PROV 501

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**Plagiarism as Defined in Western Culture**

The increasing plagiarism problem has always brought severe consequences either in academic study or in commercial product. In academic context, the definition of plagiarism was using others’ work or study without authorization, or applying others’ ideas to your own paper without citing them as if they came from you, including cheating, dishonest, stealing words and bad paraphrasing. This situation occurs more often among international students who studied in the North America. It is not because international students like to behave dishonorably in academic environment, but they are unfamiliar with the North American setting, such as the formation to give citations or add references. Kaltenbaugh stated that most students are ‘accidental plagiarists’ because of intellectual ignorance (as sited in McCord, 2009). The term plagiarism can be resolved if international students are aware and understand western academic context of academia. In order to enhance the comprehension of an article, professors always require students to paraphrase rather than directly quoting a source (Badke, 2003). Therefore, avoiding plagiarism is a focal point for academic writing: using plagiarism detection services, learning the right way to paraphrase, and remembering to reference the source of your ideas and words. I will illustrate further in following section.

**How “intellectual property,” “academic integrity,” and “plagiarism” are defined as Western concepts**

In Western conception, academic integrity was regarded as a common value of students’ ethics and academic honesty. Every university has their office for academic integrity and a website of their code of honor. Students who plagiarize will have negative effects to their career or devalue their degrees and harm the reputation of their university. Also, if the materials which used in the personal academic writing without citation, it would be an intellectual property fraud.

**Personal Experience with Non-Western Conceptions**

The conception of plagiarism in Chinese culture is different from Western concept. Taking myself as an example, I studied at Beijing Technology and Business University. We do have the similar system of plagiarism detection services which our professors use to check the sources bed used in database through internet. However, Chinese students were not strictly prohibited to use the ideas from other authors. Also, the most courses in Chinese schools emphasizes on generally cheating in exams rather than plagiarism. For example, before my final exams, I need to sign a guarantee to promise not cheat in the class. If you cheat in the exam, you will be punished like getting no grades. Serious violators would be expelled. However, in Chinese universities in general, professors will not check students’ paper carefully. The plagiarism detection tools are only used as part of rubric. The way they use plagiarism detection tools just because they need to give a score; percentage of similar concept is required in rubric. According above background, most international students from China are struggling with plagiarism issue due to the lacking knowledge on such subjects.

**Reasons for Unconscious Plagiarism**

Plagiarism happened when the new coming international students who come from the eastern countries to the western academic context. One reason is they would not know the rules of any citation, or how to quote sentences which refer from other sources. According to Duff, Rogers and Harris (2006), they stated that the history and culture behind students influence their understanding of western concepts on academic honesty and plagiarism. On this point, international students may hold difference conceptions of plagiarism when they decide to start their academics in the western countries. Moreover, another serious addition is international students have language barriers in using them to the western. They struggle to paraphrase the original sentences, since they are not good at using language very well. Based on this reason, international students may use bad paraphrase in their paper unconsciously.

**Plagiarism Prevention**

Graduate students may be tempted to plagiarize under some situations such as, submission time limitation, tough reading materials. Hjortshoj (2009) claimed that academic failure is related to different forms of plagiarism. Common forms appeared among graduate students can be divided into four parts: First, using other authors ideas, words, and without giving citation; Second, using peers’ paper or gaining help from others of writing your own assignment; Third, paraphrase the quotation but too close to original references; Fourth, loss of voice (Hjortshoj, 2009). For instance, loss of voice means that when the students use more direct quotations from other sources, this reduces their identity as authors of the article. They use more others’ ideas without providing their own thoughts and their own tones. Therefore, these common plagiarism need to be paid attention to avoid in academic concept by using some methods.

I would like to provide several steps to help graduate students prevent plagiarism. First of all, graduate students should have their own perception while reading materials related to their thesis. Secondly, when students start reading the article, they should take notes of summarizing the main idea of each point. Then, only read and annotate the article, rewrite the idea or sentence you want to use in your assignment. After that, remember to quote sentences you direct copy from other articles, cite the information when you paraphrase or utilize other authors’ idea, and give the references information at the end of your paper. Next, do not ask your classmates or friends participate in your writing work; do not even purchase for your assignment. If you do not know how to paraphrase, how to give citation, asking your professor for help or making an appointment with your school’s writing tutors. To follow the steps above students would be best acquainted in upholding Western expectations for academic integrity while pursuing their graduate degree at George Mason University.

In conclusion, understanding academic honesty and integrity is important in Western culture of education, especially for students who studied in Western countries. The right attitude towards avoiding plagiarism is an important value in academia. Cultural differences of students should not be an excuse to plagiarize especially when they are aware of the risks. Students should try all their best to be original, confident and critically thoughtful in their academic journey.

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