRCLE COUNTRY**

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Aim of the Study


- ♦ **Aim:** Examine plagiarizers' L1 writing experience.
- ♦ **The expectation:** Plagiarizers are naïve writers in their L1.
- ♦ **Research questions:**
 - ♦ RQ1: What is the case of plagiarism for the sample?
 - ♦ RQ2: How do plagiarizers regard their L1 writing skills?

Setting

- ♦ **Turkey:**
 - ♦ Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University
 - ♦ ELT Department
- ♦ **Academic session 2014/15**
- ♦ **Spring term**



Participants



- ♦ **Advanced Reading and Writing Skills Course:**
 - ♦ 3 intact classes, 152 students
 - ♦ 65 regular
 - ♦ 19 male + 46 female
 - ♦ 87 repeating
 - ♦ 45 male + 42 female
- ♦ **Female oriented dept.:**
 - ♦ **Male dominance in repeating group.**

Instruments

- ♦ Transparent Academic Writing Rubric (TAWR –Razi, 2015b) to score papers.
- ♦ Turnitin as a digital environment:
 - ♦ Institutional license,
 - ♦ Superiority in detecting plagiarism (Hill & Page, 2009), and
 - ♦ Features of peer review.

Data Collection

- ♦ **Advanced Reading and Writing Skills:**
 - ♦ Syllabus adapted from Razi (2011).
- ♦ **Assignment:**
 - ♦ 1,500-word review paper (excluding the abstract and references),
 - ♦ ELT related topic chosen by the student,
 - ♦ Three phase submission:
 - ♦ Introduction, discussion, and conclusion.
 - ♦ For each submission, multiple (3) anonymous peer feedback.

Limitation

- Generalization:
 - Data from a single university in the Turkish tertiary context.



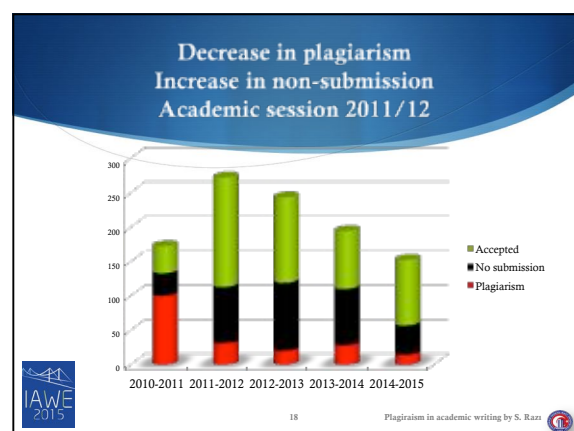
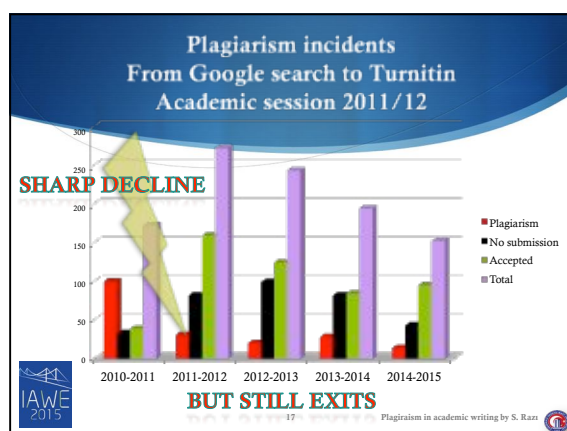
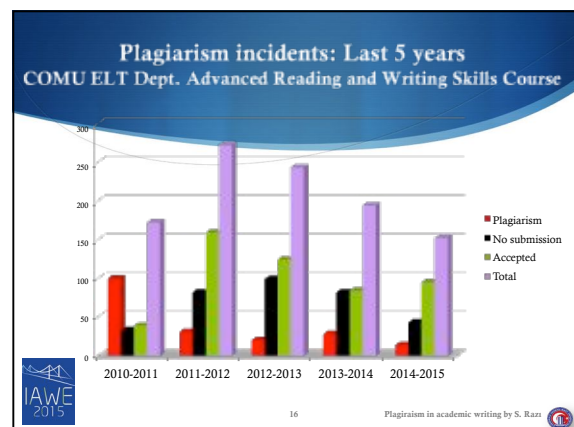
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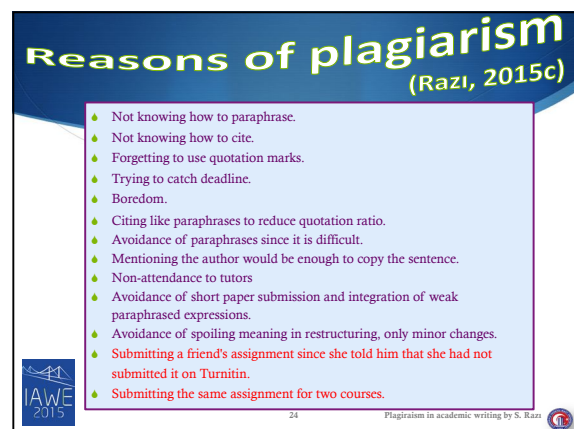
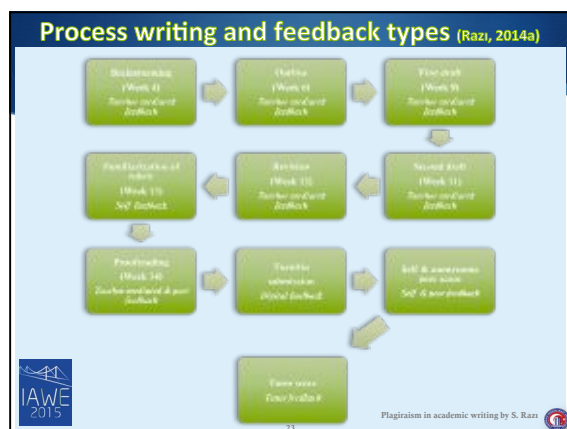
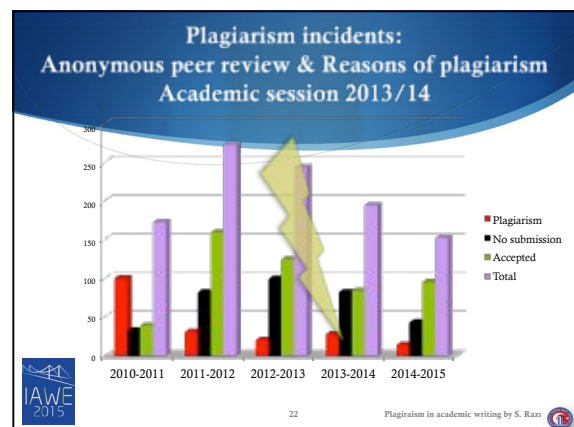
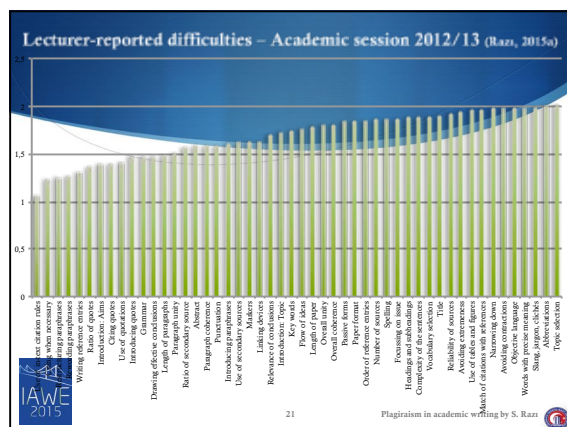
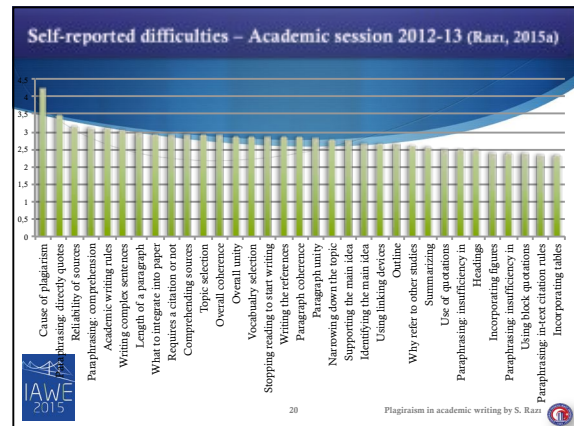
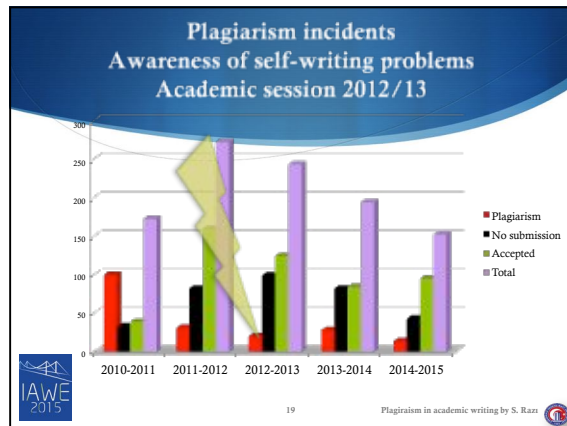
Findings and Discussion

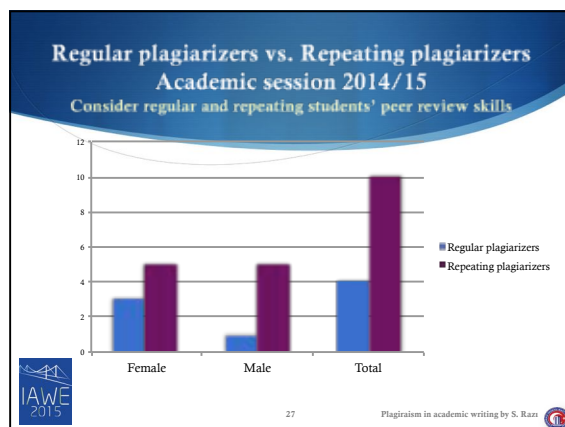
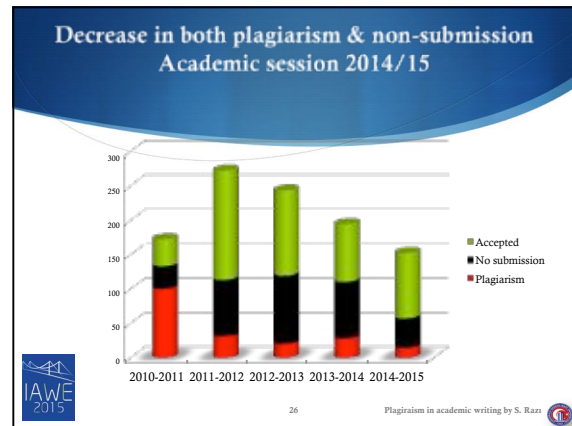
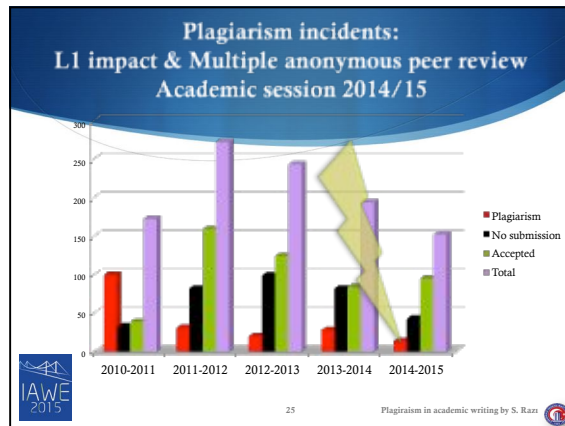
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Research Question 1: Plagiarism COMU ELT Advanced Reading and Writing Skills Course

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What happens to plagiarizers?

- No institutional policy against plagiarism.
 - No penalty.
 - Encouraged to revise and resubmit (make-up exam).
- Regular plagiarizers:
 - No resubmission.
- Repeating plagiarizers:
 - 4 resubmission, all succeeded the course.
- Policy enables students to take the make-up exam even if they do not take the final exam.
 - 3 new repeating plagiarizers in make-up exam.

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Writing background in English

- Of 152 students in academic session 2014/15
 - 101 studied at English preparatory class
 - Writing experience in English
 - 51 no preparatory class experience
 - Succeeded the exemption exam at university

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Research Question 2

L1 WRITING EXPERIENCE?

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Writing background in L1

- ◆ Of 152 students in academic session 2014/15
 - ◆ 61 wrote compositions in Turkish at exams
 - ◆ Only 32 received writing instruction in Turkish at high school
 - ◆ 10 received teacher feedback on papers
 - ◆ 3 received feedback related to both mechanics and content
 - ◆ 7 received feedback related only to mechanics
 - ◆ 22 did not receive any feedback
 - ◆ Transferability of language skills across languages???

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Plagiarizers' Writing background in L1

- ◆ Of 17 plagiarizers (final and make-up exams) in academic session 2014/15.
 - ◆ 3 students wrote compositions in Turkish at exams.
 - ◆ Only 1 student received writing instruction in Turkish at high school related only to mechanics.
 - ◆ Literature presents contradictory findings regarding the problems in FL writing and the role of interference (Siegel, 1999).
 - ◆ Poor reading skills may cause such problems (Hartwell, 1980).

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Conclusion

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Conclusion

- ◆ Turkish university students are not familiar with L1 writing.
- ◆ Lack of L1 writing skills deteriorate academic writing in English and increase the risk of plagiarism.
- ◆ Plagiarism is common among Turkish university students in English academic writing.
- ◆ Detectors may reduce plagiarism, but no complete protection.
- ◆ Digital multiple anonymous peer-review: Beneficial in developing academic writing skills.

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Approaching the Conclusions Drawn

- ◆ Consider World Englishes and ELF:
 - ◆ Even incompetent language users need to write academic papers in English.
- ◆ Language incompetency increase the risk of plagiarism.
- ◆ Mind cultural differences.
- ◆ Plagiarism is under the impact of cultural values.
- ◆ The results might be quite different in another outer-circle country.
- ◆ National and institutional policies against plagiarism have an impact on the perception of plagiarism.

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What would you do in the case of plagiarism as the lecturer?

- ◆ Students might not feel that cheating on assignments is a serious problem (Brent & Atkinson, 2011).
- ◆ What is your position as the lecturer against plagiarism?
 - ◆ Penalizing?
 - ◆ Giving zero on the assignment?
 - ◆ Failing the course?
 - ◆ Suspension or expulsion?
- OR
- ◆ Enabling learning from their mistakes?

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Plagiarism = Crime?

- Howard (2007):
 - Plagiarism is not necessarily a crime, benefit as a teaching strategy.
 - Academic writing is a complex intellectual skill.
 - Plagiarism is the first vital step in the development of academic writing skills.
 - 'Patchwriting' by Howard: in other words 'weak paraphrasing skills'.

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COMU ELT and plagiarism

- Complained about their **weaknesses in paraphrasing** skills (Razi, 2015a).
- Plagiarism might be in relation with **insufficient linguistic knowledge** in English.
- Almost no practice of **paraphrasing skills in L1**.
- Consider the impact of standardized English:
 - Feeling of frustration:
 - Comparing their own writing with that of L1 speakers' papers.
 - Awareness of WEs may reveal this feeling.

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Implications

- Lack of L1 writing skills can be compensated by the help of **digital multiple anonymous peer review**.
 - ZPD & Scaffolding**: More experienced students help less experienced ones.
- Huge number of international students in **inner- and outer-circle** countries:
- Compare plagiarism incidents in inner- and outer-circle to develop more effective curriculums for teaching of academic writing with specific emphasis on WEs.
- Consider cultural **stereotypes** (see Kumaravadivelu, 2003) and the impact of **moral implications** (Baurain, 2011).

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Strategies against plagiarism

- Provide awareness on plagiarised expression.
- Teach how to benefit from **digital feedback** (Razi, 2014a).
- Encourage resubmission rather than penalizing.
- Multiple submissions**:
 - Drop in plagiarism (1st - 2nd assignments, Ledwith & Rsques, 2008).
- Peer review: Invaluable for author and reviewer (Aghae & Hansson, 2013).
 - Multiple anonymous peer review**:
 - Students learn from their mistakes and correct.
 - Contribution to decreasing plagiarism incidents.
 - With poor peer review skills, repeating students plagiarized more.
- Integrate peers' performance into scoring (see Razi, 2014a for suggestions).

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Why multiple anonymous digital peer feedback?

- Why peer feedback?**
 - Students may learn from each other (ZPD – Vygotsky, 1978).
- Why digital peer feedback?**
 - Eliminates social constraint of face-to-face feedback (Ho & Savignon, 2007).
- Why anonymous peer feedback?**
 - Students were reluctant to highlight their friends' errors (Liou and Peng, 2009).
- Why multiple peer feedback?**
 - Students with limited abilities mislead each other.
 - Lack of trust in peer-feedback (Paulus, 1999; Rinehart & Chen, 2012; Rollinson, 2005; Ruecker, 2010; Saito & Fujita, 2004).
 - Providing asymmetrical and symmetrical feedback (Hanjani & Li, 2014).

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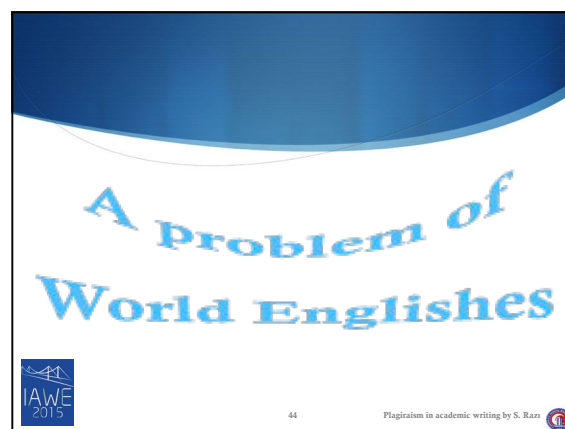
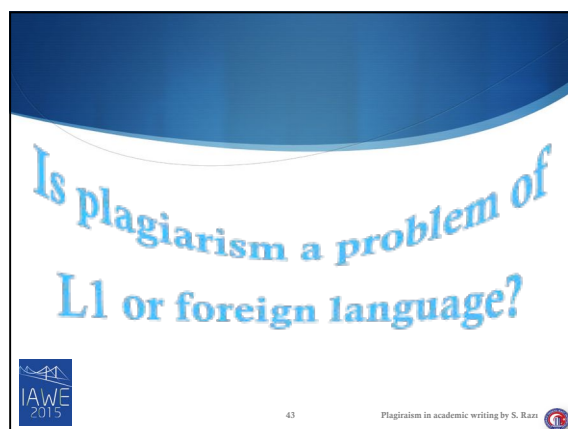
Suggested procedure

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graph TD
    A[Introduction (First draft)] --> B[Peer review]
    B --> C[Introduction (Revised)]
    C --> D[Discussion (First draft)]
    D --> E[Peer review]
    E --> F[Discussion (Revised)]
    F --> G[Conclusion (First draft)]
    G --> H[Peer review]
    H --> I[Conclusion (Revised)]
  
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