



Gradients of Plagiarism: a slippery slope?

And what to do at the bottom of the cliff?





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1. What do Homer, Plato, Socrates, Aristotle and Shakespeare have in common?

2. What do Martin Luther King, Joe Biden, Whiti Ihimaera, Dr. Danny Keegan have in common?

3. What do your and mine students have in common?





Spirit: 'Taurus' 0:47 (1968)

Led Zeppelin: 'Stairway to Heaven' 0:15 (1971)

<http://www.businessinsider.com.au/why-led-zeppelin-is-going-to-court-over-stairway-to-heaven-against-spirit-2016-4?r=US&IR=T>

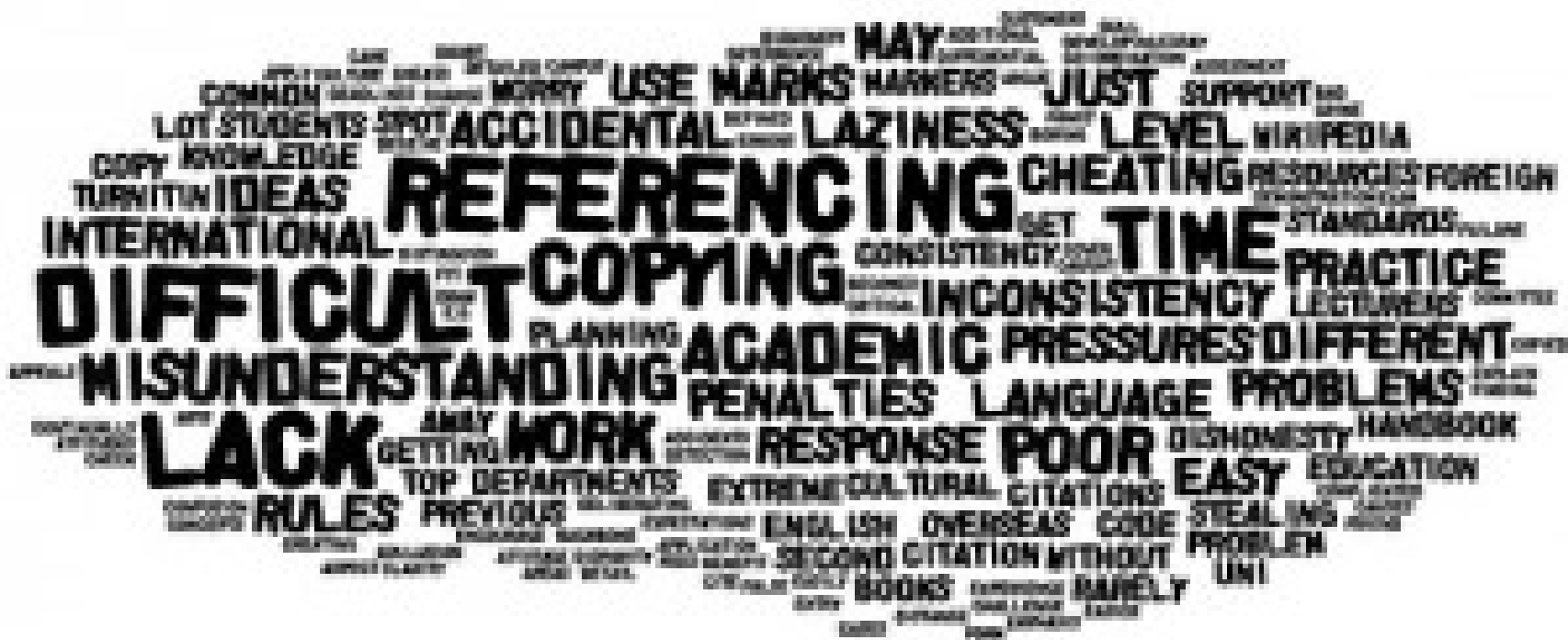
Is there a gap between our L2 learners and native English speakers?

If so, what kind of gap?

Other plagiarism cases:

April 2014: 254 in Waikato and 17 in Canterbury: what is considered being cheating, how is staff dealing with it and how is it recorded?

Vigilance and penalties can work both ways: vigilant staff, education and/or punishment.





Why is plagiarism such a problem?

It violates current notions of copyright and ownership

Plagiarisers have

- an unfair advantage over their peers.

- gain undeserved credits

- do not grow academically

- violate the integrity, honesty and ethical principles of good scholarship

- harm the original authors for not acknowledging their ideas / lack of citations



Plagiarism Fuzzy concept

- Ad slide 3: the ‘who’, ‘when’, ‘why’, ‘where’, ‘how much’ are important factors to consider.
 - relation with other texts
 - how it’s originality is perceived by the reader
- It’s very subjective (Waikato vs Canterbury- scholar vs scholar – student vs tutor - tutor vs tutor – tutor vs management)



But what exactly is it?

Unintentional

- Writer did not intend to gain undeserved credit.
- Patch writing (Pecorari 2008): writer still learning how to write properly in a new English discourse.
- Unintentional incorrect referencing
- Cryptomnesia (source amnesia) for short similar lexical bundles

• Intentional

- “A conscious effort to cover your tracks” (Heather, 2010, p. 648).
- Deliberate attempt to deceive.
- Deliberately not referencing
- Verbatim copying extensive texts



So, what exactly is plagiarism: is it just like porn and “(do) we know it when we see it?”

(St. Onge, 1988)

Table 1, from Walker (998, p. 103).

| | Type | Definition |
|---|----------------------|--|
| 1 | Sham paraphrasing | Material copied verbatim from text and source acknowledged in-line but represented as paraphrased |
| 2 | Illicit paraphrasing | Material paraphrased from text without in-line acknowledgment of source |
| 3 | Other plagiarism | Material copied from another student’s assignment with the knowledge of the other student |
| 4 | Verbatim copying | Material copied verbatim from text without inline acknowledgment of the source |
| 5 | Recycling | Same assignment submitted more than once for different courses |
| 6 | Ghost writing | Assignment written by third party and represented by student as own work |
| 7 | Purloining | Assignment copied from another student’s assignment or other person’s paper without that person’s knowledge. |

But do we?

- Can we expect our students to know all the rules re plagiarism from day one?
- Academic staff & management not always clear on regulations, processes and guidelines

Why do students plagiarise?

| organisational | academic | other |
|--|---|---|
| laziness | Lack of research skills | Financial pressure from family to perform well |
| Poor assignment design | Unfamiliarity with (Western) academic practises and conventions | Feeling pressured to give their work to friends in need |
| Time pressure due to poor time management skills | “sloppy scholarship’ (Rosamund, 2002,p. 170) | Being helped by a friend |
| | Poor referencing skills | cryptomnesia |
| | Unfamiliarity with self-plagiarism regulations | Poor student-teacher relationships |
| | Too long copied collocations or lexical bundles for a particular discipline | |
| | Unclear guidelines, unfamiliarity or misunderstanding about what their institution perceives as ‘academic misconduct’ | |



So how about our NESB learners?

They have to study in a foreign language in an alien academic setting: does this lead to more plagiarising?

| Linguistic reasons | Socio-cultural reasons |
|--|---|
| Unfamiliarity with the new academic 'discourse community' (Hyland, 2003,p.23) | Students struggle to become independent and critical readers and thinkers |
| Insufficient English language proficiency in academic reading and writing | Students unfamiliar with challenging sources and/or respected scholars |
| Poor reading comprehension skills (poor back ground knowledge and/or subject vocabulary) | Students unfamiliar with 'standing on the shoulders of giants' (Salisbury, 1159?) |
| Inability to grasp 'foreign thoughts' (Meuschke & Gipp, 2013, p.51) | |
| Time pressure due to inadequate English proficiency | |
| 'Why change an already perfect text?' | |

However: plagiarism of NESB students better explained through unfamiliarity with Western academic conventions and insufficient writing skills than their understanding of plagiarism.

NESB writers being more caught than native speakers because of the chequered nature of NESB writing.

