Different Views of Plagiarism in East and West

Yuxiong Xie

George Mason University

**Introduction**

In recent years, as the world is more closely linked, international students can achieve a chance to study abroad for their higher education. During the period, they will meet a new word “plagiarism” that shows big differences with their country. Thus, international students have a tough time to overcome the problem and keep themselves far away from being accused, even though plagiarism happens easily between Eastern and Western students. But why have this phenomenon? Struggle with English, or culture shock? As the saying goes, “The behavior of a nation is a reflection of the national culture.” That is to say, plagiarism, as an action, shows the national cultural diversity between the Eastern and Western countries. Therefore, this paper focus on the different views of plagiarism in China and U.S. from the cultural perspective and discusses the strategies to avoid plagiarism for graduate students, especially international students.

**Definition of Plagiarism**

East vs West

Plagiarism has different definitions in the east and west. In Asia, there is no clear definition of plagiarism, it just requires that students or authors need to mark inferences which come from other researches in some aspects, such as graphs, tables or images; but when adopting other academic idea or content, there is not very strict requirements. So plagiarism culture become more popular in social and internet.

On the other hand, in America, the colleges attach great attention to plagiarism and the punishments for cheating can be very severe. According to Posner (2007), “Concealment is at the heart of plagiarism” (p.13). He describes plagiarism is a private issue that people do it by secret. What’s more, Hjortshoj (2001) defines plagiarism as “the theft of someone else’s ‘brainchild’-that person’s language ideas or research-and the origin of the word conveys the seriousness of such offenses in the view of college teachers and administrators” (p.172). An explanation is that plagiarism is equal to cheat person’s academic knowledge without permission.

Broad Sense vs Narrow Sense

Plagiarism have different means in East and West culture, and it can also be defined in broad and narrow sense. For the former, plagiarism exists not only on academic field, but also be involved in literature, music, art and movie creation. But for the latter, plagiarism can be specific. For international students, plagiarism is confined to academics. It means to cheat statement or viewpoints of others and present them as your own (Badke, 2003, p.97).

**Plagiarism in cultural perspective**

Plagiarism reflects the culture of nations, while cultural diversity influences attitude to the phenomenon of plagiarism. So the purpose of this paper is to examined how is plagiarism viewed differently in China and U.S. from cultural perspective.

First of all, Chinese focus on details while American pay more attention to entirety. That is to say, when students who come from China cheat other authors’ paper, they generally copy words or sentences to fill their own research, but the American students prefer to plagiarize with the main topic or idea instead. Therefore, if international students study in the United States, and still adopt same language from others without quotation, even if they rewrite the phrases, they will be considered as “plagiarism”. This is one of main reason why international students have more possibility to be accused. Take me as an example, I am a graduate pathway student and it is the first year to study in America. I have a EAP course which teaches me how to writing papers correctly. When I was at home country, I had a bad habit when writing academic papers. I always paraphrase sentences to support ideas in my papers. Thus, when I had a position paper assignment in EAP class, I did not realize the importance of “plagiarism and quotation”, and just followed my writing habit to finish homework. However, I got a suggestion from professor about the sentences without citation. At that time, I suddenly found the seriousness of plagiarism in U.S. and started to learn how to quote inferences directly. Finally, I wrote my position again and cited the sources by using the APA style system, and got a good grade about this paper. Consequently, in aspect of culture, the emphasis of the plagiarism in East and West are different; the former may likely to copy details while the latter prefer to use other main ideas.

Furthermore, culture in the United States requires people to pay more attention to intellectual property rights. But copyright problem does not get lots of legal protection in China. According to Hjortshoj (2001), intellectual property is the general term which includes words, ideas, and research that come from their own thinking (p.172). Moreover, in order to get fame and fortune, lots of Chinese may choose to copy others’ work and build the bad habits; and plagiarism become common gradually in student’s thesis paper, college student’s article and even academic papers of professor or experts. However, punishment of plagiarism must be severe in America, so once international students plagiarize with other researchers’ idea, they may be get a failing grade on the assignment. And if the circumstances are serious, they may also face the punishment of suspension or dropping out of the university. Thus, because the different degrees of attention to the intellectual property rights, East and West may have different measures of treating plagiarism. The former has more free style about the plagiarism, while the latter is strict with the rights and cheating from others. This is also a reason why international students have more chances to be punished for plagiarism.

**Conclusion**

This paper focus on the cultural diversity, and discuss the different views about plagiarism between China and the United States. It compares the definition of plagiarism in two ways: East and West, broad sense and narrow sense. In China, plagiarism is not clear defined, so that the phenomenon of copying become more common. What’s more, students may focus on the details when plagiarizing. While in America, there is a strict definition of plagiarism and severe punishment to protect intellectual property rights.

Although plagiarism cannot be dismissed in entire academic field easily, what the most important we can do is to reduce and avoid it as much as possible. These are some special strategies:

Use the quotation directly. We need to learn the citation style system and use it no matter copy the words of others or own words (Badke, 2003, p.100-101).

When we decide to explore one topic, try to let ourselves interested in it for your own reasons. And pay attention to questions and thinking carefully and freely in own way. (Hjortshoj, 2001, p.183)

Take advantages of tools to detect the papers, such as Plagiarism Detection Software. The tools can be check for matches among students’ papers, which may provide suggestion to use correct citation format (Owens and White, 2013,21).

Spend time revising and reading carefully before submitting the papers (Hjortshoj, 2001, p.183).

If students follow these advices and revise their academic papers, they can avoid plagiarism and reduce the possibility for being punished. Although there still are plenty of differences between Eastern and Western country about plagiarism in cultural perspective, students can also try their best to understand the cultural diversity and avoid the plagiarism.

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