



Deepening source criticism in higher education to avoid plagiarism

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Increase of plagiarism cases

- Source: "Disciplinärenden 2018 vid universitet och högskolor", *Swedish Higher Education Authority* (2018),
- https://www.uka.se/download/18.55b9a49216a59c86be8cdaf/1560947678112/Disciplina%CC%88renden_2018_vid_universitet_och_ho%CC%88gskolor_72.pdf
- 6 categories (1.cheating 2. unauthorized collaborative work 3. **plagiarism** 4. falsification of documents 5. inappropriate attitude 6. gender / ethnic discriminations)
- Around 60% of disciplinary measures concern plagiarism (specific behaviour)



Source: *Swedish Higher Education Authority* (2018)

University	Total (Percentage)	Women	Men	Temporary exclusion	Warnings	Number of students registered a year
All Swedish universities	1326 (0,46%)	697	629	1057	269	289.898
Stockholm University	145 (0,55%)	86	59	121	24	26.273

National rules

- <https://www.uhr.se/en/start/laws-and-regulations/Laws-and-regulations/The-Higher-Education-Ordinance/#chapter10>
- Chapter 10 "Disciplinary measures"
- Section 1
- Disciplinary measures may be invoked against students who: 1. use **prohibited** aids or **other methods** to attempt to **deceive** during examinations or other forms of assessment of **study performance**..."



Practices of plagiarism

- “Copying the answers of another student in an examination”
- “Writing the whole part of an assignment with another person”
- “Citing sources that have not actually been read”
- “Making up false reference citations”
- “Giving incorrect information about the source of a quotation” (Gullifer, Tyson, 2014: 1211)
- Recycling culture: share, use, re-use, copy and paste (digitalization)



Theory and method

- Focus on academic writing in the literature (East, 2009: Pecorari, 2015; Chankova, 2017).
- Plagiarism in second language acquisition
- Studies made on the final product
- Learning strategies of the students differ from the concretization of a final text
- Students do not control "factual knowledge" (Agarwal, 2019) in the same way when they have access to information (they check).
- Necessity to focus on citations / references
- Research question: how do students find their sources?



Experimentation (Spring 2018 / Autumn 2018 / Spring 2019)

- Course in French I (Stockholm University). A specific modul in this course was on « Culture and Society in France »
- Course material (including Wikipedia references)
- In the final exams, I added a specific question: **"To prepare this exam, you had to read different Wikipedia articles. What can you say about these sources? Would you quote a Wikipedia source in an academic essay? Why? Answer this question in Swedish or in English and take concrete examples".**



Results

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Women	47	62.7
Men	28	37.3
Total	75	100



Encoding the answers and categorizing the discourses

- 0= Negative discourse on Wikipedia sources
- 1= Somewhat negative discourse
- 2= Neutral discourse
- 3= Somewhat positive discourse
- 4= Positive discourse

Neutral discourse (balance between negative and positive aspects)



Categorization of students' discourses on Wikipedia sources

Discourse on Wikipedia sources	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulated percentage
Negative discourse	17	23.9	23.9
Relatively negative discourse	20	28.2	52.1
Neutral discourse	15	21.1	73.2
Relatively positive discourse	12	16.9	90.1
Positive discourse	7	9.9	100
Total	71	100	



Negative narratives

- “Wikipedia is not always considered as a trustful source as it is controlled by several people and it is not always accurate. Therefore, it is not beneficial for a student to use it as a source in an academic work” (Student 1)
- “Wikipedia is not a good source because anyone can edit anything on these. One can write something without citing their sources. If you want to use Wikipedia you should always go to the main source and use that one instead” (Student 2)



Negative narratives

- “I have read Wikipedia with great attention given how they are written. In some cases, I have been looking for other types of sources to ‘double check’. Usually, I would NEVER quote nor use Wikipedia as a source but in this course I understand the point because there is a lot of information on relatively little and easy-to-read text. However, I try to be extremely source critical and if the opportunity exists, I find another source to refer to”
(Student 3) **Illegitimacy** of sources / interesting details on the process and the strategies



Neutral narratives

- “I would not quote Wikipedia in an academic essay because I was taught it was not a credible source, but I would use it as a **starting point** to get a better understanding of the subject and have some guidelines” (student 4)



Positive attitudes (learning strategies)

- “I read them [Wikipedia sources] in a clear and cautious manner, especially for the details that I was interested in. A Wikipedia source can be cited and referred to, even if you do not know who the author is. A source is better than nothing” (student 5)



Conclusions

- It is important to have **student perspective** in order to deepen source criticism. Ignoring these discussions in class can create more insecurity and be a risk for more plagiarism.
- 1) Do not take the first access to facts for granted. The students have to be aware that there is a plurality of platforms that standardize the access to knowledge. Googling a concept or something else might be natural but this practice should also be questioned in order to awake a critical attitude.
- 2) The teacher should introduce a discussion on learning strategies and sources. Source criticism is linked to the metacognitive knowledge where students are able to question the way they learn new facts.



Conclusions

- 3) Introduce an active discussion on plagiarism and citation. By being aware of the gap between the use of Wikipedia articles and the interiorization of a negative discourse on their citation, the students can avoid problems of plagiarism.
- 4) Use the guidelines edited by Academic libraries that give tips to students on how to make an efficient research.
- 5) Encourage students to diversify the nature of sources in academic writing (digital sources, books, interviews...).



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