Identifying Plagiarism

For 2013-2014 Urban Planning TAs

Forms of Plagiarism

- Word-for-word copying (Easiest to identify)

- Direct quotation (Easier to identify)

- Insufficient Acknowledgement of Borrowed Facts (Kind of easy to identify)

- Paraphrase (Most difficult to identify)

1. Direct Quotation Plagiarism

Source Material: Ekman, Paul, Wallace V. Friesen, and Phoebe Ellsworth. *Emotion in the Human Face: Guidelines for Research and Integration of Findings.* New York: Pergamon, 1972. Print.

ORIGINAL TEXT:

The human face in repose and in movement, at the moment of death as in life, in silence and in speech, when alone and with others, when seen or sensed from within, in actuality or as represented in art or recorded by the camera is a commanding, complicated, and at times confusing source of information. The face is commanding because of its very visibility and omnipresence. While sounds and speech are intermittent, the face even in repose can be informative. And, except by veils or masks, the face cannot be hidden from view.

STUDENT TEXT:

Many experts agree that *the human face,* whether *in repose or in movement, is a commanding, complicated, and sometimes confusing source of information. The face is commanding because it's visible and omnipresent.* Although *sounds and speech may be intermittent, the face even in repose* may give information. *And, except by veils or masks, the face cannot be hidden.*

Discussion of Direct Quotation Plagiarism

- Student passage almost verbatim copy of original source

- Use of "Many experts agree that…" makes it appear that write is acknowledging 'too many scholars to mention'

- Subtle changes in language: 'visibility and omnipresence' to 'it's visible and omnipresent'

- Conclusion: IF the author had enclosed the borrowed material in quotation marks and cited correctly, legitimate

2. Insufficient Acknowledgment of Borrowed Facts or Information

Source Material: Laven, Peter. *Renaissance Italy: 1464-1534.* New York: Capricorn, 1964. Print.

The tenacious particularism of the Italian state gave rise to a wide variety of constitutional solutions and class structures throughout Italy. If power changed hands, the instruments and forms of power usually remained the same. Since the economic needs of such territories did not suddenly alter with a change of government or master, those classes which had been important before the change tended to continue to be important afterwards as well.

In his comprehensive study, *Renaissance Italy*, Peter Laven discusses the peculiar organization of Renaissance city-states: "The tenacious particularism of the Italian states gave rise to a wide variety of constitutional solutions and class structures throughout Italy. Even conquered territories and those swallowed up by bigger neighboring powers often managed to retain much of their internal organization as it had been"(130). This means that if power changed hands, the instruments and forms of power usually remained the same.

Discussion of Insufficient Acknowledgement of Fact

- This writer continued to use the author's text without acknowledgment after his initial quotation. This writer disguises the direct plagiarism by inserting the transition "This means that…"

- Half-crediting sources is a VERY common form of plagiarism. Either from ignorance or deliberate obfuscation.

- This is a particularly bad form of plagiarism because the author seems to know how to correctly cite a source but then decides not to do so when wanting to pass off evaluative knowledge as their own.

3. Paraphrase Plagiarism: MOST difficult to identify

Source Material: Fishman, Joshua. *Language in Sociocultural Change.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1972. Print.

In a relatively open and fluid society there will be few characteristics of lower-class speech that are not also present (albeit to a lesser extent) in the speech of the working and lower middle classes. Whether we look to phonological features such as those examined by Labov or to morphological units such as those reported by Fischer (1958) (Fischer studied the variation between -in' and -ing for the present participle ending, i.e. runnin' vs. running and found that the former realization was more common when children were talking to each other than when they were talking to him, more common among boys than girls, and more common among "typical boys" than among "model boys"), we find not a clear-cut cleavage between the social classes but a difference in rate of realization of particular variants of particular variables for particular contexts.

In a relatively fluid society many characteristics of lower-class speech will also be found among the working and lower middle classes. Labov and Fischer's studies show that *there is not a clear-cut cleavage between social classes but only a difference* in the frequency of certain speech modes.

Discussion of Paraphrase Plagiarism

- Very few direct borrowings from the source, but all ideas and opinions are lifted from the source.

- Writer hides this by avoiding industry-specific jargon (e.g. "phonological features").

- Writer instead *substitutes* more commonly-used phrases in place of industry jargon (e.g. "we find not a clear-cut cleavage between the social classes but a difference in rate of realization of particular variants of particular variables for particular contexts" turns into "there is not a clear-cut cleavage between social classes but only a difference")

- Here, substitution is a clue because it over-generalizes the source's meaning, and in doing so, incorrectly summarizes the source author's nuances.

- Appropriate use of source: "As Fishman explains, phonological studies by Labov and Fischer show that "there is not a clear-cut cleavage between social classes but only a difference" in the frequency of certain speech modes (Fishman 67)."

Plagiarism Caveat:

- Common knowledge vs. interpretation. Common knowledge is found in numerous places and known by many people. *Rule of thumb:* if a fact is found undocumented in at least five credible sources, it can be considered common knowledge.

"John F. Kennedy was elected President of the United States in 1960." This does **not** need a citation.

"President Bush's relationship with Congress has hindered leave legislation." This needs a source citation.

Summary of Plagiarism Identifiers:

- Use of vague phrases like "Many experts agree…" or "There is general consensus that…"

- Use of transitions followed by quality of evaluative content that seems too advanced for the student. (This is a fine line, and harder to identify—familiarity with students' writing as the semester goes on should help.)

- Over-generalization of complex ideas and concepts.

- Drawing correlations where they do not exist/conflating ideas or terminology. If a student doesn't completely understand what they are writing about, they are more likely to plagiarize.

Tips for Identifying Plagiarism:

- Unusual phrasing, noticeable unevenness of style (very sophisticated sentences followed by amateurish ones)

- Concepts that seem too sophisticated for the level of the class

- Unclear or incorrect bibliographic sources

Tools to Help you Identify Instances of Plagiarism:

- Google/Google scholar (enter an unusual phrase or sentence and see if any matches are found)

- Hold a conference with the student and discuss some of the concepts in the paper to determine their familiarity with their 'own' concepts

- There are a number of software programs (WriteCheck, SafeAssign, Eve2, Glatt Plagiarism Services) that you can run your papers through to check against high volumes of publications, but the UI library doesn't subscribe to any of them, and they all cost money…

ESL Resources

- http://www.cws.illinois.edu/workshop/writers/ This website is a great and very comprehensive starting point for English grammar overview: see particularly towards the bottom of the page a section called "Common Usage Problems" for ESL students

- http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/5/25/ Summaries of some ideas behind N. American university writing (vs. British), geared towards ESL students

- http://owl.english.purdue.edu/exercises/3/ These are some pretty neat practice exercises for students to evaluate grammar and punctuation skills

- "Sentence Composition and Writing Style" PWE website resource

Sources:

- All examples given for three types of plagiarism and how to evaluate them come from Northwestern University's Provost webpage on academic integrity. The specific section is "How to Avoid Plagiarism," at http://www.northwestern.edu/provost/policies/academic-integrity/how-to-avoid-plagiarism.html

- www.safeassign.com; www.canexus.com/eve/index/shtml; www.writecheck.com/static/home/html; www.plagiarism.com/INDEX.htm