Students’ attitudes concerning Wikipedia: quick facts or collaborative writing?

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Plagiarism prevention

- Increase of plagiarism in higher education (more cases reported to disciplinary boards),

- First step to activate students’ awareness of the problem: improve the quality of source criticism ([misquoting](https://www.dn.se/nyheter/sverige/studentkaren-stressen-kan-vara-en-orsak-till-okande-fusk/) can lead to plagiarism)
Plagiarism prevention

- Teachers help students to handle facts that they find quickly (quick access to facts)
- **Patchwriting strategies** (Pecorari, 2015: 97); the problem is even bigger in second language writing (not only for students that learn a foreign language but also for scholars writing in another language)
- Target: students (freshman / sophomore) that learn a foreign language (checking facts in different languages) (Fish, Hura, 2013)
Bloom’s Taxonomy

- **Remember**
  - Recall facts and basic concepts
    - define, duplicate, list, memorize, repeat, state

- **Understand**
  - Explain ideas or concepts
    - classify, describe, discuss, explain, identify, locate, recognize, report, select, translate
  - Use information in new situations
    - execute, implement, solve, use, demonstrate, interpret, operate, schedule, sketch

- **Apply**
  - Draw connections among ideas
    - differentiate, organize, relate, compare, contrast, distinguish, examine, experiment, question, test

- **Evaluate**
  - Justify a stand or decision
    - appraise, argue, defend, judge, select, support, value, critique, weigh

- **Create**
  - Produce new or original work
    - design, assemble, construct, conjecture, develop, formulate, author, investigate

Dilemma

- Need to imitate and catch idiomatic patterns
- Focus on the language acquisition but not the content
- How do we learn students to be critical when we have to secure **basic facts**?
- For some courses, students do not need an exploration of sources. The investigative part is quite limited; then, they have access to platforms with a lot of information
- Wikipedia / Nationalencyklopedi
- Goal: reempowering students with a stronger skill in source criticism (Davies, 2013) « generic competence ».
Data

- Experiment: inclusion of wikipedia pages in the course material
- Investigation of students’ attitudes
- Survey conducted in Spring 2018 (27 students enrolled in the class of French I, « Culture and Society in France »). Detailed answers about the sources that they had for the exam
- 4 recorded interviews with students from different levels of French (beginners + advanced)
1) How does Wikipedia work?

- Wikipedia is a strong platform guided by a community of anonymous users (Hoeres, 2015: 18) (horizontal and sharing governance) Non profit organization (different from YouTube). The content will always be available
- Wikipedia was created in 2001 by people working with free softwares. Empowerment of local communities (idealistic narrative, Lund 2017)
- Creative Common Licence (the content can be used as much as possible without paying any fees...). Pedagogical problem: how to guarantee a quotation principle which is fundamental in the academic world (Tkacz, 2015)
1) Pedagogical resources

- It might be interesting to select short notices that could be reused in other contexts. A good wikipedia notice that indicates different sources is a material. Difficulty: the text can be updated at any time.
- The teacher can have a discussion on the validity of the Wikipedia texts that can be compared with other sources.
- Wikipedia is a path, it is a learning tool and could be completed depending on the level of the course and the expected study resultat.
- Sometimes, it can be possible to design specific Wikipedia exercises (Source criticism...)

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2) Students’ perceptions

- 13 men / 14 women
- Question on the sources
- Categorization of answers
- No answers / Negative / Relative Negative / Neutral / Relative Positive / Positive
- Average answer (**Relative negative**)
- More negative for men (2.08) than women (2.21)
- Index of lexicalisation: how they relate to the source (1= Negative 2= Relative negative 3= Neutral 4= Relative positive 5= Positive)
2) Students’ perceptions

Diagramrubrik

No answers  Negative  Relative negative  Neutral  Relative positive  Positive  Total

Women  Men  Men + women
2) Students’ perceptions

- Negative perception
- Neutral
- Positive perception
- No answers

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3) Student strategies

- The detailed answers give some precious information on the strategies of students (translated from Swedish to English)

- **Negative comments**

  - « When you read Wikipedia pages, it is important to sort out what is important and relevant about what you should learn. Usually there is a lot of information on these pages and it may be a bit confusing but I usually go through the text first to get an overview and then review the text more carefully afterwards »

- The difficulty to read the Wikipedia pages (it is more a resource that helps student to have access to other sources). It should not be quoted
3) Student strategies

- Wikipedia (constant update makes it difficult to use it)
- Too many links, no linear reading
- Variation of quality of Wikipedia sources (many missing information) that is not adequate for learning processes.
- Not trustworthy sources, inadequate for academic purposes
- Anonymous writing (Who am I supposed to quote?)
- **Neutral**
- Good support for other sources (basic platform), can be quoted even if authors are anonymous.
- Factual comments on the strategy
3) Student strategies

● Positive comments
● Controlling the facts presented (Wikipedia is a good start and gives information that can be checked)
● Possibilities of checking the facts in another language
● Invitation to double-check the facts and to go to specific sources
● Wikipedia sources are an adapted support for learning
3) Student strategies

- Interviews with four students about their strategies

- Some students travel in different languages in Wikipedia to see where the best information is located.

  « Wikipedia sources are different (...) You have to think about the language in order to select the information” (Interview with a student of French, advanced level, 18 May 2018).

- “When I was preparing my exam on the History of France, there was too much information to select on Wikipedia (...) I would use Wikipedia sources just for my own understanding but I would never quote them, it is not accepted”

- ” (Interview with a student of French I, 6 april 2018). Regular problem on the design (aggregative information).

- “I use Wikipedia sources sometimes, but it is not sufficient” (Interview with a student of French I, 25 April 2018)
Conclusions

- The students repeated a kind of **negative discourse** that they learnt (Wikipedia as a **global illegitimate** source). They go through these sources anyway (**implicit reference**).

- Wikipedia is not perceived in its collaborative dimension (Kalin, 2012), it is an initial platform but the students need to have access to other sources.

- The digital setup is sometimes **confusing** (**Risk of zapping and mixing sources**). Problem with the design

- The students (French) are not so interested in Wikipedia community (**policies, collaborative process**); they use these sources as a **complement, a support** for their learning. It is more a strategy to have an overview (**travelling theory**) (Fox, 1983: 160).
Complementary surveys conducted

- Survey conducted in Fall 2018 (17 students enrolled in the class of French I, « Culture and Society in France »)
- Seminar given the 5th of March 2018 on « how to write an essay in a Romance languages » (survey conducted, 9 students)
Recommendations for teachers

Train students to quote (missing information about the date, the sources).

Encourage students to quote every source that they used (even intermediary sources such as Wikipedia pages) in a complete manner (investigative skills).

Add metadiscursive questions (reactions on sources) (Pecorari, 2015: 97)

Include good Wikipedia pages (you show that you know those platforms and that you can select the best articles for them) in the course material.

Source criticism is a generic competence that needs a transdisciplinary practice (against ideological discourses, against fake news). It is important to avoid patchwriting / paraphrasing practices.

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References

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