CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

Plagiarism is not a new issue in an educational field. This kind of practice has already appeared a long time ago by some scholars, yet it had not received as much attention as today. In around 1990’s, almost 66% of students were reported to conduct plagiarism in the United Kingdom (Franklyn-Stokes & Newsted, 2003 in Darab, 2006, p. 4). This white-collar crime get worse as the technology of Internet is growing, especially with the help of Google (Marshall & Garry, 2005). It appears that the consequences of committing plagiarism do not make students reluctant to do it.

The penalties given for committing plagiarism are varied. Each institutions might have their own rules for those who are proven committing plagiarism. Besides that, most of the cases can be solved between teacher-student by verbal warning, re-submitting a new work, zero credit or by institution through comprehensive investigations and serious penalties like suspension, revocation of the degree or even dismissal (Maurer, et. al, 2006, p.1053). One example of a serious plagiarism penalty is given to an honored academician in one of the most prestigious universities in Indonesia. Muhammad Zuliansyah was accused of committing plagiarism of Siyka Zlatanova’s work which caused him to be fired from the Institute.
Teknologi Bandung (ITB) and his academic title was invalidated (Khairul, 2016 in Savitri, 2016, p. 2). There are more such kind of cases have been experienced by both students in general and also honorable academicians such as teachers, lecturers or even professors. There must be many reasons behind this phenomenon and they vary from one person to another.

The reasons such as the fear of losing faces due to lack of performance in their academic writing can trigger students to plagiarize (Burns, 1999; Walker, 1998 in Marshall & Garry, 2005). Besides that, the perceptions of someone towards the seriousness of plagiarism activity may contributes also to the activity of plagiarizing (Introna et.al., 2003 in Marshall & Garry, 2005). The worst factor which leads to plagiarism is that students do not have a comprehensive understanding of plagiarism such as lack understanding of what constitutes plagiarism and how to make citation properly (Ashworth, et. al., n.d. in Ercegovac, et. al., 2004).

Language mastery also plays vital role in the academic writing. Thus, students who lack language mastery will struggle a lot in the writing process. That problem often leads students to commit deceitful act called plagiarism. Students from non-English background, like Indonesian students, are at higher risk to plagiarize than the students from English background in the academic writing (Hosny, et. al, 2014, p.750). It is mostly because their English proficiency is still low.

Students from English majored definitely agree that writing in English is very challenging, especially in the academic writing like thesis
writing. The difficulties in writing thesis are doubled since they have to be able to organized their ideas well and at the same time expressed the ideas correctly. The sentences must be grammatically correct. The other aspects such as coherence of the sentences and paragraphs, a good use of diction, correct spelling and punctuation are also important aspects to be considered in the academic writing. A good skill of “citing” is also a weapon to succeed in the academic writing in order to avoid plagiarism.

Plagiarism can be only avoided if students have a good understanding of plagiarism. They have to know what constitutes plagiarism and how to cite a resource correctly. Sometimes, the incident of plagiarism is happened accidentally. It means that, students committing plagiarism due to lack of understanding of plagiarism, citation or referencing style (Maurer, et.al, 2006). This situation is well described by Wheelar (2014, p.46) in his statement “when encountering examples of plagiarism, they therefore may be unlikely to even recognize it, let alone condemn it”.

There is possibility that students still committing plagiarism even though they are already had sufficient knowledge of it. It seems that, the tendency to commit plagiarism also has correlation with their perceived seriousness of that activities (Martin, 1992; Dick, et. al, 2001; Carroll, 2002; Sheard, et.al, 2002 in Marshall & Garry, 2005).

Many students might also have heard from other people or experienced it himself that the penalties given for committing plagiarism was too light or flexible. They might also think that as long as they do not
get caught, then everything will be alright. This factor then adds the students’ courage to plagiarize other’s work.

Considering the prevalence of plagiarism case in the level of tertiary education in which University of Muhammadiyah Purwokerto (UMP) might also included in it, the researcher raised up this study. It was specifically explore the extent to which students have understood the concept plagiarism in academic writing context and also their opinion on the seriousness of committing plagiarism. The result of the study can be used by English Department faculty and the lecturers as a basis to take appropriate approach to deter plagiarism effectively from its root. As one approach suggested by Haris in Ergovac (2004) that teaching students about plagiarism issues is important and might help to reduce plagiarism cases than just simply assuming that the students already know it all.

B. Reasons for Choosing the Topic

There some reasons the researcher chose this research topic which can be described as follows:

1. Plagiarism is a problem that always appeared in the academic writing. It keeps mushrooming among students along with the development of Internet. Despite knowing the consequences of committing plagiarism, students do not reluctant to avoid it. Some studies revealed that lack understanding of plagiarism and perceived seriousness of it constitutes to majority of plagiarism cases.
2. Understanding of plagiarism and perceived seriousness of plagiarism are the reasons of some students committing plagiarism. Thus, the researcher wanted to investigate those two factors among students of English Department. It aimed to reveal the extent to which students of English Department have understood about plagiarism and perceived it as a serious crime in the academic field. It can be used as a consideration to tackle plagiarism violation caused by those two factors through developing appropriate approach.

C. Statement of the Problems
The study attempts to find out information in regards to:
To what extent do students have understood plagiarism and perceived it as a serious crime in the academic field?

D. Purpose of the Study
This study is intended to collect information regarding:
The extent to which students have already understood plagiarism and perceived it as a serious crime in the academic field?

E. The Significant of The Study
This study hopefully will give contribution both theoretically and practically which will be described as follows:
1. Theoretically

The information gathered in this study can contribute theoretically as data regarding to students understanding and perceived seriousness of plagiarism act of English Education Department students. This information hopefully can be used as a data for conducting further research related with the same topic.

2. Practically

The result of this study can be used as a basis information to take preventive action to minimize plagiarism act. It can be done, for example, by setting up both educative and punitive program. Giving the students education about plagiarism, the seriousness of committing plagiarism and also proper technique on referencing and citing are example of educative program to prevent plagiarism. While the punitive program like drawing up strict policy on plagiarism act and implementing that policy firmly can support the educative program.