

# The problem of plagiarism in academic culture

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## Abstract

For those new to Australian academic culture, particularly international students, the emphasis on the importance of avoiding plagiarism can herald a new concept and a new way of using source material and constructing text, while for those familiar with academic culture the concepts of plagiarism may seem to need no explanation. In this paper I explore the idea that concepts of plagiarism are embedded in Australian academic culture, which explains why university lecturers as members of this academic culture can 'know' what plagiarism is, while new students by contrast can be concerned and confused. I argue that students new to university in Australia are entering 'a high context culture', which means that they are trying to learn from those within this culture whose understandings of some of the complexities of academic culture and academic writing are often implicit and taken for granted. In this paper, attitudes to text in the culture of the English speaking university are reviewed. I also review perspectives from scholars and lecturers working in the area of university learning and teaching. Finally, I suggest some critical ways of teaching about the problem of plagiarism.

## Background

A few years ago I participated in a workshop about plagiarism. By the end of the workshop, it was clear that there would be no agreement on whether or not a particular scenario constituted plagiarism. The outside consultant brought in to run this workshop said that such heated stoushes between lecturers were usual, as was our initial consensus that we all knew what plagiarism was, and we had come some way in helping our students avoid it – especially our students from other cultures. As an academic language and learning adviser in the English-as-a-second-language (ESL) unit, I really wanted to find out how to help, because a number of my students were presenting with confusions and concerns about referencing and copying. By the end of the workshop, I too was confused, without any readymade strategies for 'helping' the students.

## Introduction

Plagiarism can be considered from a number of perspectives. Not only are there different understandings of the concept, but those who must deal with this concept and its presence come with their own realities, knowledge and cultural experiences. In protecting the values of academic integrity, many Australian universities are now developing and presenting policies which deal with standards of integrity and attempt to define plagiarism and specify its penalties. This focus directs faculty to be more mindful of the presence and potential of plagiarism in students' work. While in the past lecturers could have been comfortable with the notion that plagiarism is simply a form of cheating in which the copying of another's work is not acknowledged, now they are confronted with explaining this and being seen to have in place prevention measures. Students are also dealing with the complexities of plagiarism, and for

many, especially those from overseas, the complexities represent a new way of understanding the world of university knowledge and assessment. Academic language and learning advisers of students and academic developers of university teaching, in trying to be explicit about the construction of academic texts for students, bring another approach to the notion of plagiarism.

In this paper I explore the idea that plagiarism can be understood as a problem embedded in Australian academic culture. Being culturally embedded explains why until recently plagiarism was rarely clearly defined, and why university lecturers as members of this academic culture seem to 'know' what plagiarism is, while new students by contrast are concerned and confused. Australian academic culture meets Hall's (1981) description of a 'high context' culture; it is a type of culture in which its members have come to implicitly understand the situation in which they operate. In the light of this idea, this paper explains ways of analyzing academic culture, with particular focus on academic writing, and reviews how plagiarism is discussed by scholars and lecturers working in academic language and learning and educational development. I argue that learning interests would be served if teaching about plagiarism took into account its cultural and problematic nature. I propose a critical approach to teaching about plagiarism but conclude that the presence of authoritarian and unfair practices discourages critique.

### **University as high context**

In trying to understand the university experience of new students, considering university as a type of culture could be enlightening. Hyland (2003, p. 341) explains that: 'Academic knowledge is now generally recognized to be a social accomplishment, the outcome of a cultural activity shaped by ideology and constituted by agreement between a writer and a skeptical discourse community'. Unfortunately, such cultural activities might be implicit and seem inaccessible to newcomers. In trying to learn these cultural activities, as Geertz (cited in Swales, 1990, p. 19) explains, we end up becoming acculturated but not necessarily able to explain ourselves to those outside our discourse community. For example, we may want to learn everything we can about biology so that we can explain biology, but in the end we would actually become a biologist. Furthermore, as Ede and Lunsford (2001) point out, as insiders, scholars can be constrained by their cultural perspectives so that they don't reflect on and don't critique the peculiarities in academic authorship.

One way to explain cultural activities is to apply the concept of High Context (HC) and Low Context (LC) cultures. Generally, it is Asian cultures that are described as HC and western cultures as LC. Communication in HC cultures is encoded in messages with very little explicit information needed and inferences are implied; in LC cultures communication is direct, explicit and likely to represent an individual view point (Hall, 1981; Gudykunst, 1998). Such categorization is useful to explain why English language essays (supposedly LC) clearly state at the outset their main intention and position, which is directly related to the rest of the essay, while essays in HC cultures do not use explicit arguments (Clyne, 1982; Wang, 1998). However, not all communication in LC cultures is low context. There are circumstances in which insiders use HC messages, for example partners in a long term relationship (Gudykunst, 1998). I argue that the situation facing newcomers to university can seem to be HC – consider that HC can be defined as 'a term which refers to the sheer amount of information and cultural content taken for granted by members', and that the higher the context, 'the harder it is for outsiders to feel that they belong or to know how to behave appropriately. Such cultures exclude strangers without necessarily wishing to do so and communicate in codes which only members understand' (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1998, p. 164).

Explaining university culture to those coming from the outside may require more explicit detailing than those within that culture know how to deliver. The anthropologist Hall explains that it is difficult to describe a culture from both the inside and the

outside, and at the same time one 'cannot transcend one's own culture without first exposing its hidden axioms and unstated assumptions' (Hall, 1981, p. 222). The Australian university is a HC situation in a LC culture, so its teachers, if they are working with students from HC cultures, could face communication breakdowns. The students may not know what is going on, and the lecturers may not have the wherewithal to know what to explain, nor the inclination to reflect on their academic culture. The problem is not just lack of knowledge or inclination, it is also a matter of contexts. Hall (p. 127) argues that people coming from a LC culture expect flexibility in dealing with something new; on the other hand, people coming from a HC culture, in order to adapt, require more detail and explanation than even LC people are used to providing. A HC situation such as academic text making, if it is to be taught, will need to be deconstructed in more detail than might be expected by those who already have mastery.

The construction of an academic text is a contextualised activity. Geisler (1994) refers to (the myth of) the ideal of the academic text as an autonomous text. She explains that supposedly, such a text is created by the academic writer who constructs logical arguments out of specialized knowledge and presents these in a stable format. The resulting text is then supposed to say what it means and mean what it says, without having to be contextualized, although requiring a high level of cognitive ability. Supposedly a good reader can apply such principles to any academic text and then understand it. In reality, however, academic literacy is highly contextualized: the format and construction of ideas can be culturally specific (Gudykunst, 1998), and the ways of presenting knowledge can differ from discipline to discipline (Lea & Stierer, 2000). An example of such difference is the tendency in science writing to avoid referencing phrases, while in the humanities greater use is made of referencing terms to show the writer's opinion of source material (Buckingham & Nevile, 1997). This might be obvious, but Hyland (2003), in his analysis of citations across disciplines, concludes that 'our routine and unreflective writing practices are deeply embedded in the epistemological and social convictions of our disciplines' (p. 363).

'Routine and unreflective writing practices' and lack of consciousness about what students don't know can explain why much of the explanations about the use of citations and plagiarism do not cover the complexities of the conventions of citation, the role of acknowledgment and the textual synthesis of references peculiar to academic culture (Scollon, 1995; Pennycook, 1996; Sutherland-Smith, 2005). Examples of such explanations are blanket instructions to avoid copying which do not take into account the various distinctions in ways of copying and do not allow for the value of models as a learning tool (Jones & Freeman, 2003). In his research about plagiarism and Chinese ESL students, Bloch (2001), points out that teachers can oversimplify concepts of plagiarism which is not enlightening. He gives the example of teaching which instructs students that plagiarism is like theft, implying that plagiarism is a straightforward matter of deceit, and 'assumes the Chinese have no concept of intellectual property' (Bloch, 2001, p. 220).

Such teaching (of English), in which the teacher is unlikely to be challenged by aspiring learners and can remain comfortable in not reflecting on the students' needs and knowledge, is also evidence of the power differential (Pennycook, 1999). A further consideration in perceiving academic culture as a HC situation is the excluding nature of academic culture and much academic discourse. Geisler (1994, p. 72) argues that there are historic reasons for the (existence of the) exclusiveness of academic culture, and that there are status benefits in being seen as an expert; moreover, experts, in knowing more than others, are privileged in being seen as beyond evaluation. Cadman (2003, p. 2) also claims there is 'a desire to maintain those taken-for-granted values which are perceived as inherent in the English language academy and its discourses', and more dramatically argues that this is a type of racism. In a similar vein, some critical pedagogues such as McLaren (1996) argue that lecturers typically function as expert workers and privileged perpetrators of a 'supremacist system' that either colonizes or excludes the other hence such workers

are limited in their capacity to critique the assumptions of their academy. While not intended to exclude, some teaching, rather than making the role of acknowledgment and citation in academic literacy transparent, discourages awareness and critique of academic conventions.

### **Academic cultures and texts**

Comparing and contrasting academic practices from other cultures can provide a way of revealing culturally embedded practices. The field of contrastive rhetoric provides a way of understanding the texts of students, particularly those who are writing in English as a second language, so that lecturers can be aware that they are teaching a way of writing that might differ from what their students have previously learnt. Examples of this research include Clyne (1994) who compares a number of cultures and has a particular interest in German writing; Duszak (1994) who writes about Polish writing; Simpson (2000) who analyses paragraphs and sentences in academic Spanish and English; Melander, Swales and Fredrickson (1997) who contrast Swedish and North American writing; Lee (1996) who explains Confucian conceptions of learning as a contrast to western approaches; and Connor (1996) whose text 'Contrastive Rhetoric' presents an overview of the significant research in the writing of the first language of ESL students.

Research in the area of cultural differences in the constructions of academic texts is not without concerns. In Kaplan's 1966 work (cited in Clyne, 1994), the English speaking essay was seen as logical and direct, and cultural variations to this, by definition, were classified as indirect and lacking logic. Kaplan himself (Connor & Kaplan, 1987) later acknowledged this to have been ethnocentric. There is also the potential for contrastive rhetoric to generalize and extrapolate cultural features of writing as stereotypes (Littlewood, 1999; Scollon & Scollon, 2001). Furthermore, as Cortazzi and Jin (1997, p. 67) point out we 'interpret and assess other peoples' words, actions, and academic performance' from the framework of our own culture.

Of particular interest is the work of those who write with insider knowledge. In making a plea for a more international and culturally sensitive approach from Australian university lecturers, the writers Spizzica (1997) and Phan (2001) alert readers to differences in how students learn and present knowledge in Italy and Vietnam, respectively. As a Chinese writer, Shen (1998) explains how he confronted alarming differences in how the self is represented in western writing. Also comparing Chinese and western academic writing, Chen's work (2001) analyses the referencing perspectives of Chinese postgraduates writing in English and reveals the cultural nature of how writers position themselves in texts and use other people's words.

Through the teaching of academic writing in English speaking universities, work has been done in analyzing the construction of academic texts. Of the number of approaches to teaching study skills and academic English (for an overview see Flowerdew & Peacock, 2001), one influential approach has been analyzing texts according to their genre, for example a research paper, or even a smaller text such as an abstract. Advocating this, Swales (1990) presents analyses of the form and language of academic texts (most of which come from the sciences) which reveal useful details, such as verb types and tense changes and their communicative effect. While some might claim that in science, content is more important than form, we should consider Gergen's point that the rationality of an argument depends on the vehicle of language to persuade that this is reality (Gergen, 1994, p. 41). Swales provides some broad principles which can help understanding of what confronts novices trying to write an academic essay. They need to learn the way people use language in particular texts, how particular types of texts are structured and held together, and what is known and explored in a given subject. It is implied in this approach that such principles of text analysis can be applied across subjects, although Swales later acknowledged that 'the idea of the free-standing research article, is an over-simplification...' (Swales, 2001, p. 49).

## **Responses to the uncritical reproduction of conventions**

Teaching approaches which work out what students need to do to meet the conventions of academic culture have been criticized because they accept what is given (Lea & Street, 1998). Furthermore, while genre analysis (see the work of Swales) is useful for the purposes of finding appropriate language, in taking a surface approach to the types of language used in academic texts, it does not reveal much about the cultural complexities of synthesis of knowledge, referencing conventions and plagiarism. The complication here is that attempts to reduce the conventions of plagiarism and authorship to simple rules and use of appropriate language, while standing in a HC situation can lead to teaching students to apply an uncritical reproduction. For example, in order to help students, teachers might provide guidelines for using sources in academic writing without any analysis or awareness of where practices are culturally specific. This may not seem contentious, but instructions such as, 'This is the way it's done' might not lead to revelation, and if students are left unaware about why acknowledgment is vital to academic knowledge and the construction of academic arguments, they could perceive the conventions as arbitrary, with failure as a matter of chance leading to punishment.

Other perspectives on the academic study experience, such as critical pedagogy, critical theory, academic literacies and critical English, seek to reveal disadvantage and disrupt unseen privilege. Writers such as Benesch (2001), Pennycook (1999) and Lea and Street (1998) acknowledge the power inherent in universities, in terms of what they teach, how they teach, and how they make (or reject) identities. Using this critical approach, academic texts are analysed for implicit and explicit messages of power, and the teaching of academic writing is moved beyond teaching students how to be competent. Canagarajah (2001) argues that attempting to provide opportunities of competence for ESL students can lead to a 'reproductive ideology' (p. 120), in which the issues of power are ignored or not analysed. This contrasts with the sentiment in Swales' purpose (1990, p. 9) of 'a pragmatic concern to help people, both non-native and native speakers, to develop their academic communicative competence'. While the desire to help people hardly seems open to challenge, it does position some as in need of help; critical pedagogy, rather than simply aiming to help some people to adapt, takes a position of attempting to scrutinize education practices that marginalize learners (Luke, 2004). Can it be assumed from this that scrutinizing prevailing practices and assumptions will necessarily improve the learning experience? Certainly critiquing can develop awareness, but Canagarajah points out that teachers often know about power inequalities in the system, but they do not always have ways of dealing with them. Perhaps these ways include an attitude of looking for where the practices that privilege and subordinate exist, working out how that power could be subverted and reflecting on what students need to learn so they can have access to learning and assessment opportunities.

## **Perspectives on learning and teaching about plagiarism**

Typically, those who teach about plagiarism, rather than writing about how to deter students from the "sin" of plagiarism, write about inadvertent plagiarism and the need for education (Chanock, 2003; Devlin, 2003; Parker, 2003; McGowan, 2005). Working closely with students, they have an awareness that students struggle to understand how to avoid plagiarism and to apply the conventions of referencing (Chanock, East & Maxwell, 2004). Buckingham and Nevile (1997, p. 51) have observed that, not only do many students find these conventions difficult, they see them as part of 'the many apparently arbitrary writing conventions that they must master to produce successful texts'.

Some of the advice from learning developers is positioned to support students to meet prevailing standards. McGowan (2003; 2005) has outlined strategies for plagiarism

minimization. These include the use of electronic detection tools, such as Turnitin (go to [www.turnitin.com](http://www.turnitin.com)), better task setting, an apprenticeship to teach academic conventions, the application of genre analysis, and collaboration between learning skills lecturers and discipline-specific lecturers. McGowen (2005, p. 292) argues that 'What students need to become aware of is that in undertaking tertiary study they place themselves into a research tradition... They must become familiar with a new culture: the 'culture of enquiry'. Such a stance doesn't critique the notion that the responsibility to change rests only with the students, nor does it question the nature of the prevailing academic culture (Benesch, 2001). While it could be argued that the university has a responsibility to make it possible for students to meet the university's standards, it could be that some of the teaching and assessment practices are not in the interests of student learning.

Ivanic (1998) writes about how students grapple with writing text that is not familiar, and how this positions them as outsiders. An example of this is academic writing which requires originality to be a matter of reflecting and commenting on other people's work. Ivanic (1998, p. 195) notes that there is a 'paradox about originality' (in academic writing it implies a re-creation) and a 'fuzziness of the whole concept of plagiarism'. Furthermore, students who get it wrong, who do not re-create appropriately, are likely to be accused of plagiarism, and excluded; hence, the rhetoric around plagiarism can work as a gate keeper.

A critical approach questions the rhetoric around plagiarism. In taking such an approach, Pennycook challenges the appropriateness of imposing the current cultural values. He posits that in the west, 'we often find ourselves vehement defenders of "correct" textual practices, desperately trying to promote our version of language and ownership. This position, however, 'is filled with tension' (Pennycook, 1996, p. 212). Reflecting on such a tension and her own attitudes, Moore Howard (2000, p. 475) describes her path of initially accepting and trying to teach prevailing definitions of plagiarism, and then eventually realizing that she must reject 'the very word', because the concept is deeply cultural and 'amorphous' and 'hierarchical'. Cadman (2003) also rejects prevailing views of plagiarism. She reflects on the views of others, and chastises them for not coming to the conclusion that plagiarism is a problem; she denounces the rhetoric around plagiarism and accuses those who write on the topic of having the narrow view that 'plagiarism is a transgression that 'needs' to be addressed' (p. 9). In her view there is fault and it lies with those who write about how to deal with plagiarism.

### **A critical approach to teaching and learning about plagiarism**

Earlier I described Australian academic culture as High Context as a way of explaining why students can be confused and lecturers can seem to know what plagiarism is but seem limited in explaining and teaching about it. Positioning those who teach about plagiarism inside the HC of academic culture raises issues about how academic integrity and plagiarism could be taught. How can teachers be explicit about their implicit understandings? And how to deal with the positioning of students as the other and their teachers as the insiders? I propose a critical stance with its approaches of problematizing and reflecting on what is familiar (Luke, 2004). While early writings in critical pedagogy often amounted to rantings against imperialism and domination, reminiscent of the oratory in student politics in the 1970s, more recent works such as *Critical Pedagogies and Language Learning* (Norton & Toohey, 2004) and *Border Crossings* (Giroux, 2005) are about knowledge, authority and practice. Such works 'articulate a stance toward intervention that aims at engaging participants in reflection and praxis' (Norton & Toohey, 2004, p. 15), challenge authority and take some action to transform the world. Examples of how such approaches enable teachers in a HC situation are demonstrated in the language building opportunities Starfield (2004) creates with her students which resulted from her awareness of how academic language is a gate-keeper, and Lin's (2004) reflections on teaching the texts of critical pedagogy which led her to an attitude of disrupting their authority.

My concerns about aspects of the ESL advising and teaching work I do with undergraduate and postgraduate university students and the concerns I heard from these students led me to reflect on ways to teach about plagiarism that would make sense and wouldn't be an imposition of cultural values. Comments from students, such as "I'm afraid of plagiarism" and "plagiarism makes me feel very confused", certainly led me to want to help and to fix the problem. And from my comfortable and privileged position (Giroux, 2005) this seemed a good idea, but attempts to bestow knowledge from within one's culture are unlikely to be bountiful. Furthermore, positioning students as being excluded because they don't know all the complexities of plagiarism also invites teachers to bestow inclusion on their students. In the context of these concerns, I present some suggestions for teaching about the problem of plagiarism. They are not activities that will make the problem go away for either lecturers or students, but they are aimed at increasing engagement in understandings of the problematic nature of plagiarism.

In discussions with students and faculty, in which plagiarism is framed in academic integrity, I have observed common understandings about the value of fostering honesty and discouraging cheating in scholarship. However, there is differentiation between the notion of plagiarism as cheating and that of copying not done according to the prevailing rules. Dawson (2004, p. 130) suggested from her findings that many students differentiate between cheating, which they perceive in terms of a premeditated attempt to deceive, and plagiarism, which they perceive more as a failure to follow required institutional procedures. While she bemoans this, perhaps because she is concerned that students are cynical about plagiarism, I suggest that it is a useful distinction. Kuiper (2005, p. 242) found that 'ironically, abandoning the term plagiarism was a major breakthrough in dealing with plagiarism at Lincoln University'. The university made the distinction between inappropriate copying and dishonesty. Making this distinction could support a learning environment for those who are trying to master academic conventions and encourage more awareness in those acculturated and familiar with how to avoid transgressions.

Discussions about misdemeanours of copying in other domains can increase awareness of the contextual nature of academic integrity. There are protocols about copying which are peculiar to academic culture, but concerns about unfair copying and plagiarism are not restricted to universities. In workshops I have given for lecturers and for students, presenting some scenarios (see Figures 1 & 2 below) for discussion about authorship and acknowledgement has resulted in much discussion about how copying can be a learning strategy, what is appropriate copying and how authorship is defined.

**Figure 1: Copying and acknowledgement**

1. A writer uses a famous quote but does not say who the author was.
2. A painter paints a copy of the work of another painter and then sells it.
3. A painter starts copying a painting done by another painter, but can't copy it exactly and so the final painting looks quite different from the original. He sells this as his own work.
4. A candidate employs a professional writer to write a scholarship application
5. A photographer produces a book in which the cover design and page design are copied from another book but the photographs are different.
6. A chef eats a meal in a restaurant and later presents the same meal in his restaurant.
7. This chef then enters this meal into an international competition and is awarded a gold medal.
8. The Prime Minister gives a speech which he did not write.
9. The Vice-Chancellor designates letter writing to her assistant, but signs such letters as if she is the author.

The idea for presenting scenarios came from Barks and Watts (2001), as did the following activity in which the object is to discuss whether or not the cases are plagiarism and/or a breach of academic integrity. I have presented cases that demonstrate that academic integrity is not just an issue of student transgression, nor is it a simple matter of plagiarism as transgression. Inevitably, while the discussions resolve some situations and concerns, more problems and more scenarios are raised.

### Figure 2: Academic integrity and plagiarism

1. A student gets someone else to write her essay and then submits it for assessment.
2. A student borrows a thesis from the library and copies the structure and the style and uses the same references.
3. When a student's paper is published his professor is listed as an author, even though he didn't do the research or the writing.
4. A student makes a paragraph by taking short phrases from a few sources and putting them together so the paragraph sounds academic.
5. A writer uses a complete paragraph as a quote and gives a full bibliographical reference.
6. A lecturer reads an article then rewrites it by making some changes to the words, e.g. using synonyms, changing some of the grammar, and putting in different examples.
7. A group of students work together and produce separate pieces of work which have the same organisation and ideas.

Copying without acknowledgment can become plagiarism, however, acknowledgment is not just to avoid plagiarism. Certainly, integrity is generally understood as an important concern of plagiarism and acknowledgment; as a student reported to me "You must do it because it's other people's effort". There are other reasons for acknowledgment and the use of references in academic texts. It may not be possible to uncover all the reasons, but it can open discussion to posit that the special ways and rules for presenting academic writing have been constructed by the people who present their work this way. From this position, other principles can be developed, for example: citations indicate that there are different perspectives of knowledge, and the way they are used can provide a message about these perspectives. Chen (2001) categorises citation behaviour as: identifying sources and providing a message and the attitudes to that message. Another principle that helps to explain the function of citations and acknowledgment is the notion that academic knowledge is a communal project so a number of people are building this knowledge, and it is not stable so there is always the possibility of accessing new sources, and it is never completed so there is a need to go to new sources.

Discussions about the prevailing conventions about plagiarism can be seen as an opportunity for developing mastery, as well as a chance to examine plagiarism as a concept and problem of academic culture, rather than a standard which is only to be revered and cannot be questioned. In such discussions about why plagiarism is a problem, students have shared their concerns as well as what they know about acknowledgment and plagiarism. Typically, international students explain the citation conventions and attitudes to copying to which they have become accustomed. Sharing these understandings and alternative attitudes can lead to distancing from the emotion implicit in much of the rhetoric which is about transgressions and failure to comply and is conducive to a sense of control, which McLaren (1996) argues leads to a sense of power.

A critical approach is premised on being alert to power imbalance, so while a lecturer standing within the HC of academic culture can unintentionally exclude, he/she can also be understood as doing so from a privileged position. From such a position there



may be little opportunity to hear students' perspectives on plagiarism. Nevertheless, I have observed that when lecturers have heard quotes from students there has been reaction, much discussion and concern. For example, in workshops I have given, student comments such as, "every teacher will tell you be careful, don't copy from others, bla bla bla. In their mind it's very, very serious – it's wrong" have provoked discussions about asymmetry between lecturer and student attitudes. While comments which reflect on the concept of originality, for example, "Where does an idea come from, it's generation to generation," have caused discussion about the differences in student and faculty perceptions of what originality means. I cannot say that hearing student perceptions has changed practice. But I can say that being exposed to these at least creates the possibility of greater awareness so that conventions can be deconstructed.

It takes practice and awareness to learn about the copying conventions of academic culture and to learn how to exploit texts without plagiarising them. Tasks which have low risk of punishment and failure for plagiarism provide opportunities for newcomers to academic culture to practice. I have frequently seen evidence of greater control in referencing in students' writing when they have resubmitted work following feedback or peer review. Barrett and Malcolm (2005) describe how they gave individual advice to students and used Turnitin reports to demonstrate the presence of plagiarised text in their work. Faced with such evidence the students became aware of the need to learn to use others' texts appropriately. Advice and warnings about plagiarism may alert students to a potential danger; however, without being mapped to a specific assessment activity, such warnings may not seem relevant.

The rules about copying, acknowledgment and authorship can change depending on the context, and in academic culture, citation conventions vary with genre and subject. Johns (1997) advocates for writing skills, such as integration of texts, to be taught as part of the teaching of subject knowledge. According to her, 'intertextuality' (see Bakhtin, 1986) is the presiding feature of academic discourse requiring contextual knowledge. Examples of target writing can be deconstructed to demonstrate this integration of texts. Lecturers might not be able to make all the citation conventions transparent for students who are new to academic culture. However, they can alert students to be present to such.

Models and guidelines can give students access to expected standards, and discussions about understandings of these guidelines can be insightful for both students and lecturers. Research by Pardoe (2000) shows how difficult it can be for students to work out what their lecturer wants and that, even though they might often get it wrong, students will bring reason to their responses. While the learning value of models can be enhanced with guidelines, possibilities for students to learn about academic writing by discovering and exploring also need to be considered. Jones and Freeman (2003) described how, in teaching writing to first year students doing an introductory physics course, they initially gave explicit guidelines about the structure of reports and advice about language, but later found that providing models which students analysed in terms of 'making sense' (p. 181) were more effective. Taking into account the need for students to make their own sense of models of academic writing, and the HC nature of academic culture, the guidelines for analyzing models should: use simple language; invite students to ask questions about what they don't understand; and provide opportunities for students to find features they could use in their own writing.

While teaching about academic writing and acknowledgment conventions can increase understanding, challenging the tyranny of plagiarism is another matter. The prevailing authoritarianism in attitudes to plagiarism and copying in Australian academic culture are unlikely to be challenged by lecturers if they are unaware of any strangeness in conventions. At the same time, students who are trying to master the conventions are not likely to challenge prevailing attitudes, especially if they are doing so in an environment when punishments for plagiarism and suspected plagiarism are

unfair and autocratic. Pennycook (1996, p. 265) argues that teaching should address students' needs to access the norms of academic culture, but at the same time such teaching could also support students to critique those same norms and practices, so that there is an opening for more culturally diverse ways of seeing and presenting knowledge. Such critique is unlikely in a university where fear of punishment predominates. This is the case in a university where punishments for plagiarism are not equitable and fair, for example where a breach in one class could lead to expulsion, while in another it could result in a quiet chat.

## Conclusion

In this paper it has been argued that framing plagiarism as a problem embedded in the HC of English speaking academic culture helps in understanding the position of new students as outsiders trying to learn new codes of rhetoric and of being in danger of being excluded. Considering university as a HC culture also allows for the opportunity to expose text practices so that they can be critiqued for what is implicit to those within the academic culture and what is strange to newcomers. In the paper, approaches to theorizing and teaching academic rhetoric which aim for competency were compared with those that try to critique the prevailing practices and understand such practices as being part of a system that privileges some and excludes others. This comparison led to concerns about teaching the complexities of plagiarism from a HC situation. Critical pedagogy is an approach which was used to analyse the role of power in education and to review practices which are familiar. Using this approach some teaching and learning strategies which have led to much discussion about plagiarism from students and lecturers were presented. Reflecting on plagiarism can lead to it being seen as a concept produced in academic culture rather than that which is treated with reverence and is not questioned. There is continued need to be critical and reflective about the rhetoric around plagiarism. The challenge remains for those of us working in academic culture to uncover and take action on unfair and authoritarian practices in the teaching of plagiarism.

## Author Biography

Julianne East has worked as an adviser teaching academic language and learning in the Language and Academic Skills (English as a Second Language) unit at La Trobe University, Australia since 1997. Her research interests are autonomous learning, academic culture and academic integrity, and her current research focus is on plagiarism.

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