

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is not so much a linguistic category as a social issue to which linguists and anthropologists have sometimes directed attention. As a social issue, the term indexes a range of moral, ethical, legal, and positioning issues that have importance for research in linguistics and in anthropology. As a theoretical issue, plagiarism is a subset of a wide variety of questions that are suggested by terms such as *intertextuality* and *interdiscursivity*, *reported speech*, *constructed dialogue*, *discourse representation*, and *dialogicality* and *polyvocality*. What is at stake, whether we view plagiarism as a social issue or a theoretical one, is the analytical and responsible position taken in respect to the appropriation of text from one discourse which is then recontextualized (entextualized, embedded) within another subsequent text.

In much contemporary linguistic analysis it is taken as axiomatic that all text is constituted to a considerable extent by combining prior texts, from words and utterances to full literal texts and that much of what gives any particular text its generic characteristics as well as what gives the author—a highly problematic consideration in this view—originality derives from the particular mixes, combinations, and hybridities that result. In this view a text with no history in prior utterance would be a theoretical impossibility. Thus what emerge as the central questions are the questions of accuracy of citation, of clarity of attribution to prior sources, of legal ownership of texts that are transformed in new entextualizations, and of the moral, ethical, and power relationships among those who have been responsible for prior utterances and those who are engaged in recontextualizations.

The wide range of recontextualizations that have been studied make it clear that we cannot easily take direct quotation as the prototype of entextualization. Attention must be equally given to indirect quotation, paraphrase, presupposition, negation, staged enactments, and hidden dialogicalities where the other voice is only represented through responses to it and a host of other modes of intertextuality. In this sense the poetic

discourses of poetry and song, advertising, and mythology come closer to representing the full complexity of the nature of discourse than the direct citations with clear attributions set up as norms in academic discourse.

Accusations of plagiarism within an understanding of the hybrid nature of all discourse, then, can be viewed as hegemonic and derogatory positioning. Practices of entextualization, which are the norms in advertising and journalism, are viewed as plagiarism in academic discourses. In making assertions about plagiarism, broader social issues of personal character, social networking, in-group and out-group membership, and the power to (mis)appropriate are inevitably indexed.

Plagiarism in the form of copyright and patent infringement indexes a subset of intellectual property issues in which the power of the nation state through the legal discourses it authorizes intervenes in the common discourses of daily life. Among intellectual properties are the commodity/signs of brand names, logos, trademarks, and product and brand slogans. These commodity/signs, which are protected against unauthorized uses, bring into common discourse injunctions based in corporate ownership. To the felicity conditions on speech acts of pragmatics have now been added conditions of fear of infringement. An unauthorized use of a brand name on a television talk show, for example, or in a newspaper story will bring a letter of injunction or a legal action to produce legal remedies for damages to the product or the corporate owners. The discursive consequence is that a form of hidden dialogicality or indirectness in discourse may arise in which common brand names, logos, and trademarks are only present by their studied absence in discourse. One uses a facial tissue rather than a Kleenex® and makes a photocopy rather than a Xerox®.

Plagiarism has been discussed as an issue in mentoring, particularly in reference to "international" students, "international" colleagues, or other "latecomers" to academic discourses. Couched in the most positive terms, the problem is seen as one of analyzing academic discourses to produce clear descriptions of practice to enable entrance into these discourses. Couched in more critical terms, the problem is seen as the assertion of the practices of an "inner circle" of academics as a hegemonic move to maintain exclusion. This latter argument is strengthened by research suggesting that academic practice is far from universal even within the "inner circle" and that "international" practice more resembles the "inner circle's" discourses of journalism and advertising, of art and literature.

Plagiarism as the violation of secret or privileged knowledge had been rarely scrutinized by linguists and anthropologists, but in recent years studies of this kind are increasing. As the inverse of the "mentoring problem," the texts that linguists and anthropologists produce in the field are normally recontextualizations or entextualizations of privileged and ritually controlled discourses. There is a growing concern with the study of the relative positionings of linguists-anthropologists and the authors or ritual owners of the texts upon which our research crucially rests. In the best cases this has led to an understanding of the processes of co-construction and co-production of linguistic descriptions and ethnographic analyses and to an appreciation of the intertextual and interdiscursive constitution of all of our

discourses whether descriptive or analytic, whether produced in the field or presented in academic publication.

(See also *genre, heteroglossia, improvisation, media, reflexivity, relativity, truth, voice*)

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Department of Linguistics

Georgetown University

Washington, DC 20057

scollon@gusun.georgetown.edu