‘Cheating’ or ‘Sharing’? Academic Ethics Across Cultures

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Session Outline

- Statement of Problem
- Attempts to Address Problem
- Group Work and Sharing
- Presentation of Model for Training
- Resources
“Academic integrity is a fundamental value of teaching, learning and scholarship. Yet, there is growing evidence that students cheat and plagiarize.”
Research from the Center for Academic Integrity
Clemson University Rutland Institute for Ethics

- On most US college campuses, over 75% of students admit to some cheating
- Internet plagiarism: 10% in 1999, 41% in 2001
- Majority of students (68%): “not a serious issue”
- 80% of students reported “no qualms” about cheating in 2001
- Cheating: from 11% in 1963 to 49% in 1993 (self-reported -- state universities)
- US high schools: 74% - serious test cheating
- 72% - serious cheating on written assignments
- Over half - some level of plagiarism on written assignments using the Internet
Common Examples of Academic Dishonesty

- Copying answers from another
- Unapproved collaboration
- Using notes or assistance of some sort during exams
- Submitting one’s own work for multiple assignments
- Claiming another’s work as one’s own
- Falsifying or misrepresenting results
Plagiarism as a Cultural Construct

Oxford English Dictionary definition of plagiarism:
“to take and use another person’s ideas as one’s own.”

Question: Is plagiarism always synonymous with cheating?

### ‘Plagiarism’ & ‘Cheating’ in Cross-Cultural Perspective

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Cultural Practices</th>
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| Russia & Eastern Europe | • Sharing notes, talking in class OK – not hidden  
|                  | • Goal is to bring the whole class level up  
|                  | • Bribes routinely expected for grades                                                |
| Germany         | • Sharing of answers common, but understood as student vs. teacher; not sharing is social taboo |
| Mexico          | • Sharing is common, but students will deny                                          
|                 | • Professors do not expect citations in paper                                         |
| Costa Rica      | • Teamwork the rule in personal and academic life, including supporting those who do not contribute to the group |
### ‘Plagiarism’ & ‘Cheating’ in Cross-Cultural Perspective

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<th>Country</th>
<th>Observations</th>
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| China         | • Students openly admit cheating is a way of life  
                   • ‘Intellectual property’ a foreign concept  
                   • Value: saving face, maintaining group harmony  
                   • Cheating seen as a skill everyone should develop to succeed in the world; the world is corrupt |
| Burma         | • Student learning seen as a task shared by group  
                   • Worst accusation in culture is selfishness: pursuing own goals at expense of others |
| India & Bangladesh | • Student riots when test cheating prevented  
                   • Exams should not be memory tests |
| Greece        | • Focus on learning concepts, rather than words  
                   • Connecting quotes demonstrates understanding |
‘Plagiarism’ & ‘Cheating’ in Cross-Cultural Perspective

Non-Western countries:
• Focus on textbook learning
• Rote learning
• Using another author’s words is a form of respect
• Loved poetry and revered scholarly arguments are learned by heart
• Students have difficulty stating own opinion
• Students have difficulty criticizing others’ words
Inherent Problems in U.S.

• Academic dishonesty is defined differently across campuses, disciplines and departments

• Students are educated about academic dishonesty in different ways

• Academic honesty violations vary and are inconsistent

• All of this is intensified for the visiting student
How is the problem approached now?

- Honor codes
- Syllabus statements
- Basic message:
  “Plagiarism and cheating are not allowed and consequences are serious.”
- Detection
- Penalization
Detection Programs

• Proving plagiarism can be burdensome on faculty
• Results are mixed and do not indicate unintentional plagiarism
• Devices derive from Western mindset *
  - emphasis on “catching” rather supporting new members of the community
  - Non-natives become disproportionately identified and scrutinized

* Niall Hayes and Lucas Introna, Lancaster University Management School
Language Acquisition Issues

• “Patch writing” as a transition to language independence
• Students are taught to mimic academics to improve writing skills
• Feeling that student cannot improve upon what has already been written
Group
Work
A Model for Cross-Cultural Training

1. **Acknowledge that plagiarism and cheating are not universal concepts**
   - share experiences
   - provide examples of expectations
   - academic ethics as cultural construct
A Model for Cross-Cultural Training

2. **Identify sources of difficulty**
   - “common knowledge”
   - collaborative work vs. cheating
   - group vs. individualist focus of society
   - teacher-centered vs. learner-centered
   - collaboration vs. competition model
   - reporting on others: honor or betrayal?
   - research & citation conventions
   - recognizing own writing style
   - student–teacher access
   - pressures on international students
   - ownership of intellectual property
   - differing classroom cultures
   - technology dependence of US students
A Model for Cross-Cultural Training

3. Acknowledge contradictions of US academic expectations
   • Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) resource: “Avoiding Plagiarism”
   • role of syllabus, US & abroad
   • how to seek help with clarification of expectations, or with citation
A Model for Cross-Cultural Training

4. Provide specific training on citation
   • standards of different disciplines
   • ungraded practice papers
   • paraphrasing instruction and practice
   • collaborate with campus writing center?
   • alert US students to possible differences in expectations abroad
   • utilization of tutors
5. Encourage students to learn expectations of host culture
   • Be prepared
   • If expectations clash with home culture norms, look for the value in them
   • Make decisions about any values that cannot be accepted
   • Know resources for resolution
Resources on Academic Integrity

- University of Sydney, Faculty of Economics and Business: www.econ.usyd.edu.au/
- University sites: guidelines for students, honor codes, suggestions for faculty
- Interactive on-line quizzes
- TESL-EJ articles http://tesl-ej.org/about.html
- NAFSA’s US Classroom Culture guide
- Institute for Study Abroad, Butler University: Academic Differences section www.ifsa-butler.org
- Center for Academic Integrity, Clemson University Rutland Institute for Ethics www.academicintegrity.org
- Extensive web resources (see handout and more)
Questions for Further Consideration

• Have we educated ourselves about the current state of academic misconduct in our program locations?

• Who has the power to handle cases of academic misconduct in the host country and are we prepared to accept their decisions?

• Should our students be held to the standards of the host country, whether they be more stringent or more lenient?
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Thank you