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Good and original: Plagiarism and patchwriting in academic second-language writing

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Abstract

Plagiarism is regarded as a heinous crime within the academic community, but anecdotal evidence suggests that some writers plagiarize without intending to transgress academic conventions. This article reports a study of the writing of 17 postgraduate students. Source reports in the student-generated texts were compared to the original sources in order to describe the relationship between the two. Interviews were also conducted with the student writers and their supervisors. The student writing was found to contain textual features which could be described as plagiarism, but the writers' accounts of their work and the textual analysis strongly suggest absence of intention to plagiarize, thus providing empirical verification of similar suggestions in the literature. Implications of these findings are discussed and include a recommendation that the focus on preventing plagiarism be shifted from post facto punishment to proactive teaching.
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Background

Samuel Johnson is said to have been sent a manuscript by its author and to have returned it with this comment: ''Your work is both good and original. Unfortunately, the parts which are good are not original, and the parts which are original are not good.'' Many academic writers have this in common with the victim of Johnson's (probably apocryphal) wit; while their work may be both good and original, the two qualities do not always overlap. Teachers of academic writing are

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well aware not only that plagiarism can appear in their students' work but that it can appear in unexpected forms. Matalene (1985) used an episode of plagiarism to illustrate a call for a contrastive rhetorical approach to teaching writing. Her Chinese students produced a writing assignment that followed its source too closely and then were surprised by her subsequent objections to what they saw as a valid writing strategy. Later, one of her students found this eloquent way of summing up the ensuing class discussion:

> After our teacher's explanation, we understand that in her country or some others plagiarism is forbidden . . .. However in our country, things are [a] little different. We may perhaps call what our teacher calls 'plagiarism' as 'imitation,' which is sometimes encouraged, especially for a beginner. (1985, p. 803)

Alastair Pennycook had a similar experience, again in China. He assigned his students to write a biographical sketch, and one produced a text on Abraham Lincoln which seemed unusually fluent. When Pennycook asked the student about it, the student reported feeling

> rather fortunate that I had asked them to write something which he already knew. Sitting in his head was a brief biography of Abraham Lincoln, and he was quite happy to produce it on demand. (1996, p. 202)

Although both cases involved what can be termed *textual plagiarism* — that is, language and ideas repeated from a source without (sufficient) attribution — they lacked a standard feature of *prototypical* cases of plagiarism: the intention to deceive. In both cases the students agreed that they had copied from their sources but believed that copying was appropriate. They did not intend to violate academic standards nor to pretend that they had *not* copied. Anecdotal accounts of such unintentional, non-prototypical plagiarism abound (e.g., Barker, 1997; Braine, 1995; Connor & Kramer, 1995; Crocker & Shaw, 2002; Dong, 1998; Leki, 1992; Pennycook, 1996; St. John, 1987; Shaw, 1991; Sherman, 1992; Spack, 1997).

Because these accounts have appeared largely in the L2 writing literature, and because specific explanations for source misuse often apply primarily or exclusively outside the Anglophone academic discourse community (AADC),[1] it has become conventional wisdom in some circles that second-language writers plagiarize frequently, particularly in this unconventional way. Indeed, one paper on plagiarism in technical writing begins with the simple assertion that "one obvious cause [of increased plagiarism] is the influx of foreign students into engineering fields" (Brogan & Brogan, 1983, p. 4).

Any number of explanations for this phenomenon have been offered, many of them centering around cultural differences. It has been suggested (e.g., Currie, 1998) that students from some countries may not be aware of what sort of source

[1] The first use of this term of which I am aware occurs in Belcher and Braine (1995).

use is and is not appropriate. Elaborations of this theme have included the claim that students whose culture privileges rote learning and memorization are inclined to repeat from sources (Kirkland & Saunders, 1991) and that students from "a collectivist culture" may see plagiarism as a kind of positive collaboration (Barker, 1997, p. 115). (Space does not permit a full discussion of explanations of non-prototypical plagiarism, but Barks and Watts (2001) provide a good review.)

While explanations involving cultural differences often resonate with the experiences of L2 composition teachers, the only evidence for them is anecdotal. In addition, cultural differences leave two important issues unaddressed. First, non-prototypical plagiarism occurs among academic writers who have grown up within the AADC and has been documented by Angélil-Carter (2000), Hull and Rose (1989), and Prior (1998), among others. Cultural issues, therefore, cannot be the only factor at work. Secondly, such explanations tend to identify knowledge gaps among student writers as the source of the problem. For example, non-native speakers of English (NNSEs) may, like Matalene's students, not know that it is not acceptable to copy from a source, or that treating sources critically is laudable in the AADC and not a sign of disrespect toward the source author.

If missing declarative knowledge is the cause of plagiarism, the obvious remedy is to supply the information. But some writers who have heard explanations about plagiarism still commit inappropriate source use. Must it be concluded that such writers are intentional, deliberately deceptive plagiarists? Some teachers feel that this is, indeed, the logical conclusion, a point of view which is frequently expressed when the TESL-L discussion list features one of its recurrent threads on plagiarism. During one such thread, a teacher wrote:

> On the whole, I also find it useful to be firm but non-confrontational in cases of suspected plagiarism, and to give students the benefit of the doubt in the first instance (by assuming that an innocent mistake has been committed), but *never subsequently.* (Emphasis added; May 5, 1998)

In a later discussion on the same topic, this post appeared:

> Students who continue to plagiarize after activity based classroom warnings and development are not culturally confused, they are using the issue of cultural sensitivity to mask their own performance problems. (TESL-EJ December 2002)[2]

An alternative interpretation, which circumvents both these difficulties, has been offered by Howard (1995). She argues that novice writers need support as

[2] The authors of these postings (which are available from the TESL-L and TESL-EJ archives, respectively, at http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/~tesl-l/ and http://www-writing.berkeley.edu/TESL-EJ/ej23/fl.html) have not been cited by name in order to avoid the appearance of singling them out as representatives of a view point which I argue here is mistaken, but which is nonetheless widespread.

they learn to write in a new discourse, and that causes them to depend heavily on the language of their sources. To describe this source-dependent composition, Howard has coined the term *patchwriting*. The causes of patchwriting may be

> uneven reading comprehension: The student doesn't fully understand what she is reading and thus can't frame alternative ways for talking about its ideas. Or the student understands what she is reading but is new to the discourse. She merges her voice with that of the source to create a pastiche over which she exercises a new-found control. (Howard, 2001, p. 1)

Patchwriting, according to Howard, is an essential phase through which writers pass en route to a stage at which their own voices can emerge. As a developmental stage, rather than a form of deliberate deception, patchwriting deserves a pedagogical, rather than a punitive, response. By focusing on the procedural, rather than the declarative knowledge required to use sources correctly, patchwriting explains students who have been warned about plagiarism but still misuse sources. Learning a skill is rarely a straight line from input to mastery. The novice academic writer must crawl before being able to walk.

Howard's patchwriting model offers an intuitive appeal and, potentially, a powerful explanation for the phenomenon of non-prototypical plagiarism. However, too little empirical evidence for patchwriting exists. Only two studies have addressed the question of actual versus apparent source use, and both are of limited applicability to the patchwriting model. Campbell studied a group of both native English speaker (NES) and NNSE undergraduates and found that they "relied on copying as their primary method of text integration . . . [and cited] the author or text too little" (Campbell, 1990, p. 225). However, under Campbell's experimental conditions the students read a single text on the topic they wrote about and were aware their teachers had read the same text. Campbell acknowledges that students may therefore have seen explicit citation as superfluous. In addition, they may have depended excessively on their single source of information for the task, while students writing authentic essays would look for more than one source of information about a new topic, gain some degree of knowledge about it, and be more likely to be able to compose independently. Caution is needed, therefore, in applying Campbell's findings to source use in authentic texts.

Angélil-Carter's (2000) study of NES and NNSE students at a South African university provides a rich view of some aspects of source use. Based on interviews with students and their teachers, Angélil-Carter uncovered a range of strategies which could be identified as plagiarism, including: paraphrasing through synonym substitution (97); repeating selected sentences from a source (99); and alternating between repeated language and independently written language (96). However, because Angélil-Carter draws her data from interviews with teachers and students, and provides little description of their texts, important questions about the nature and frequency of inappropriate source use are left unanswered.

Thus, while ample reason exists to suspect that the anecdotal accounts of patchwriting reported above describe a real phenomenon, questions remain.

How widespread is inappropriate source use among novice writers? How pervasive is it in their texts? And, importantly, is there support for the contention that patchwriting is a distinct entity from intentional, deceptive plagiarism? This paper reports a study which addressed those questions.

Methods

The research reported here was carried out in two phases and involved the writing of 17 students in four broad disciplinary areas — the sciences, engineering, humanities, and social sciences — at three British universities.[3] In the first phase, nine students working toward master's degrees supplied writing samples and took part in interviews. An initial contact was made with lecturers, inviting them to participate in what was presented in general terms as a study of academic writing, along with a brief description of the kind of involvement that would be asked of them (access to the students' work and their comments on it, and interviews). Those who agreed to take part were asked to nominate students who were working on master's dissertations[4] and were international students and NNSEs.

The final criterion was established not in the belief that NNSEs are more likely to plagiarize but because the issue of plagiarism has additional facets for that group. Because the difference between their own writing and that of published sources is often quite visible, NNSEs are particularly vulnerable to accusations of plagiarism. While no evidence exists that NNSEs plagiarize more than their NES counterparts, it has sometimes been asserted that they do, as the discussion in the previous section indicated. Issues of language proficiency and cultural background were therefore relevant in this investigation. The decision to focus on second-language writers was purely for these reasons relating to analytical convenience and *not* from a conviction that NESs would not be a suitable focus for such an investigation.

The master's students whose names were supplied by their supervisors were then contacted with the same general explanation of the study. Of the students recruited this way, nine completed the study. The students were not known to me in any way before the study, nor did I have any connection or contact with them apart from the research. Participation was entirely voluntary, and no incentive or inducement was offered.

The students were asked to select a portion of their dissertations as a writing sample, ideally in draft form. The latter was a precaution against the discovery of features in the text which the writers or their advisors would deem unacceptable.

[3] The departments and universities will remain anonymous, and pseudonymns have been used for the students.

[4] The terminology associated with postgraduate studies varies somewhat between Britain and the US. ''Dissertation'' here refers to the writing done by a master's student and ''thesis'' to that done by a PhD student.

It would be easier to resolve such issues in a draft than in finished work. All students complied, except for the two civil engineers, who wrote no preliminary drafts and who gave me their completed dissertations.

The second phase of the research involved collecting similar writing samples from completed PhD theses. The ability to use sources appropriately at this level is vital: The writer of a successfully completed PhD thesis is understood to have the basic skills for further, unsupervised participation in academic activities. The potential consequences of inappropriate source use at that level are correspondingly heavier, so to protect the writers' identities, no contact was made with them or their supervisors. Theses were selected from university library catalogues and writing samples taken from those theses. Given evidence that the nature of source use changes across time (Bazerman, 1984; Salager-Meyer, 1999), the theses chosen were less than 10 years old; came, two each, from the same discipline areas as the master's dissertations; and, based on the writers' names and contextual information (personal notes in the acknowledgments, features of language use, etc.), were assumed to have been written by NNSEs.[5]

From each of these eight theses, approximately 10 consecutive pages of writing samples were selected (an additional page was sometimes taken to allow the sample to begin or end at a natural section division). Samples were taken from the early, citation-dense chapters, with a preliminary check to insure that some of the sources were available. Apart from that, the selection of pages for the writing sample was random. The eight PhD samples totaled just over 24,000 words, or an average of about 3000 words each; the nine dissertation samples were of about the same average length and totaled about 27,000 words. Table 1 details the samples.

Each text was compared to as many as possible of the sources it cited. In all, the writing samples referred to 464 sources. Of these, 352, or just over three-quarters, were consulted. In order to compare parts of the samples with a single source, each sample was divided into passages of varying length, the passage boundaries being determined by the source use. As Table 2 shows, the compared portions of the samples included 57% of the total passages, and 61% of the words in the corpus. The remaining, uncompared portions included no citation, or cited sources which were not available for comparison.

Transparency in the writing samples

Identifying plagiarism is complicated by the lack of common consensus as to how to judge specific cases. University policies are in broad agreement about a general definition — plagiarism means taking words or ideas from a source without (sufficient) attribution — but do not provide a yardstick to apply to

[5] Again, since no there was no direct contact with the PhD students, it was not possible to question them about their countries of origin and first languages, and so their status as NNSEs remains a matter of inference.

Table 1
Length of the writing samples

Discipline	Dissertations	Number of words	Theses	Number of words
Science	Ingrid	2136	Sci1	2871
	Erden	1373	Sci2	2815
Engineering	Yves	2240	Eng1	3261
	Pierre	5025	Eng2	3237
Social Science	Graciela	4227	SS1	2314
	Maria	3651	SS2	2665
Humanities	Roula	2430	H1	3439
	Kwan	2797	H2	3474
	Helen	3510		
Total		27389		24076
Average		3043		3010
Total both groups		51465		
Average both groups		3027		

Table 2
Passages compared by writing sample

Writing sample	Passages (total)	Passages compared	Inconclusive passages	Proportion compared (%)
Ingrid	19	17	0	89
Erden	30	20	0	67
Pierre	99	23	2	23
Yves	51	9	0	18
Graciela	56	44	5	79
Maria	40	27	5	68
Kwan	29	19	1	66
Roula	30	16	1	53
Helen	50	17	1	34
Sci1	66	50	20	76
Sci2	54	45	8	83
E1	55	22	5	40
E2	56	34	6	61
H1	76	54	14	71
H2	44	25	2	57
SS1	34	18	2	53
SS2	68	52	16	76
Total	857	492	88	57
Average: dissertations	44.9	21.3	1.7	48
Average: theses	56.6	37.5	9.1	66
Average: all	50.4	28.9	5.2	57

specific texts to determine whether plagiarism is involved (Pecorari, 2001). Because there is some question about what degree of inappropriateness will be received as plagiarism, it is useful to invert the question and ask whether a text is fully appropriate in its source use, and therefore beyond accusations of plagiarism.

One aspect of appropriate source use has been summed up like this: ''It is a conventional expectation among readers of all but the most playfully postmodern of Anglophone academic texts that it will be clear at any given point whose 'voice' is 'speaking' '' (Groom, 2000, p. 15). Appropriate source use, in other words, must be *transparent*; it must be clear ''whose voice is speaking,'' clear whether the writer[6] is *attributing* a portion of text (in Tadros', 1993, terms) to a source author or *averring* that it is his or her own contribution.

Accurate signals of attribution and averral are necessary because of the nature of source use. Swales (1996) has identified the existence of occluded genres of academic writing, genres which are not ordinarily visible to the academic community. Citation, similarly, is an occluded feature of academic writing. The real nature of source use is only known to the writer, who uses conventional metatextual devices (citation, quotation marks, etc.) to signal the relationship. The reader decodes these signals and interprets the relationship between source and citing texts. Ordinarily, these signals are the reader's only source of information about source use. If they are not used accurately, then the real nature of the source use is obscured. *Transparency*, then, means signaling the relationship between source and citing text accurately; its opposite is often termed plagiarism.

The writer's burden of transparency extends to at least three sometimes overlapping areas: (1) the identity of the text's origins; (2) the language of the text; and (3) the content of a source. Readers make a number of assumptions based on the principle of transparency. Those which are related to plagiarism include the following:

1. that language which is *not* signaled as quotation is original to the writer;
2. that if no citation is present, both the content and the form are original to the writer;
3. that the writer consulted the source which is cited.

When these three assumptions are not borne out by the facts of the actual source use, the result can appear to be plagiarism. All 17 of the writing samples contained opaque source use in at least one of these areas, and 15 in all 3.

Transparency of language

An experienced academic reader assumes that when language is not signaled as a quotation (through the use of quotation marks or other conventional signals

[6] Thompson and Ye's (1991) useful distinction between the *writer* of a new text and the *author* of a source text is followed here.

such as longer, offset quotations), the wording is original to the writer. Sixteen of the 17 samples were opaque as to the origins of at least some of their language. To provide a quantitative measure of the scope of this feature, the number of words found in both student and source passages was divided by the number of words in the student passage. The resulting score expresses the repeated words as a percentage of the whole student passage. Because *unattributed* repetition was of interest, signaled quotations (i.e., language which was in quotation marks, part of longer offset quotations, etc.) were excluded from this calculation.

Given the difficulty, already noted, of establishing a threshold for plagiarism, this section presents examples of various levels of unattributed repetition in order to provide a context for interpreting the subsequent findings. Figs. 1–5 show passages with 100, 85, 70, 50 and 40% of their language, respectively, repeated from their sources without attribution. Errors of grammar, spelling, or copying from the source in the student half of the comparison were also present in the students' original texts.

Which examples deserve the label ''plagiarism'' is a question which is likely to attract diverse answers. It is clear, though, that even the 40% passage — with more of the language coming from the writer than from the source — bears unmistakable signs of having been based on the source rather than composed autonomously. Because the use of source language is not acknowledged, it is not possible to infer from these passages the nature of their textual relationship with their sources, and the responsibility of transparency is thus not upheld. The source use in these passages, therefore, puts the writers at risk of a plagiarism accusation.

Sixteen writers, all except Maria, had one or more passages in their writing samples in which 50% or more of the words came from their sources without being indicated as quotation. (Sci1 and H2 had only one passage each at or above the 50% level; all other writers had multiple passages in this category.) Of those 16 writers, 13 had one or more passages at or above the 70% level.

Ingrid 3:1a	Lagercrantz et al., 1996, p.13
The control of flowering time is a process of primary importance in agriculture and also of great scientific interest for the understanding of plant development.	The control of flowering time is a process of primary importance in agriculture and also of great scientific interest for the understanding of plant development.

Fig. 1. One hundred percent of words in common with source.

Erden 1:2b	Kukreja et al., 1991, p. 184
Mentha are self compatible and seed set occurs readily upon self fertilisation. However, polimorphic nature of *Mentha* associated with gynodiocy, poliploidy and natural hybridisation, generally result in the production of male sterile or sub-fertile hybrids (Chamber and Hammer, 1994).	. . . have been employed for evolving genetically improved strains of *Mentha arvensis*. The plants are self compatible and seed set occurs readily upon self fertilization. However, polymorphic nature of Japanese mint associated with gynodioecy, polyploidy and natural hybridization, generally result in the production of male sterile/subfertile hybrids.

Fig. 2. Eighty-five percent of words in common with source.

Ten had passage(s) at or above the 85% level, and six had at least one passage with 100% of the language taken from its source but not signaled as quotation.

In all, eight passages (of the 493 which were compared) had 100% similarity with their sources; a total of 50 (including the eight at 100%) were at or above the

Helen 9:4b	Williams and Dallas, 1984, p. 205
In addition to gap-filling, there should be a variety of techniques to practise new words, such as word class change, crossword completion, crossword creation, multiple choice, sentence creation from a table, etc. (Williams and Dallas, 1984: 205).	Each unit of the workbook also contains a 'Using New Words' Section, employing a variety of techniques in addition to gap-filling, such as word class change, crossword completion, crossword creation, multiple choice, sentence creation from a table, etc.

Fig. 3. Seventy percent of words in common with source.

SS2 153:4e	Turney and Robb, 1971, p. 135
(d) The interview provides an opportunity to question thoroughly certain areas under investigation and allows for a greater depth of response (Ary, Jacobs and Razavich, 1979; Turney and Robb, 1971).	When compared with the questionnaire and similar data-gathering devices, the interview has certain advantages. It provides an opportunity to question thoroughly certain areas of inquiry, and it permits greater depth of response.

Fig. 4. Fifty percent of words in common with source.

85% level. Ninety-six, or just under 20% of the passages compared, were at or above the 70% level, and 172, or 35%, reached the 50% level. By the time the 40% level of repetition is included, 44% of the compared passages have been accounted for. Table 3 shows these results.

Individual instances of language repeated from a source tell only part of the story, though; such passages must also be evaluated in the context of the larger work. To see how pervasive unattributed repetition was among the texts, the

SS2 148:2b	Burgess, 1984, p. 143
In addition to this, Burgess (1984) argued that the researcher should follow a range of methods that are suitable to his research, needing to be flexible in his approach, and to be prepared to use a range of methods in order to deal with complex problems.	Accordingly, researchers need to take this situation into account and to approach substantive and theoretical problems with a range of methods that are appropriate for their problems. Such a perspective means that researchers cannot rigidly apply their methods but need to be flexible in their approach and utilise a range of methods for any problem.

Fig. 5. Forty percent of words in common with source.

Table 3
Unattributed repetition from source by passage

Words in common (%)	Passages at or above threshold	As percent of compared passages
100	8	2
85	50	10
70	96	19
50	172	35
40	216	44

percentage score reported above was recalculated for each writing sample as a whole. This ''broad context'' figure was arrived at by dividing the number of words in common by the total number of words in each sample. Once again, signaled quotations were excluded. Table 4 shows that there was considerable variance among the writers on this point. At the extremes, only 4% of the words not in quotation marks in Maria's text came from her sources, while Ingrid's writing sample, which contained no signaled quotations at all, took 92% of its language from sources.

Because this broad context measure includes passages which were not compared, the extent to which it reflects the real source use in the text depends on how closely the uncompared passages resembled the compared passages. This, however, cannot be known, precisely *because* they were uncompared, either because they cited no source or because the source they cited could not be obtained.

Table 4
Unattributed repetition as a proportion of total text, by writer (quotation excluded)

Writer	Percent in common with source
Ingrid	92
Erden	55
S2	52
E2	29
H1	29
Roula	30
E1	22
Kwan	19
SS2	18
SS1	16
S1	15
Yves	14
Graciela	14
Helen	10
H2	8
Pierre	8
Maria	4
All	23

The likelihood is that some of these passages were original to the writers, and that others were source-dependent. Because the broad context equation effectively treats all uncompared passages as if they had no relationship to a source, it almost certainly understates the degree of repeated language in the samples.

An alternative approach is to base the same calculation on only the compared passages, again excluding quotation. By this measure, Ingrid's score rises very little (because most of her writing sample was compared), as does Maria's, who was scrupulous about acknowledging repeated words as quotation, but the scores of the other writers rise significantly. Recall that Fig. 5 showed a clear connection between the language of the source and the new text at the 40% level of similarity. If source dependence above the 40% level is of questionable appropriateness, then, as Table 5 shows, at least eight of the writers employed risky strategies.

If the broad context measure understates the level of unattributed source use, by treating all uncompared passages as if they had been autonomously composed, then the narrow context measure certainly overstates it, by excluding some passages which almost certainly *were* autonomously composed. These writers' true dependence on their sources is likely to fall somewhere between these two figures; where, exactly, it is impossible to know. However, even if the extent of unattributed repetition from sources could be determined more exactly, there would still exist no benchmark level of appropriateness to compare it to. From a pragmatic perspective, though, student writers are likely to be less concerned about where scholarly consensus falls on this issue and more concerned about how their teachers judge their work view. Sixteen of the 17 writers were outside the area of

Table 5
Unattributed repetition as a proportion of compared text, by writer (quotation excluded)

Writer	Percent in common with source
Ingrid	95
Erden	74
Roula	65
S2	61
E1	49
E2	48
H1	43
Yves	41
Helen	39
SS1	35
Kwan	32
Pierre	26
SS2	26
Graciela	23
S1	19
H2	16
Maria	7
All	23

full appropriateness, something which would presumably have concerned them and their advisors.

Transparency and the presence of a citation

A second transparency assumption is that if no reference to a source appears, that portion of a text is original both in form and content. The writers in this study were nearly unanimous in challenging this assumption; only the H2 sample was transparent in this respect. Although all sources used for comparison had been identified in some way by the writers (i.e., in in-text citations, reference lists, and, with the dissertation writers, in personal communications), this did not always constitute a clear acknowledgment of the source's role. Simply listing a work in the reference list does not indicate that it supplied the language or the ideas for a given section of the new text. To be a useful signal to the reader, the source must be named where it is used.

When experienced academic writers and readers ''collaborate'' on a text, placing citations and interpreting them is not difficult. However, determining whether these less experienced writers had cited a source was not always straightforward. The example in Fig. 1, above, was fairly clear-cut. The nearest mention of the source was more than 200 words away from that passage, with citations to two other sources appearing before it. Seventy-three passages among 16 writing samples were like Fig. 1 in that they lacked a citation to their source altogether.

Some passages were more difficult to categorize, as Fig. 6 illustrates. It seems likely that most readers would understand Roula's citation to apply to the part of her text beginning ''metaphor is typically viewed ....'' The earlier sentence, which comes from the same source with the change of a single word, is not clearly included in the citation. It is, however, close enough to the citation that it could be appropriate to give Roula the benefit of the doubt. Fifty-eight passages like this were neither fully appropriate nor clearly inappropriate. Thus 131 passages, or 27% of the total compared, lacked a clear citation to the source they used.

Transparency and secondary citation

The final transparency assumption to be considered here is that the source cited is the one the writer actually consulted, unless it is otherwise stipulated (e.g., ''Smith, quoted in Jones''). Only H2 met this expectation; the other 16 texts appeared to have cited works on the basis of an account from a secondary source, without acknowledging that fact, in a total of 87 instances. The connection between unacknowledged secondary citation and plagiarism may not be immediately obvious, but one effect of this form of citation may be to make it appear that the writer consulted a number of primary sources instead of fewer secondary ones, masking the fact that it was the source author's diligence and creativity that brought various voices together to speak on a given topic. Maria's work, the only text without chunks of language from sources without attribution, illustrates this

Roula 1:2b (excerpt)	Lakoff and Johnson, 1980, p. 3
Metaphor is for most people a feature of extraordinary rather than ordinary language. According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 3) metaphor is typically viewed as a characteristic of language alone, a matter of words rather than thought or action. For this reason, most people think they can get along perfectly well without metaphor.	Metaphor is for most people a device of the poetic imagination and the rhetorical flourish—a matter of extraordinary rather than ordinary language. Moreover, metaphor is typically viewed as characteristic of language alone, a matter of words rather than thought or action. For this reason, most people think they can get along perfectly well without metaphor.

Fig. 6. Presence of citation unclear.

effect. In the passage in Fig. 7, Maria has used quotation marks where appropriate, but the overall effect still falls short of transparency. The reader assumes that Maria read all five named sources, Tylor, Arnold, Bullivant, Malinowski, and Burtonwood, and identified an apposite comment about culture in each. However, since Burtonwood includes precisely the same quotations from all four authors, it is clear that (whether or not Maria also read the other authors) the creative act of gathering their comments is Burtonwood's, and that is not attributed in Maria's passage. (Here and elsewhere, a double slash indicates that parts of the source text have been omitted to save space.)

This example from Maria's work is not typical of the unacknowledged secondary citation found in the writing samples; it is by far the most extreme case. It serves, though, to illustrate what is less obvious in each of the less colorful examples until their cumulative effect is weighed up: Even with quotation marks properly placed, unacknowledged secondary citation can result in a writer appearing to take unearned credit for a part of the composition process. Through unacknowledged secondary citation and through the absence of clear citations, all of the writers except H2 failed transparently to identify their sources.

Taking all three assumptions of transparency as a whole, each of the 17 writers failed to use sources transparently, and did so in a way which could be labeled plagiarism. Table 6 summarizes these findings. This source use went undiagnosed, however. None of the master's advisors was aware of the nature of the source use, and since all of the PhD writers successfully defended their theses and received

Maria 1:5b	Burtonwood, 1986
The anthropologist E. B. Tylor gives a fairly concise definition, looking at culture as "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society" (Tylor, 1871); while the sociologist Matthew Arnold describes it as the "pursuit of our total perfection, by means of getting to know, on all matters which concern us, the best which has been thought and said" (Arnold, 1869). Bullivant on the other hand, discusses the notion of culture on the basis of its being "a patterned system of knowledge and conception, embodied in symbolic and non-symbolic communication modes, which a society has evolved from the past, and progressively modifies and augments to give meaning to and cope with the present and anticipated future problems of its existence" (Bullivant, 1981). Malinowski takes this argument furthe, [sic] attributing to culture the characteristic of constituting "a vast	The first and perhaps still the best-known, and certainly the most often quoted social scientific definition of culture in English, is that of the anthropologist E. B. Tylor, who referred to 'that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society' (Tylor, 1871, p. 1). Two years earlier in Culture and Anarchy Matthew Arnold (1869, p. viii) had said of culture that it was 'a pursuit of our total perfection by means of getting to know, on all matters which concern us, the best which has been thought and said'.//The following quotation from Bullivant's discussion of educational responses to the plurality of cultures within societies indicates how the notion of culture now taken on board by educationists is emphatically that of the anthropologist: Culture is a patterned system of knowledge and conception, embodied in symbolic and non-symbolic communication modes, which

Fig. 7. Unacknowledged secondary citation.

apparatus by which man is put in a position the better to cope with the concrete, specific problems which face him in his adaptation to his environment in the course of the satisfaction of his needs" (Malinowski, 1945). And Burtonwood will later comment that "this has been the predominant view of English anthropology and it has regularly found its way into introductory texts in the sociology of education" (Burtonwood, p. 3)	a society has evolved from the past, and progressively modifies and augments to give meaning to and cope with the present and anticipated future problems of its existence. (Bullivant, 1981, p. 3)./*/Malinowski (1945, p. 42), for instance saw culture as 'the whole body of implements, the charters of its social groups, human ideas, beliefs and customs' and it 'constitutes a vast apparatus by which man is put in a position the better to cope with the concrete, specific problems which face him in his adaptation to his environment in the course of the satisfaction of his needs'. This has been the predominant view of English anthropology and it has regularly found its way into introductory texts in the sociology of education.

Fig. 7. (*Continued*).

their degrees, it is probably fair to assume that their inappropriate source use, too, went undetected.

Plagiarism or patchwriting?

All 17 writers gave a misleading impression of their source use. Was this the result of an intention to deceive, or did it come about in another way? In this section, four possible explanations for source misuse are examined. The first is what is often the ''default assumption'' about source misuse, that it is prototypical plagiarism, an intentionally deceptive act. Next, two alternative explanations, suggested by the existing literature on source use, will be discussed: the role of culture and Howard's patchwriting model. Finally, a fourth explanation, suggested by the present data, will be introduced.

Table 6
Opaque source use features by writer

Source use feature	Writer																
	Ingrid	Erden	Pierre	Yves	Graciela	Maria	Kwan	Roula	Helen	S1	S2	E1	E2	H1	H2	SS1	SS2
Passage(s) with 70%+ unattributed repetition	√	√	√	√	√		√	√	√		√	√	√	√			√
Passage(s) with 50%+ unattributed repetition	√	√	√	√	√		√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Citation missing or unclear	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√		√	√
Unacknowledged secondary citation	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√		√	√

Intentional deception

Textual plagiarism is routinely assumed to be the result of intentional deception. At a minimum, many academics are likely to be skeptical if a student protests that he or she did not mean to plagiarize. There is a presumption of guilt, and innocence must be proven. It is interesting to note that, in that respect, a higher burden of proof is placed on a student suspected of plagiarism than on a suspected criminal.

Intention is a notoriously difficult matter to prove or disprove, since the only conclusive evidence of intention exists within the head of the perpetrator. Whether these writers (or any others) intended to commit deceptive, prototypical plagiarism, cannot be proven beyond a shadow of a doubt; the available evidence is circumstantial, suggestive rather than conclusive. It should not be discounted on those grounds, though, as it is the only evidence available to speak to this part of the writing process. If reasonable doubt is cast on whether textual plagiarism always implies deceptive, prototypical plagiarism, then the claim of lack of intention to deceive must be evaluated neutrally, rather than skeptically. The purpose of this section is to establish grounds for that reasonable doubt. The evidence regarding intention comes primarily from the student interviews, from which two observations are drawn: first, that these writers presented a profile of diligent, motivated, and engaged students; and second, that they made no apparent efforts to conceal their source use strategies. Both observations are hard to reconcile with the image of the intentionally deceptive plagiarist.

The nine students who participated actively in this study gave the strong impression of being engaged in their thesis work. Early in the first interview I asked students to summarize their research topics, and they did so with enthusiasm, revealing strong personal investment. Erden gave a knowledgeable and confident exposition of his research based on his 15 years' experience in the field. Graciela had been motivated by the desire for personal growth to take a leave of

absence from her job to pursue a degree which was unrelated to it. Helen, on the other hand, had selected a thesis topic directly related to language teaching and young learners, the area she hoped to work in, and spoke avidly about child multilingualism.

Maria — the student whose extended discussion of culture owed so much to its source — was not only deeply involved in her research topic, she also had a special appreciation for the mode of study in the British university. In Greece she had been frustrated in her attempts to prepare for university entrance exams by a system which, she said, demanded that students work above a level they could reasonably attain: ''For me it was pointless. You can't expect a 16-year-old to speak like a lecturer.'' Maria described her peers' coping strategies:

> Imagine the classroom was 30-35 pupils, 20 of them were cheating, five of them were extremely intellectual and they were doing well, and the rest of them, including myself, we were just trying to cope with the situation.

Maria perceived her move to Britain (where she first completed a Bachelor's degree) not only as a tactical move to obtain access to a university, but as a rejection of a system she saw as unjust. Her early experiences in Britain came as a breath of fresh air. Students and teachers alike seemed to be engaged in learning, rather than playing the system.

> It was so amazing the first time I sat an examination in England, we were given the exam sheets and the professor left the room and no one in the classroom just looked at the other table trying to copy. No one. Just everyone was just focused. In Greece people would start thinking ... now I can copy ... British people wouldn't do that .... They trust you when they issue the paper and they leave you alone and this means that you are professional enough and responsible enough to sit down and write the exam.

The point here is not the accuracy of Maria's perceptions; clearly, her assertion that British students would never cheat on an exam is assailable. However, this account sheds light on her motivations. Having rejected what she viewed as pressure to cheat, she was deeply appreciative of the contrasting values she identified in Britain. If Maria's sincerity in presenting this account is accepted, it is very difficult to reconcile these comments with a suggestion that she intentionally flouted the same values she praised so highly.

A second suggestive point is the absence of any indication that the writers tried to cover their tracks. The writers in the first part of this study were volunteers and were offered no incentives for their participation. They were free to decline to participate or to drop out of the study, but they not only took part in the interviews and showed me their texts, they helped identify their sources. Being in draft form, a number of samples lacked complete reference lists. When I queried the writers about their sources, they responded immediately and enthusiastically. Kwan typed up a reference list so she could e-mail it to me. Erden, in an interview, pulled out

packs of index cards with his bibliographic records and went through them and then offered to lend me articles which weren't available at his university library. The same evidence in a weaker form is available for the PhD writers. All of the sources which were compared were named in their reference lists; had the writers intended to conceal the use they had made of sources, they might have chosen not to name them at all.

More compelling evidence that there was no attempt to conceal the nature of their source use is available for three writers, Ingrid, SS2 and H1, and is exemplified in Fig. 8. Although this passage was not signaled as quotation and cited no source, it has manifestly been taken from a source, one of the articles named in Ingrid's reference list. However, it is not plausible that she intended her reader (i.e., her advisor) to form the misleading impression that she had authored this passage because he was the author of the article from which she took it. Repetition from the advisor's writing was found in another passage in Ingrid's work, in multiple passages of the SS2 writing sample, including one passage at 100% similarity, and in several passages of the H1 sample.

It must be acknowledged again that this evidence is not conclusive. Perhaps other explanations can be found to reconcile the apparently open behavior of these writers with a claim that they intended to deceive their readers about the nature of their source use. Finding a plausible explanation for all 17 writers would be more challenging, but still possible in principle. The value of this evidence is not that it provides conclusive proof that these writers did not intend to cheat, but rather that it suggests that the many anecdotal accounts of unintentional plagiarism may be grounded in fact. If the existence of unintentional plagiarism — i.e., patchwriting — is accepted, then deceptive plagiarism cannot be the default assumption.

Ingrid 1:3c	Anonymous source
QTL analysis is predicated on looking for associations between the quantitative trait and the marker alleles segregating in the population. It has two essential stages: the mapping of the markers and the association of the trait with the markers. Both these stages require accurate data plus statistical software.	QTL analysis is predicated on looking for associations between the quantitative trait and the marker alleles segregating in the population. It has two essential stages; the mapping of the markers and the association of the trait with the markers. Both of these stages require accurate data plus statistical software.

Fig. 8. Deceptive source use?

Culture and plagiarism

A number of explanations for non-prototypical plagiarism in second-language writing have focused on cultural differences, and some of those explanations were reviewed in the introduction. Culture did not emerge from the students' accounts as a strong explanation for the inappropriate source use found in this study. Maria came closest to making this point by claiming that plagiarism was a common coping strategy among Greek students. She did not claim, though, that either students or teachers deemed it an acceptable strategy.

A specific cultural influence on source use which has been suggested is that some students are unaware that unattributed copying is inappropriate within the AADC. For that specific suggestion, no support at all emerges from the present study. The nine students who were interviewed showed an awareness of appropriate and inappropriate source use, at least at an abstract level. One component of the first interview was to ask the students to discuss terms related to source use, and to identify examples of quotation and paraphrase in an excerpt from a journal article. They were able to do so with little or no difficulty.

Nor was the concept of plagiarism unknown to them. During the interviews I was careful not to use the word "plagiarism" or to suggest it euphemistically. Five of the nine writers, however, — Erden, Ingrid, Maria, Kwan and Roula — raised the subject. The matter was, therefore, part of their awareness. In some cases, their sensitivity to the issue involved classing rather mechanical problems as plagiarism. Kwan said matter-of-factly that using too many quotations would be "something like plagiarism." Because of this concern, she tried to balance quotation with paraphrase, although she found it difficult. Roula was under the impression that her supervisor had told her that a citation with the date missing could look like plagiarism. Although universities have enumerated many and varied writing practices as specific types of plagiarism (Pecorari, 2001), it is difficult to imagine an excess of quotations, or a missing publication year, being counted among them. Nonetheless, if Kwan and Roula were attuned to those two matters, it is testimony to the level of their concern about involuntarily plagiarizing, and the importance which they attached to getting the details of source use right (a similar concern was expressed by the participants in Angélil-Carter's study, 2000, p. 72).

Cultural factors cannot, therefore, explain the present findings of inappropriate source use. This conclusion is at odds with numerous anecdotal but persuasive accounts in the second-language composition literature, and two explanations may account for this discrepancy. The first is that the interviews were loosely structured to permit students to discuss the issues that were salient to them. It may be, therefore, that cultural differences were not *irrelevant* to these writers, but that they were overshadowed by *more relevant* matters.

Another possibility is that the students who took part in this study may differ from those who have described unattributed textual repetition as a standard writing practice in their culture. While the writers described by Matalene (1985)

and Pennycook (1996) were studying in their own countries, the participants in this study had been in England for most of a year at least at the time the writing samples were produced. They may simply have been too sophisticated to make the mistake of the novice at crossing cultures, assuming that behavior which is appropriate in the home country is appropriate in all contexts. Cultural differences may indeed play a role in the misuse of sources in some cases.

Patchwriting

Howard (1995) explains patchwriting as the product of novice writers who are not yet equal to the task of writing autonomously in a new discourse. Patchwriting, then, differs from prototypical plagiarism in two ways: It lacks the element of intentional deception, and it is not a terminal stage. Today's patchwriter is tomorrow's competent academic writer, given the necessary support to develop. No evidence for intentional deception was found in these writing samples, suggesting that patchwriting may have been involved. Measuring the writers' development did not fall within the scope of this study; rather, it took a snapshot of their writing at a moment when they could be classed as novices. Only Maria and Roula, who had earned BAs in Britain, and Erden, who had published research in his field, had experience of academic writing in English prior to beginning their courses. With the exception of Erden and Graciela, who had done a previous journalism degree in her country, the participants were not experienced writers even in their own languages. And even the most experienced of the group, Erden, reported that writing was the most challenging part of completing his thesis, "because it's not my own language, first. And also I'm not good even in my own language in writing." Since the PhD in Britain typically involves no coursework, it's possible that some of that group actually had *less* academic writing experience than the dissertation writers, many of whom wrote a certain number of long essays as part of their course.

The question of patchwriting in the context of a writer's development is one which needs further investigation. However, these students, whose source use was manifestly inappropriate, were not experienced or confident writers. The findings of the present study, therefore, provide support for Howard's model of patchwriting, a form of textual plagiarism which is caused not by the intention to deceive but by the need for further growth as a writer.

The beat of a different drummer

The consequences of plagiarism can be staggering. Students can be expelled from university; established academics face public disgrace. This dramatic impact makes it easy to forget that avoiding plagiarism is not a writer's only concern. One explanation for inappropriate source use is that the writers had their own agenda, and the avoidance of plagiarism, while not unimportant to them, was overshadowed by other concerns. A detailed account of each writer is not possible

here; instead, issues raised by three writers will be offered as examples of how each was marching to the beat of a different drummer.

Ingrid, whose writing exhibited textual plagiarism to an extent which was frankly astonishing, raised two interesting points. First, she distinguished between ''background material'' in a source, which she felt could be appropriated, and original findings:

> I don't know how I'm supposed to do it, but when I'm referring to their experiments I try to put them in, and when I just using the same background information that they probably got from someone else I don't use, putting the names, because I don't know where they got it from, and you're supposed to use the original source *and since I don't know what the original source is I just put the article that I read*.... [emphasis added]

Ingrid's distinction between more and less original parts of a research article echoes Swales' observation that the importance of the methods section in scientific papers is often downplayed (Swales, 1990, pp. 169–170), and this can be seen graphically in papers Ingrid and the other biologists cited, in which the methods section was printed in smaller type than the rest of the article.

Ingrid also explained that she was reluctant to cite all of her sources because, paradoxically, it could cause her to *violate* a principal of good source use. She reasoned that other writers used sources in the same way that she did and therefore the sources for 'background information'' may not be reported transparently: ''They probably got from someone else ... I don't know where they got it from.'' And that presented Ingrid with a problem because she was aware that ''you're supposed to use the original source.'' Her solution was at times to cite the source she had consulted and at times to omit a citation.

The point is not that Ingrid's original principles for source use were in line with expectations in her discipline; her advisor felt that they very much were not. The point is that Ingrid perceived herself, not as violating rules, but as having extrapolated rules for source use. Her writing was guided by a set of principles more complex than ''it's okay to plagiarize''; she had expended some thought on what she was doing. It is also worth noting in passing that her view that the methods section was the least important part of an article is widely shared in her field, although her conclusion that it is available to be copied may not be.

Ingrid's was not the only unexpected perspective. Roula's writing sample included the passage shown in Fig. 9. Although Roula's text closely follows the source, she has substituted the example of the ''ham sandwich'' with the example of the ''*Times*,'' which appears later in Lakoff and Johnson (1980). Roula explained that she had switched because she did not understood the meaning of the ''ham sandwich'' example, but she did understand the authors' larger point about personification and recognized that the ''*Times*'' example was an equally good illustration, and so she substituted it. Although Roula did not follow the letter of the law, her view that she should understand everything that she included in her text respects its spirit.

Roula 4:1 (excerpt)	Lakoff and Johnson, 1980, p. 35
In the case of personification we are imputing human qualities to things that are not human. In such cases there are no actual human beings referred to. Cases like this must be distinguished from cases like *The Times* hasn't arrived at the press conference yet where the expression *'The Times'* is being used to refer to an actual person, the reporter from the *Times*. This is not a sample of personification metaphor, since we do not understand the *'Times'* by imputing human qualities to it. According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 35), this case is known as 'metonymy because we are using one entity to refer to another that is related to it'.	In the cases of personification that we have looked at we are imputing human qualities to things that are not human—theories, diseases, inflation, etc. In such cases there are no actual human beings referred to. When we say "Inflation robbed me of my savings," we are not using the term "inflation" to refer to a person. Cases like this must be distinguished from cases like The *ham sandwich* is waiting for his check where the expression "the ham sandwich" is being used to refer to an actual person, the person who ordered the ham sandwich. Such cases are not instances of personification metaphors, since we do not understand "the ham sandwich" by imputing human qualities to it.

Fig. 9. Changes to the source text.

During our second interview, Erden became aware of the similarity between one of his passages and the source. He commented that verbatim language can be copied into notes and then later transferred into a draft: "It is normal, while we are taking a note, when you are reading this part and you can copy it in your papers, sometimes you can copy directly to the sentence and sometimes summary." Initially Erden's reaction to the discovery of unattributed repetition was that it was less than ideal but did not cross the line into plagiarism: "I mean ... I don't think that this is the plagiarism, this is not copy of whole paragraph or sentence or one description. It is just copied, taking a note or something." But later, considering another passage, he grew doubtful, not about his intentions, but about how they could be viewed.

DP: ... the one that's marked number 4. What can you tell me about that citation?
Erden: Yes, it is again, there are too much copied.
DP: Is it too much?
Erden : (Pause) Probably. (Long pause)

Although unhappy with the source use he discovered, he viewed it as an inevitable consequence of the real-life pressures on his work.

DP: You do give the author, though, you do give the citation.
Erden: Yes.
DP: Is it all right then?
Erden: No. You try to avoid this, but you know, when you are reading and taking a note, sometimes it is unavoidable.

I asked Erden if he would revise this section in a subsequent draft, and he replied, quite pragmatically, that he could not find every instance of inappropriate source use in his writing:

> I have to look at all of my cards, and go through the whole notes and look at them sentence by sentence .... No, this ... I cannot go directly that way because probably I am going to use hundreds of citations, hundreds of articles ... I mean, my position, it is impossible.

Erden's perception was the rather mature one that there would be a gap between ideal and realistic performance. He explains his inappropriate source use as having come about as a result of the notetaking process, and while the result was undesirable, remedying it by comparing every line of his text with the hundreds of sources he had consulted would not be feasible.

These student writers may not have found the best possible solution to their dilemmas. A writing teacher might suggest to Erden, for example, that he needs to refine his notetaking strategies so that it *is* always clear to him, when he looks at a notecard, whether the language from his notes has been taken as a quotation from the source or has been paraphrased. Similarly, if Ingrid's assumption that the language of the methods section is fair game is mistaken, then it would be well for a teacher in her field to share that disciplinary knowledge with her. The accounts

these writers presented, though, show that their source use was a direct result of the priorities and objectives they had set. They may not be priorities and objectives that established academics would endorse, but they go to show that the writers were neither entirely ignorant of, nor had chosen to ignore, prevailing academic standards for source use. Rather, avoiding textual plagiarism had to vie for their attention with other objectives.

Classroom and institutional implications

Academics are right to be concerned about plagiarism. The possibility of an inadvertent form of plagiarism could be seen as a challenge to core academic values, a lowering of standards. That need not be the case. If textual plagiarism is as common as these findings suggest, then the cases of plagiarism which are detected are merely the tip of the iceberg. In that case, the real threat to academic standards comes when students receive degrees without learning that their source use strategies are not appropriate. Distinguishing between prototypical plagiarism and patchwriting is an important first step in addressing the issue. Therefore the findings of this study have the potential to strengthen academic standards by allowing weaknesses in the system to be addressed. The findings carry two important implications for teachers and administrators who are concerned about textual plagiarism.

First, patchwriting should be recognized as a widespread strategy, and efforts to address it should start with the understanding that most students will use sources inappropriately before they learn how to use them appropriately and focus on supporting novice writers and ensuring that they emerge from the patchwriting stage. Secondly, patchwriting should be recognized as a neutral, rather than a stigmatizing error. Some writers plagiarize, deliberately and deceptively, in an attempt to gain unearned benefits. Others commit textual plagiarism for reasons more to do with their textual skills than their honesty. Conflating textual features with their sometimes dishonest causes has a number of negative effects. First, teachers who assume that plagiarism is primarily an ethical issue are not likely to diagnose it in students they see as diligent and honest. Secondly, the stigma creates an atmosphere of suspicion and concern whenever teachers raise questions about source use, and this is not conducive to the learning process. Then, as Howard (1995) has pointed out, conflating patchwriting with deceptive plagiarism limits teachers' options for a pedagogical response, particularly if their institutions dictate (as many do) that suspected cases of plagiarism should be referred to a disciplinary body.

The present research has shown that inappropriate source use is a widespread phenomenon. That awareness, if acted upon, can lead to better efforts to bring all academic writing, regardless of level, into closer conformity with the norms of the academic community. The findings reported here also support Howard's model of patchwriting as separate and distinct from plagiarism. Separating these two acts

makes it possible to treat instances of source misuse appropriately, with pedagogical efforts directed at the students who can benefit from them and disciplinary measures for those whose intention is to deceive. That should be a comfort to those who fear that recognizing a well-intentioned form of plagiarism is the thin end of the wedge; in fact, recognizing the existence of the problem is the beginning of the solution.

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