

Trung Hoang
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Dr. Melissa S. Ferro
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Plagiarism Research Paper

Almost all Western colleagues, schools and universities consider plagiarism to be a serious cheating action. Students, who get caught cheating, often be penalized strictly, from receiving an F to suspension from school. Even though plagiarism is often inhibited in all honor code or code of conduct, its definition seems to be unclear to the majority of students. For this reason, in this research about plagiarism, I intend to make a clear definition of plagiarism, or in other word academic integrity, with some steps could be taken to avoid it.

The word plagiarism becomes from the Latin root “plagiary”, which means “stealing” or “kidnapping”, to define the action that someone use one’s ideas, words or concepts without citation (Merriman, 2010). Furthermore, it might be considered to be plagiarism not only when you steal someone’s words, but also even with proper attribution if the sentence structures or grammar are too close with the origins.

In contrast with Asian, the Western education is based on democracy, which strongly believe that everybody has the right to talk, express their ideas and convey their own voices. And only by saying things with their own voices, students could show to their professors that they deeply understand the scholar’s concepts or ideas and be able to contribute their ideas to build up the knowledge effectively (Hjortshoj, 2009). It explains why in all colleagues and universities the professors, as Li (2008) concludes in her research, always encourage their students to write their

essays with an “argumentative edge”¹ and avoid copying other works. In collectivism cultures like Vietnam, which has a history of more than 4000 years, there is another concept of education. The knowledge is believed to be wide and deep enough and the professors held the responsibility to transfer their knowledge to students. Students are the one who absorb the knowledge and normally not allow to have their own voices or ideas. In this concept of education, plagiarism is not considered to be a bad behavior, besides, sometimes the professors even encourage their students to copy the same words in the tests or exams.

According to Flanagin (2007), there are four different ways that plagiarism could happen as she lucidly defined in her book, which are “direct plagiarism”, “mosaic”, “paraphrase” and “insufficient acknowledgment”. The most common one is “direct plagiarism” occurring when students copy, intentionally or recklessly, exact the same words or paragraphs from the published articles or books, which denounced as “violates standards of honesty and collegial trust and may also violate copyright law” (Flanagin, 2007). Furthermore, almost students do not know that if they submit their own work for the second time for other course, most of the time it is still considered to be plagiarism, or more specify “self-plagiarism” (Wiwanitkit, 2012).

As Holly Ober, Scott I. Simon, Daniel Elson (2013) point out in their article “Five simple rules to avoid plagiarism”, students could easily avoid plagiarism by following five rules in this article strictly. Firstly, students should recognise that copying other works is unethical and unacceptable in Western culture. Moreover, when students must use someone’s ideas, they should either use direct quote for full quote or transform author’s ideas into their own ideas². Lastly, the images, dashboards or tables could not be used without author’s permission in any circumstances.

(Word count: 567)

¹ “Argumentative edge” means searching for the new angle in one’s work (Li, 2008).

² Or could be called as “Paraphrasing” (Hjortshoj, 2009).

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