

## MULTIDIMENSIONAL COMMUNICATION AND EDUCATION STRATEGIES IN HANDLING PLAGIARISM IN HIGHER EDUCATION: CULTURAL, ETHICAL, AND LANGUAGE PSYCHOLOGY PERSPECTIVES



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### Abstract

Plagiarism is a major challenge to maintaining academic integrity in higher education. Three different approaches - culture, professional ethics, and communication psychology offer complementary insights to understand and address this phenomenon. This article reviews three key studies: Fatemi & Saito (2019), who highlighted unintentional plagiarism among international students; Jiang et al. (2013), who examined integrity and risk factors in the health sciences; and Brown et al. (2019), who discussed metaphorical framing in shaping students' perceptions of plagiarism. Based on this synthesis, this article proposes an integrative strategy based on cross-cultural education, the establishment of a professional code of ethics, and the constructive use of metaphors in academic communication.

**Keywords:** Academic Integrity, Plagiarism, Higher Education, Academic Culture, Ethics, Metaphorical Framing

## INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of plagiarism is a real threat to the academic credibility of higher education institutions. Although plagiarism detection technology is increasingly developing, the root of the problem is often complex, related to cultural backgrounds, academic pressures, and miscommunication of academic integrity values. Therefore, understanding plagiarism is not enough only from the legal or technological side, but also from an educational and communication approach. This article presents a comprehensive analysis of three main approaches from three leading journals, as a basis for developing new strategies to mitigate plagiarism in the academic environment.

The diversity of students in global university environments is increasing, and this has become particularly prominent in Australia, where international students, particularly those from Asia, Africa, or Latin America, have become an integral part of the university class space. The term ‘international student’ can have different definitions depending on the context. For example, in the UK, the distinction between local and international students is based on fee and residency status, while in Australia, this classification usually refers to citizenship or immigration status (Morrison et al., 2005). In the context of this study, ‘international students’ are defined as postgraduate students who are from outside Australia and hold a temporary visa to complete a master’s degree program at an Australian university (Imai and Imai, 2019). According to the Australian Trade and Investment Commission Report (2018), the number of international students in the higher education sector increased by 66% between 2012 and 2017, from 230,000 to 350,000 students. In fact, since the early 2000s, the proportion of international students in Australia has exceeded the number of domestic students (Crooks, 2003).

However, the diverse cultural backgrounds brought by international students can pose challenges in adapting to the values, traditions, and academic practices prevailing in the host country. One of the main challenges is related to academic integrity, which is a set of principles and conventions that uphold credibility, honesty, trustworthiness, and respect within the scientific community (International Centre for Academic Integrity, 2014). Failure to adhere to these principles can have serious consequences for students’ academic outcomes, including the risk of losing grades or even failing a course.

This journal specifically focuses on unintentional plagiarism in international students' academic writing, both in coursework and manuscripts for publication. This focus limitation is based on findings from a large-scale survey in Australia that showed that many international students tend to have a low understanding of plagiarism (Bretag et al., 2014; Guilifer & Tyson, 2014). This unintentional plagiarism is often caused by a lack of knowledge and awareness, which can be prevented through more effective academic literacy education. If students do plagiarize unintentionally, it would be more educationally meaningful if universities provide a learning approach that supports and encourages academic understanding, rather than directly imposing sanctions that can hinder their adaptation process.

On the other hand, intentional plagiarism remains a serious concern and requires a strong corrective response. However, in the context of international students who are new to Western academic culture, an educative and preventive approach is considered more appropriate to build their awareness and competence in scientific writing. The increase in the number of students from different cultures and literacy styles is also in line with the increase in cases of academic integrity violations in higher education between 2002 and 2015 (Jones, 2011; Josien & Broderick, 2013; Offir, Lev, & Beza'el, 2008). Many students who enter the world of research without sufficient experience in academic writing experience what is called 'culture shock' when faced with assignment standards and learning methods that differ significantly from the education system in their home country.

Historically, plagiarism has been a practice that has been known since the 17th century and is derived from the Latin word *plagarius*, meaning a thief or plunderer of literary works (Barnhart, 1988; Malion, 1989). In the modern context, plagiarism is defined as the act of taking the ideas, methods, results, or words of another person and using them without proper attribution, as if they were one's own (Park, 2003; Bilić-Zuille et al., 2005, 2007). The digital age has made this situation even worse; a survey found that 52% of secondary school students and 62% of undergraduate students in Australia had plagiarized written work from the internet, while at the postgraduate level, this figure was as high as 40% (Wa'ace, 2009; McCabe, 2017). This rise in academic dishonesty poses a serious threat to educational values

and scientific reputation, especially in the increasingly multifaceted and complex university environment.

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

### **Academic Integrity Theory**

This theory was developed by the International Center for Academic Integrity (2014). This theory emphasizes that values such as honesty, responsibility, trust, respect, and fairness are the foundation of legitimate academic behavior. Violations of these principles, including in the form of plagiarism, are considered a form of dishonesty that damages the credibility of both individuals and academic institutions. However, when these violations are committed without adequate awareness or understanding, then their handling must also take into account the educational context of the students concerned.

### **Academic Culture Shock Theory**

International students often experience a form of ‘academic shock’ when entering a foreign higher education environment with drastically different expectations, values and practices than those in their home country (Jones, 2011; Offir et al., 2008). For example, students from Asian or African countries who are accustomed to rote-based education systems and teacher authority may be unfamiliar with a system that places an explicit emphasis on critical thinking, originality and source attribution as in Australia. This unfamiliarity with academic writing and citation practices can lead them to inadvertently commit plagiarism, even if they had no intention of copying someone else’s work.

### **Academic Literacy Theory**

This theory was developed by Lea and Street (1998). This theory argues that academic literacy is not just a technical ability to write or speak English, but includes an understanding of the social, cultural, and discursive context of academic practices in a particular institution. In many cases, international students do have good English language skills, but still fail to understand certain academic expectations such as originality, paraphrasing, and appropriate use of references. Therefore, an approach that focuses only on language training is insufficient, and needs to be replaced by more comprehensive and contextual pedagogical interventions.

### **Social Learning Theory**

According to Bandura (1977) it can also be used to explain how students' academic behavior is shaped by the influence of the social environment and observation of the behavior of others. In this context, new students who do not understand academic norms may imitate incorrect writing practices from fellow students or even from non-credible online sources, which ultimately increases the risk of plagiarism. Without a strong understanding of academic ethics, they may imitate actions without realizing that these actions are violations.

### **Deontological Ethical Theory**

The theory derived from Immanuel Kant's thinking provides a normative perspective that an action is considered right or wrong based on compliance with the rules, not on its intentions or results. Therefore, even though plagiarism is done unintentionally, it is still considered a serious violation because it is not in accordance with moral principles in the academic world. However, in practice, educational institutions must distinguish between violations committed due to bad intentions and those that occur due to a lack of understanding, and provide proportional and educative handling.

### **Cognitive Evaluation Theory**

The theory is part of Self-Determination Theory by Deci and Ryan (1985) to be relevant. When students feel incompetent in meeting academic standards, especially because they do not understand the rules of integrity, they can experience a decrease in intrinsic motivation. Fear of failure or getting academic sanctions can cause them to avoid academic challenges or even try shortcuts without understanding the consequences.

### **Epistemological Ignorance Theory**

This theory can be used to understand unintentional plagiarism. The theory emphasizes that ignorance of basic academic principles, such as citation, paraphrasing, and the use of direct quotations, is a major cause of plagiarism, especially among new students or those who come from educational systems with different academic standards. Students may think that copying without citing sources is not a big deal, or may not even realize that they have committed plagiarism because they do not understand the difference between original ideas and general information.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This study uses a qualitative-descriptive approach based on a literature study. Three scientific articles are critically reviewed and compared: (1) Fatemi & Saito (2019), (2) Jiang et al. (2013), and (3) Brown et al. (2019). Thematic analysis techniques are used to identify key dimensions in the discussion of plagiarism and academic integrity. A perspective triangulation approach is used to ensure the validity of the synthesis.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Cultural Dimensions (Fatemi & Saito, 2019)**

International students often experience unintentional plagiarism due to differences in understanding of citation, paraphrasing, and intellectual property rights. Universities need to design orientation programs and scholarly writing workshops that are not only technical in nature but also introduce local academic norms and ethics. Cultural challenges and academic literacies also require more targeted and contextual pedagogical interventions. For example, reflective training on the home and target academic cultures will help students understand normative and epistemological differences in academic practices.

### **Dimensions of Professional Ethics (Jiang et al., 2013)**

Academic integrity among health students is closely related to professional ethics. Plagiarism is not only an academic violation, but it is also considered to harm professional morality. An ethics curriculum and the implementation of an honor code are needed as preventive measures. Academic pressure, lack of guidance, and high expectations are the main backgrounds of deviant behavior that need to be approached professionally and systemically. In addition, an evaluation of students' perceptions of plagiarism shows that these perceptions can change significantly after being given educational interventions, especially those based on real case studies and open ethical discussions.

### **Communication and Perception Dimensions (Brown et al., 2019)**

Experimental studies show that metaphorical framing, such as "plagiarism is a disease," can strengthen students' perceptions of the seriousness of the issue. The language used in academic policies and communications greatly influences students' awareness and compliance. The use of appropriate metaphors in campus counseling and campaigns can be

an effective psychological strategy to increase academic awareness and responsibility. This communication strategy can be combined with visual media, posters, educational videos, and short story-based simulations that encourage students' empathy and moral reflection.

### **Factors Causing Plagism Among International Students**

One of the key findings of this study is that plagiarism, especially unintentional plagiarism, is often due to international students' lack of understanding of the academic norms that apply in the country in which they study. As noted in studies by Bretag et al. (2014) and Guillefer & Tyson (2014), international students, especially those from countries with educational systems that do not emphasize the importance of rigorous attribution and citation, often do not understand the significant differences in how referencing and attribution are accepted in Western academia, particularly in Australia.

A study by Imai and Imai (2019) showed that international students from Asia, Africa, and Latin America often face difficulties in integrating their writing styles rooted in different academic traditions with academic expectations at Australian universities. For example, in some of the countries where international students come from, direct quoting or using someone else's ideas without attribution is not considered plagiarism, while in Australia, it is considered a serious violation of academic integrity.

In addition to cultural factors, low academic literacy and English language skills also play a significant role in the occurrence of unintentional plagiarism. Many international students, despite having sufficient English skills for everyday communication, often find it difficult to write academic work that meets the high standards expected in Australian universities. They often struggle to construct original arguments and easily fall into plagiarism due to a lack of skills in paraphrasing appropriately or referencing sources correctly.

### **The Impact of Plagiarism on Academic Integrity**

Unintentional plagiarism can have significant long-term impacts on students' credibility and academic integrity. Although many cases of unintentional plagiarism do not carry severe sanctions, they can still affect students' academic reputations and disrupt their learning process. This is because students not only fail to develop writing skills that meet

academic standards, but also are deprived of the opportunity to understand and internalize the principles of academic ethics that should underlie scientific writing.

A study by Jones (2011) revealed that the increasing number of international students with different cultural backgrounds in Australian universities has increased the complexity of managing academic integrity. Universities need to recognize that international students need more than just technical instruction on how to avoid plagiarism, but they also need a deeper understanding of the academic values that underlie those integrity policies.

### **Strategies to Improve Academic Integrity**

To overcome this problem, this research suggests a number of strategies that can be implemented by universities to support international students in understanding and complying with applicable academic norms. One way is to improve the quality of the academic orientation program, which includes training on how to write academically, the importance of attribution, and the appropriate use of references. Research by Offir et Al. (2008) shows that universities that hold intensive training sessions on academic ethics, as well as providing clear and accessible guidance on how to properly cite sources, can significantly reduce the incidence of unintentional plagiarism.

Additionally, the use of plagiarism detection software such as Turnitin or iThenticate can help students understand the difference between original writing and plagiarism, while also giving them the opportunity to correct errors before their work is judged. However, it is important to remember that these tools serve not only as plagiarism detection tools, but also as educational tools that allow students to learn from their mistakes. This approach is in line with the deeper pedagogical principle of prioritizing learning over punishment.

This educational approach-based policy, involving mentors and lecturers, is also important to identify students who are at risk of experiencing difficulties with academic literacy or who may be involved in plagiarism without realizing it. According to Park (2003), lecturers need to be actively involved in mentoring international students, not only from an academic perspective, but also in terms of cultural adaptation and the development of their scientific writing skills.

### **Cultural Counseling and Academic Literacy**

One of the most effective solutions to avoid plagiarism is to provide more comprehensive cultural outreach programs for international students. For example, universities can organize workshops or seminars that not only focus on academic writing and proper citation but also introduce students to the academic norms that apply in that country. These programs not only help students avoid plagiarism but also facilitate their in understanding of cultural differences that may affect how they interact with the scientific work of others.

### **Policy Evaluation and Implementation**

The findings of this study also indicate that while some universities have implemented adequate academic integrity policies, there is still room for improvement, particularly in terms of providing support for international students. Universities need to continually evaluate and adapt their policies to be more responsive to the needs of international students and provide them with the resources necessary to thrive academically. This includes integrating relevant cultural and linguistic elements into their academic curricula to better align students with expected academic practices.

Solutions to Addressing Plagiarism and Improving Academic Integrity among International Postgraduate Students.

### **Provision of a Comprehensive Academic Orientation Program**

Universities should provide a more in-depth academic orientation program for international students, particularly those beginning postgraduate study. This program should include training in academic writing, appropriate citation and attribution, and an understanding of plagiarism in the Australian higher education context. In addition, the orientation program should address key differences between academic practices in the students' home countries and Australia, so that students understand the different academic expectations.

### **Organizing a Workshop on Academic Integrity and Writing**

Universities should hold regular workshops and training sessions, at least twice a year, that focus on strengthening academic writing skills and a deeper understanding of proper citation and paraphrasing. These workshops should cover in detail how to avoid

plagiarism, including an explanation of patchwriting, proper paraphrasing, and the importance of citing sources. Through these sessions, students will be given the opportunity to practice more effective writing skills and be guided to improve their academic literacy.

### **Providing Further Resources and Guidance**

Faculty and university libraries should provide international students with easily accessible resources and further guidance on how to properly paraphrase. Additionally, online learning platforms and digital resources that provide tools for plagiarism checking and proper citation can be of great help to students who are less familiar with the academic writing format used in Australia.

### **Integration of Active and Collaborative Learning Methods**

Universities should integrate active learning methods, such as group assignments and discussions, that allow students to share their experiences, knowledge, and understanding of academic writing. Collaborative learning can help international students better understand concepts that are often difficult to apply in academic writing, such as effective paraphrasing and proper attribution.

### **Implementation of an Assessment System that Encourages Original Writing Skills**

Student assessment should be designed to place greater emphasis on critical thinking and originality than on memorization or reference collection. For example, research projects that challenge students to develop original ideas and relate them to existing literature can reduce the likelihood of plagiarism, as they are more encouraged to produce their thinking and analysis. Process-based assessment, in which students submit multiple drafts throughout their research journey, can also discourage plagiarism by facilitating ongoing feedback from instructors.

### **Increasing Understanding of Academic Culture and Writing Ethics**

Universities need to raise international students' awareness of the differences in academic culture that exist in different countries and how this affects standards of academic writing. By providing a better understanding of academic culture in Australia, international students will be better prepared to face the challenges of producing academic work that conforms to accepted academic norms. This also includes an understanding of the different

types of plagiarism, both intentional and unintentional, and their impact on academic credibility.

### **Using Technology to Help Prevent Plagiarism**

Universities can use plagiarism checking software to help students check their work before submission. Using these tools can detect errors in paraphrasing or inconsistencies in citation, so students can correct their mistakes before submitting assignments. In addition, these tools can provide students with an opportunity to learn the proper way to cite sources and avoid plagiarism.

### **A Communication Approach Using Disease Metaphors to Raise Awareness**

As found in this study, the use of metaphors, such as describing plagiarism as a “disease” can help students become more aware of the seriousness of the problem of plagiarism. This approach can be considered in university communication materials to emphasize the importance of avoiding plagiarism and maintaining academic integrity. The application of this metaphor can be done in a comprehensive educational campaign across campus to increase students’ understanding of the negative impacts of plagiarism.

### **Providing Support to Enhance Students' Confidence in Academic Writing**

International students often feel insecure about their writing skills, especially when faced with the high demands of academic writing in a new environment. Universities need to provide additional support, such as consultation sessions with lecturers or academic advisors, who can provide constructive feedback and guide students to improve their work. With this support, students can hopefully feel more confident in their writing skills and avoid unintentional plagiarism.

## **CONCLUSION**

Plagiarism prevention in higher education must be carried out with a multidimensional approach that includes aspects of cross-cultural education, professional ethics, and communication strategies based on language psychology. Higher education institutions need to formulate policies that are not only repressive but also preventive and educative. The main recommendations in this article include the implementation of scientific writing training based on real case studies, the application of metaphorical framing in campus

communication, the integration of a code of ethics in mandatory cross-disciplinary curricula, and periodic evaluation of international students' academic understanding and practices. With this approach, universities can create a more inclusive, adaptive, and integrity-based academic environment and support students' overall academic growth.

This study confirms that plagiarism, especially unintentional plagiarism, is a major issue among international students, who often face challenges from different academic cultures and limitations in their academic writing skills. There is a need for a deeper understanding of the factors that cause unintentional plagiarism and the development of better support programs to help international students develop their academic literacy skills. Universities need to introduce more in-depth academic orientations, more structured academic integrity workshops, and the use of plagiarism-checking technologies to reduce academic misconduct. In addition, it is important to take into account differences in academic culture so that international students can more easily adapt to the expectations and norms of academic writing in their host country. With these more comprehensive steps, unintentional plagiarism can be minimized, and academic integrity among international students can be strengthened, creating a more ethical academic environment and supporting their success in higher education.

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