

Throughout my journey of tutoring, I have noticed that my tutees were plagiarizing. I began to learn about their culture as they expressed what their audience, especially their teachers expected out of them in their country. My tutee from Korea expressed his teacher's expectation; students are graded highly by their teachers when they imitate classic writers. My tutees from China never thought plagiarism was a big deal because in their homeland, using famous sayings, proverbs, and quotable phrases is essential in writing Chinese and English essays. Whatever their reason for plagiarism is, it is very important that we, as tutors, recognize this problem and help them "prevent it perfectly!" So how do we exactly do this? Well first step is understanding plagiarism itself.

Plagiarism is commonly defined as "presenting the words or ideas of another person as though they are the writer's own" from the book *ESL Students* by Shanti Bruce and Ben Rafoth. Although this definition seems straightforward, it still raises important questions about cultural and academic and textual practices: What does it mean to present words or ideas as though they are one's own? Why do some people make such a big deal about plagiarism? Plagiarism does not have one clear-cut meaning. People use it to describe a range of practices such as submitting a paper downloaded off the Internet, copying specific words or phrases from a source without using quotation marks, and many more. Now that we have a general idea of what plagiarism is, we will dive in to the importance of having knowledge about plagiarism and culture, which will make us become better tutors.

During my presentation, I discussed how cultural values lead to different writing practices. For instance, in the United States and in many English-language schools through the world, ideas are driven by a particular understanding of what it means to write. For example, in many Western contexts, we put a huge emphasis on individuality and independence, encouraging writers to develop and use their "authentic voice." Having an authentic voice is a way of writing that is uniquely their own. Teachers in the U.S. expect their students to express themselves in their own voices, rather than through the voice of others. Therefore, when one considers why voice is so important in writing, one reason for our attitudes toward plagiarism might become clearer: that plagiarism misappropriates voice, which undermines an important goal of writing.

Originality is also essential in Western education. The western audience expects writers to say things that are original and not just parrot ideas and words they've found elsewhere. Writers are expected to create new meaning through their use of sources, to contribute their own ideas to the discussion. By having their own creativity and fresh voice, they give credit where credit is due, and prevent taking credit for work other people have done.

Although originality and individuality is significant to many Western audiences, this belief about the purposes of writing does not hold true to other cultures. In *Perspectives on Plagiarism from ESL Students in Hong Kong* by Glenn Deckert, he states that "the Western tradition typically honors a person's divergent thinking through the individual's arbitration and participation in ongoing academic exchange. Other traditions, as in China, emphasize close allegiance to a few greater social harmony." Such cultures generally value collectivity over individuality, which means that it is better to work for the common good rather than individual gain. This understanding might be a possible explanation to why my Chinese and Korean tutees suppress their individuality rather than celebrate it. These ESL students are basically working with a set of beliefs about writing that might be different from what they're used to. This also explains why my tutees might unintentionally plagiarize. However, cross-cultural differences are not the only reason why students plagiarize. ESL students give other reason for plagiarizing, such as the spending a lot of time to complete assignments in a second language. One of my tutees confessed and told me that he needed to write the assignments faster due to this busy work schedule. Other students plagiarize assignments because they feel as though their instructors don't care about their writing or about their students. With a great background of culture and plagiarism, we can try our best to "prevent plagiarizing perfectly" through many ways in order to help us become better tutors!

The *Bedford Guide for Writing Tutors* by Leigh Ryan and Lisa Zimmerelli lists Do's and Don'ts of how to properly approach your tutees when you suspect plagiarism. The authors suggest that "if you encounter a suspicious passage or phrase, explain that the text sounds "different" or "funny" and seems to be taken from another source. Explain that material taken from another source that is not common knowledge must be documented, whether it is quoted directly, paraphrased, or summarized." They also tell us not to

accuse a writer directly of plagiarism, which makes sense, due to the cultural differences we learned earlier and we don't want to hurt their feelings either!

Although paraphrasing properly can be a huge challenge for your tutees, it is important to help them through this because it requires a writer to "both master his sources and break his connection to their language and structure" (Rofoth, 109). When they learn to paraphrase, they will be able to participate in a new academic culture, rather than subvert the culture's expectation about originality and authorship. We should welcome the writer's attempt to learn a new language and do all we can to help the writer with their limited vocabulary and unfamiliarity with syntax of a language. It is our responsibility as tutors to help them navigate the terrain of academic writing in English.

Many of us know that plagiarism is a sensitive topic and we don't want to risk offending students, especially if they have worked on their assignments really hard. However, we should keep in mind that plagiarism is both appropriate and important for a tutor to address using sources correctly with a writer when there are any questions about whether the writer has plagiarized, intentionally or not. As Sandy states, "Questions are your tools." To open up a conversation about suspected plagiarism, you might simply ask the writer, "Did you consult any sources as you wrote this paper?" If the answer is yes, follow up by asking her to indicate in her paper any words, phrases, or ideas she found in her sources. If she says no, you can show her why you asked the question, by pointing out which parts of her paper caught your eye, and helping her find ways to make those parts fit more smoothly. "During this conversation maintain a supportive, encouraging, non judgmental role" (Rofoth, 111). We can refer to several resources to facilitate conversations about plagiarism and sources such as referring to their green sheet (usually has school's plagiarism policy, and usually found in the student handbook).

Another way we can prevent our tutees from plagiarizing is to expose them to MLA, APA, and Chicago. We might even consider developing an archive of sample papers for writing centers. This will allow both tutors and writers to analyze real writing samples to find out different ways to integrate source information into a paper.

We can also invite the tutees to talk about some of the writing conventions they learned in their home culture and look at their sources side by side with their paper so that both of us can best ensure that their paper uses source material accurately and correctly, in ways that are both rhetorically effective and academically appropriate.

One last note! As international relations major, you can probably see why I chose this topic. I'm always fascinated with cultural differences and the most important lesson I've learned is that we need to remember that when we're working with ESL students, we need to recognize that they're working in an environment that might be different than the one they are accustomed to. We need to remember that the rules of that culture and its conventions for using sources may appear quite foreign. In the book, *Tutoring Writing* by Donald McAndrew and Thomas Reigstad, they point out that all cultures have rhetorical preferences, "all of which are equally good," and that our preferences are neither better nor worse than those of any other culture.

"P to the third power = Preventing Plagiarism Perfectly!"