

TRANSLATION AS AN INTERIM STRATEGY TO AVOID PLAGIARISM AT UNIVERSITY

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Abstract

First-year students at the rural Qwaqwa Campus of the University of the Free State, South Africa, lack the basic cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) in English when they enter university. They test low in the National Benchmark literacy test and because their Admission Point scores are also too low to enter a mainstream degree programme, they are enrolled in a four-year extended programme. English is the medium of instruction in most schools, but it is not the mother tongue of our students. Therefore, they struggle with basic academic writing and reading comprehension, which furthermore lead to problems with paraphrasing and summarising and eventually plagiarism.

The Write Site assists students to overcome these obstacles in the form of a scaffolding process and interventions. One of the interventions this paper will focus on is translation as an interim strategy in the paraphrasing process which could ultimately help the students to avoid plagiarism. We tested this hypothesis with two groups of students from different modules. They first had to paraphrase a passage and submit it to Turnitin, as part of Blackboard, our Learning Management System, to detect plagiarism. Afterwards they translated the original passage into their home language, and 'paraphrased' it back into English. The aim was to help the student understand and interpret the passage that they have read, before they paraphrased it. It was also submitted to Turnitin. The results of the two methods were then compared to see whether translation played a role in avoiding plagiarism. The paper will report on the outcomes of these two methods.

Keywords: English, Literacy Test, Plagiarism, Turnitin, Paraphrasing.
