Pedagogy, not punishment: Reducing plagiarism in EAP

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BC TEAL
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- A definition of plagiarism
- Preventing intentional plagiarism
- Addressing unintentional plagiarism
Fall 2017 term, ESLA 1900
Course theme: Lying and deception
Public perception that...

- universities are lowering their standards
- plagiarism rates are increasing
- internationalization is related to lower standards and more plagiarism (Clegg & Flint, 2006)

No evidence academic dishonesty is rising

- BUT recent figures still very concerning:
  - 65% of Ss self-report engaging in academic dishonesty (Trevino, McCabe, & Butterfield, 2012, qtd. in Lang, 2013)
  - about 32% of Ss in UK, Australian, and N. American studies admit copying a few sentences without acknowledgment (McCabe, 2005, qtd in Pecorari & Petric, 2014)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>% of Ss self-reporting engaging in at least 1 of 13 academically dishonest behaviours</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bowers (1963)</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McCabe &amp; Trevino (1993), replicating Bowers</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McCabe (2012), web-based surveys, 2002-'10</td>
<td>65</td>
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## Has the Internet increased plagiarism?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>% of Ss reporting inappropriate copying from PRINT sources</th>
<th>% of Ss reporting inappropriate copying from ONLINE sources</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>undergraduates</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>graduates</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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(McCabe, 2005)
textual plagiarism: ‘use of words and/or ideas from a source without appropriate attribution’

1. prototypical plagiarism – intention to deceive

2. patchwriting – no intention to deceive (Pecorari & Petric, 2014)
Reducing prototypical plagiarism

Lang’s 4 CLASSROOM factors that lead to cheating

1. extrinsic motivation
2. low expectation of success
3. an emphasis on performance (not mastery)
4. high stakes  (Lang, 2013)
Promoting intrinsic motivation

- Ss learn best when exploring questions they care about – can we tap into this? (Bain, 2004)

- ‘grounded assessments’ are inextricably linked to S’s experience in your course
  
  - increase intrinsic motivation and also make plagiarism logistically difficult
promote self-efficacy

- help Ss improve metacognition with low-stakes formative assessments (eg think-pair-share; minute papers, clicker questions)
- be as transparent and consistent as possible in assessing Ss (Lang, 2013)
- good instructors set high standards but show confidence in Ss’ ability to meet them (Bain, 2004)
- **emphasize mastery instead**
  - where possible, provide a range of evaluation options
  - shift focus from particular assessment instruments to the knowledge, skills, orientations Ss are expected to master (Lang, 2013)
Avoid giving excessive weight to particular assessments

Unfortunately, we have little control over how high the stakes are in ‘gatekeeping’ EAP programs
Tactical suggestions

- **Hybrid writing assessments**
  - Read and take notes at home, write in class (Westbrook & Holt, 2015)
  - Teacher-chosen source lists or submission by Ss of the sources/passages they cite as appendices
Possible sources of writing assistance

- Essay mills and online essay banks
- Friends, classmates, cousins, private tutors
- TAs, writing centres
- Unacknowledged research sources

Student with take-home writing task
- moral reminders such as academic integrity pledges (Ariely, 2013)
- could we dispense with take-home writing assignments worth 20+% submitted at end of term?
Addressing unintentional plagiarism
A survey of 54 UK, US, and Australian university plagiarism policies found

- language is legalistic, suggesting clear-cut distinctions
- plagiarism is likened to theft
- response is punitive
- not differentiated by discipline (Pecorari & Petric, 2014)
patchwriting: “copying from a source text and then deleting some words, altering grammatical structures, or plugging in one-for-one synonym substitutes” (Howard, 1995)

met a traditional def’n of plagiarism but Howard argued it was a legitimate learning strategy

here means any textual feature that might be called plagiarism despite lack of deceptive intent

empirical studies support Howard’s model (Abasi & Akbari, 2008; Pecorari, 2003)
Responding to an assignment requiring students to locate three sources relevant to their chosen topic and write a 500-word essay, Iris approached the literature search for the task by typing the keywords from the assignment title into the university’s electronic database search engine and selecting two articles that were among the first in the output. She then copied two passages from one and the abstract from another into a Word document which became the basis for her assignment, together with PowerPoint lecture slides. Her textual interventions included deleting sentences she did not understand or find to be relevant, and minimal editing (e.g., changing active to passive voice). In the subsequent conference session with her tutor, when questioned about her source-use practice, it transpired that Iris did not understand the texts. (Li & Casanave, 2012, qtd in Pecorari & Petric, 2014)
Acknowledging PW as a legitimate learning strategy

- PW should be recognized by Ts as a common strategy
  - we should accept most Ss will go through a PW stage and provide support to ensure they eventually move beyond it
  - PW should be viewed as ‘neutral’ not a ‘stigmatizing’ error. (Pecorari, 2003)
Better pedagogy around plagiarism

- moving beyond general advice to tasks & discussions
  - discussing plagiarism-related cases in media (esp. discipline-specific ones)
  - discussing scholarly articles focused on plagiarism
  - having Ss contribute to creation of course plagiarism policy
  - analysis of university’s academic integrity policy
  - creating and copyrighting a digital story (Pecorari & Petric, 2014)
Better pedagogy around plagiarism (con’d)

- avoiding excessive focus on citation mechanics.
  - practice tasks for reading comprehension; note-taking; paraphrasing, summarizing, quoting; synthesizing
  - awareness raising tasks on the purposes of citation (Pecorari & Petric, 2014)
Better pedagogy around plagiarism (con’d)

- allowing use of sources with appropriate level of reading challenge
- incorporating recognition of PW into our writing rubrics.

Which practices could be deemed developmental, not dishonest?

- sources are cited properly but paraphrase is inadequate or source text is copied verbatim ✔️
- source appears in an in-text citation but not in References section (or vice versa) ✔️
- S has used sources (whether with good, poor, or no paraphrasing) without acknowledging this with either in-text citation or Reference list entry?
Wette (2010)
- 78 undergrads in New Zealand. 8-hour course unit on plagiarism. Pre- and post-test model.
- Significant drop in unacknowledged copying from sources, but other problems still very present on post-test.

Ellery (2008)
- Small group tutorials for 1st-year Ss at a S. African university.
- 25% of final assignments still had source use problems; exit interviews showed many Ss still ignorant of key conventions.
- Author thinks Ss benefited but development of appropriate source use practices is a longer-term enterprise.
Reducing prototypical plagiarism

- PEDAGOGY: promoting intrinsic motivation; raising expectations; emphasizing mastery; lowering stakes
- TACTICS: hybrid at-home/in-class writing assessments; moral reminders (e.g. pledges)

Responding to—and helping Ss move beyond—patchwriting

- recognize PW as a legitimate learning strategy for L2 writers.
  - Incorporate PW into writing rubrics.
- go beyond general advice and citation mechanics. Practice and discuss the key skills and issues.
References

Thank you

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