



Using Evidence in Academic Writing: Avoiding Plagiarism



Heather Benucci
Office of English Language Programs
US Department of State

+ Objectives

Our “to do” list



- Examine how **culture** can affect our understanding of **plagiarism**
- Discuss the relationship between **claims** and **evidence** in writing
- Examine three ways to incorporate **evidence** in academic writing
 - Quoting
 - Paraphrasing
 - Summarizing
- Explore these topics through an **EFL classroom lens** by answering:
 - Why can using evidence in writing be tricky for English language learners?
 - How can we equip EFL students to deal with the challenge?

+ Plagiarism – what is it?

“In every matter that relates to invention, to use, or beauty or form, we are borrowers.”

- Wendell Phillips

“Nothing is said which has not been said before.”

- Terence

“Fine words! I wonder where you stole 'em.”

- Jonathan Swift

- What is your definition of “plagiarism”?

+ Plagiarism – a definition

“Plagiarism - presenting work, products, ideas, words, or data of another as one’s own

[Sources] must be acknowledged whenever:

1. one **quotes another person’s actual words** or **replicates all or part of another’s product**. This includes all information gleaned from any source, including the Internet.
2. one **uses another person’s ideas, opinions, work, data, or theories,** even if they are completely paraphrased in one’s own words.
3. one borrows facts, statistics, or other illustrative materials.”



Academic Integrity | Code

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY HOME

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

[Academic Integrity Code](#)

[Washington College of Law Honor Code](#)

[Adjudication](#)

[Students Rights & Responsibilities](#)

[Frequently Asked Questions](#)

[Contacts](#)

POLICIES & PROCEDURES

SCHOOLS & COLLEGES

OFFICE OF THE PROVOST

Questions?

University Registrar
202-885-2022
Fax: 202-885-1052
Wisconsin (4200), Room 5th floor

Poehts, Alice
University Registrar

[Mailing Address](#)

Academic Integrity Code

Section I: Standards of Academic Conduct

Academic integrity stands at the heart of intellectual life. The academic community is bound by a fundamental trust that professors and students alike undertake and present their work honestly. As a community of the mind, we respect the work of others, paying our intellectual debts as we craft our own work.

The Academic Integrity Code ("Code") for American University defines honorable conduct, outlines attendant rights and responsibilities, and describes procedures for handling allegations of academic misconduct.

American University views academic integrity as integral to its mission, treating it as far more than a disciplinary matter: All members of the university must join in educating students about the value of integrity and the ways in which intellectuals acknowledge their debts. In each course, faculty should remind students of the standards of integrity, and faculty may ask students to include with their submissions a signed statement pledging adherence to the Code in completing the assignment.

By enrolling at American University and then each semester when registering for classes, students acknowledge their commitment to the Code. As members of the academic community, students must become familiar with their rights and their responsibilities. In each course, they are responsible for knowing the requirements and restrictions regarding research and writing, examinations of whatever kind, collaborative work, the use of study aids, the appropriateness of assistance, and other issues. Students are responsible for learning the conventions of documentation and acknowledgment of sources. American University expects students to complete all examinations, tests, papers, creative projects, and assignments of any kind according to the highest ethical standards, as set forth either explicitly or implicitly in this Code or by the direction of instructors.

Section II: Definition of Academic Integrity Violations

Violating standards of academic conduct is a serious matter subject to discipline. Types of violations are listed and defined below. This section provides explanations and illustrations but does not exhaust the scope of these violations. Academic integrity is not merely a matter of conforming to rules; it must be understood in terms of the broader purposes of a university education.

A. Violations Adjudicated under the Academic Integrity Code

1. Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the representation of someone else's words, ideas, or work as one's own without attribution. Plagiarism may involve using someone else's wording

Responsibility
rests with
students

+ Plagiarism – a definition



To paraphrase:

- Plagiarism is using others' words, ideas, or data without credit
- Give credit even when summarizing or paraphrasing (using your own words) to express the ideas or work of others

(Towson University Academic Integrity Policy, 2012)

+ Plagiarism and culture



Are there cultural assumptions in the definition we just saw?

- Ideas have owners – “intellectual property”
- Crediting a source is required whether quoting or summarizing
- Plagiarism is a “moral” issue or an “integrity” violation
- The source of ideas must be clearly documented in academic writing
 - Which are the author’s thoughts?
 - Which are the the thoughts of others?

+ Cultural assumptions and EFL students



Other cultural perspectives:

- Knowledge is shared wisdom, not individual property
- Expert texts serve as “truth” versus “claims” to be analyzed
- Memorization and reproduction is a learning method
 - Verbatim respect for the original text is important
- Presenting an individualized position is not required to demonstrate mastery of academic material
- Writers should integrate their thoughts directly with the work of experts

+ Cultural assumptions and EFL students



Teachers must go beyond a written definition of plagiarism to explore below the surface

- “Referencing” is important in the English language academic genre
 - A skill that can be mastered
 - Most plagiarism by ELLs is not intentional “ethical” violations
 - A lack of comfort with genre requirements
 - “Patchwriting” and experimenting
- ELLs need explicit instruction on:
 - Genre characteristics of English language academic writing
 - How to incorporate evidence according to accepted standards

+ The academic genre: A closer look



Academic writers join a **discourse community** with shared standards

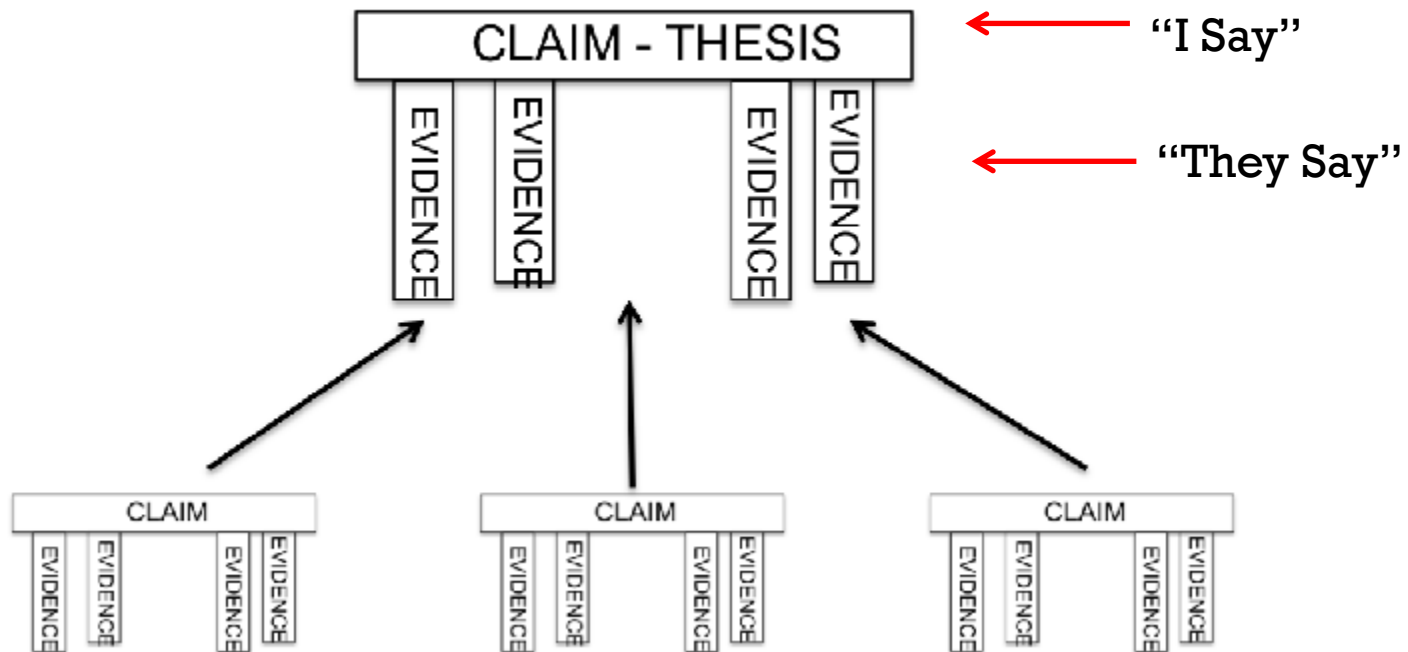
- Academic writing is a conversation
 - Writers are expected to contribute something new to the conversation
 - Writers express their ideas **in response** to the works of others
 - Writers use the works of others **to support** their ideas
- How can we help ELLs join the conversation?
 - Make the following explicit:
 - ‘They say’ / ‘I say’ format is expected – voices are separate
 - The relationship between claims and evidence

+ Claims and Evidence



- What is the difference?
- **Claim:** a writer's idea or argument (master claim = ?)
- **Evidence:** information that supports, refines, or develops a claim

+ The supported/supporting relationship





You can't have one without the other



■ Claims without evidence

- Example: The internet is ruining society. Nobody writes letters anymore. Tweeting and texting are damaging our writing skills.
- Solution: Support claims with evidence – the work of others

■ Evidence without claim

- Example: Susan Smith writes about women and dieting: “Fiji is just one example. Until TV was introduced 1995, the islands had no reported cases of eating disorders...”
- Solution: Explicitly relate evidence to a claim

(Graff & Birkenstein, 2010, p. 45)



Evidence: using what “They say”



- Provides support for claims or add credibility to writing
- Refers to work that leads up to the work you are now doing
- Illustrates several points of view on a subject
- Calls attention to a position that you wish to agree or disagree with
- Highlights a particularly striking phrase, sentence, or passage by quoting the original

Using what “They say” as evidence



? **Paraphrasing** ?

? **Quoting** ?

? **Summarizing** ?

	A.	B.	C.
Citations	Must reference the original source (author, year)	Must reference the original source (author, year)	Must reference the original source (author, year, page number)

Using what “They say” as evidence



	A. Summarizing	B. Paraphrasing	C. Quoting
Citations	Must reference the original source (author, year)	Must reference the original source (author, year)	Must reference the original source (author, year, page number)
Text Length	The text produced is much shorter than the original text	The text produced may be shorter or longer than the original text	The text produced is the exact length of the original text
Phrasing	Must use your own words/phrases, usually with a <u>very limited</u> use of quotations.	Must use your own words/phrases Put quotation marks around any key terms lifted from the original	Use the original author's exact words Put quotation marks around the original author's exact words
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Main idea• Broad view	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Single ideas• Short passages	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Long or short• EXACT match

+ Examples



Students frequently overuse direct quotation in taking notes, and as a result they overuse quotations in the final [research] paper. Probably only about 10% of your final manuscript should appear as directly quoted matter. Therefore, you should strive to limit the amount of exact transcribing of source materials while taking notes.

(Lester, James D. Writing Research Papers. 2nd ed. (1976): 46-47.)

Using what “They say” as evidence



	Summarizing	Paraphrasing	Quoting
Citations	Must reference the original source (author, year)	Must reference the original source (author, year)	Must reference the original source (author, year, page number)
Text Length	The text produced is much shorter than the original text	The text produced may be shorter or longer than the original text	The text produced is the exact length of the original text
Phrasing	Must use your own words/phrases, usually with a <u>very limited</u> use of quotations.	Must use your own words/phrases Put quotation marks around any key terms lifted from the original	Use the original author's exact words Put quotation marks around the original author's exact words
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Main idea• Broad view	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Single ideas• Short passages	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Long or short• EXACT match

+ Quotations




■ Possible EFL student problems?

- Overusing quotations
- Quoting out of context
- Making changes or deletions to quotations
- Not citing/improperly citing quotations

■ Activities

- Show students an unbalanced paper full of quotes
 - Ask them to identify the authors' claims and the effect of so many quotes
- Acceptability tasks
- Inductive analysis tasks




It is commonly believed by many journalists and politicians that the homeless of America are, in large part, former patients of large mental hospitals who were deinstitutionalized in the 1970s—the consequence, it is sometimes said, of misguided liberal opinion, which favored the treatment of such persons in community-based centers....

Source: Kozol, J. 1994. Distancing the homeless. In *The writer's presence: A pool of essays*, ed. D. McQuade and R. Atwan, 530–40. Boston: St. Martin's.

Instructions: Look at these quotes and decide whether they are acceptable. If they are not acceptable, correct them.

- a. Kozol (1994, 530) explained that “It is commonly believed that the homeless of America are former patients of mental hospitals.”

Kozol (1994, 530) explained that “It is commonly believed **by many journalists and politicians** that the homeless of America are, **in large part**, former patients of **large** mental hospitals.”




...While conceding that a certain number of the homeless are, or have been, mentally unwell, they believe that, in the case of most unsheltered people, the primary reason is economic rather than clinical. **The cause of homelessness, they say with disarming logic, is the lack of homes and of income with which to rent or acquire them....** One year later, the Washington Post reported that the number of homeless families in Washington, D.C., had grown by 500 percent over the previous twelve months. In New York City, the waiting list for public housing now contains two hundred thousand names. The waiting is eighteen years.

Source: Kozol, J. 1994. Distancing the homeless. In *The writer's presence: A pool of essays*, ed. D. McQuade and R. Atwan, 530–40. Boston: St. Martin's.

Instructions: Look at these quotes and decide whether they are acceptable. If they are not acceptable, correct them.

b. Kozol (1994, 530) argued that “The cause of homelessness is the lack of homes and of income with which to rent or acquire them.”

Kozol (1994, 530) argued that “The cause of homelessness...is the lack of homes and of income with which to rent or acquire them.”



...The cause of homelessness, they say with disarming logic, is the lack of homes and of income with which to rent or acquire them.... **One year later, the Washington Post reported that the number of homeless families in Washington, D.C., had grown by 500 percent over the previous twelve months.** In New York City, the waiting list for public housing now contains two hundred thousand names. The waiting is eighteen years.

Source: Kozol, J. 1994. Distancing the homeless. In *The writer's presence: A pool of essays*, ed. D. McQuade and R. Atwan, 530–40. Boston: St. Martin's.

Instructions: Look at these quotes and decide whether they are acceptable. If they are not acceptable, correct them.

c. Kozol (1994, 531) wrote that “...the Washington Post reported that the number of homeless families in Washington, D.C., had grown by five hundred percent over the previous 12 months.”

Kozol (1994, 531) wrote that “the Washington Post reported that the number of homeless families in Washington, D.C., had grown by **500** percent over the previous **twelve** months.”



Quotations: Inductive Analysis



- Allow students to discover how quotations are used and cited
- Use an accessible text and a graphic organizer with follow up questions
- Benefits:
 - Students get to analyze quotations in context
 - Appeals to different learning styles



Quotations: Inductive Analysis



Article information: (Author, Title, Date)		
Article Page #	In-text citation for the quote	Function – Why did the author use this quote?
47	(Smith, 1999, p. 324)	Contains statistical data
48	(Park & Choi, 2011, p. 20)	Wording gives reader a clear definition of “acid rain”

1. What is the format for citing a quotation? What pieces of information do you need?
2. How many quotations were in this article? What percentage of the article is made up of direct quotations?
3. Did the author quote phrases, sentences, or long passages?



Now for something more difficult!



- Paraphrasing and summarizing involve similar skills
- What do teachers often tell students who have to summarize or paraphrase a text?

“Put it into your own words.”

- Why is this guidance problematic for EFL students?



Challenges for EFL students



- Limits of lexicon
 - “I don’t know how else to say it.”
- Resisting the urge to overuse quotations
 - “The original author said it better than I could.”
- Which phrases and words can be kept?
 - “Do I have to replace every single word?!?”
- Others ideas?

+ Video



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xsJiACTuBV4>



Beyond “Put it in your own words.”



- Students should focus on IDEAS more than WORDS
- Paraphrasing is NOT just using synonyms and changing the grammar – it is capturing an idea:
 - A. California accounts for 78% of the citrus produce grown in the US.
 - B. In the United States of America, a vast majority of round, acidic fruit is farmed in the largest state on the West Coast.
- Is B. an acceptable paraphrase of A.?
- Efficient, fluent reading helps students summarize and paraphrase well
 - Do you read ‘word for word’ or do you read for ideas?



Cristin Boyd's tips for readers



- Identify the overall main idea; keep it in mind while reading
- Read at the paragraph level → what is the key idea?
- Don't try to read every word or translate
 - Note key words that are repeated throughout the text
 - Look up only key words
- Read quickly several times rather than once slowly
- Re-read to understand ideas, not words



7 Steps for 'Paraphrasing Well'



1. Read the passage repeatedly to identify/understand the main idea
2. List important key words and proper names
3. Restate the main idea (Cover the original!)
4. Don't worry about grammar or sentence structure
5. Compare your paraphrase with the original
6. Check the sentence construction with original
7. Proofread & edit your paraphrase

+ Activity: Paraphrase “on the run”

- Post original short text outside classroom
- ‘Runner’ reads the text outside
 - Limit time – no memorization!
- ‘Scribe’ is told meaning inside the classroom
- Collaboratively write a paraphrase
- Check paraphrase against original



+ Activity: Paraphrase “on the run”

■ Benefits

- Active
- Communicative/collaborative
- Oral communication = less worrying about grammar
- Ideas are key: no time to focus on single words

+ Activity: Read to retell



- Class reads a short text using the “reading for ideas” strategies
- Individual students are each assigned a passage in a text
- Short timed re-reading
- Put text away!
- Student orally paraphrases his/her section for a partner
- Partner paraphrases his/her section
- All have read text, so teacher or partner can prompt for missing details



Summarizing – finding main ideas



- Pre-read: try to identify the overall main idea of article using the title, thesis, section headers, and conclusion
- Read the article once to get the gist and to look for idea breaks
- Mark ideas breaks in text
- Fill in the sentence: *“The article is mainly about”*
- Read the article again with this overall main idea in mind
- Write down key words or proper names for each section/paragraph



Activity: Summary grids

Author, Title, Year, Pages:

Overall Main Idea:

Idea Breaks: Paragraph Numbers	Main idea	Essential Details	Key words (repeated words, phrases, proper nouns)



Activity: Summary grids



- Text selection is key – start with accessible texts
- Students can use grids individually
 - Improves notetaking skills
 - Paraphrasing practice is included!
- Can be used in a group task, too
 - All read whole text
 - Assign students individual “idea break” portions
 - Fill in chart and create a paraphrase according to previous method
 - Individuals share paraphrases with group and complete chart
 - Group summarizes the overall main idea



Putting it together!

Activity: Identify the function



Author, Title, Year, Pages:			
Number	Reference	Summary, Paraphrase, or Quote?	Function
1	The government's data for 1991 show that 43 percent of the nation's poor were found inside central cities (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1992: 1).	Paraphrase	Gives the primary source of the data.
2	Elliot Liebow argues (and we agree) that "the only things that separate people who have a home from those who do not are money and social support: Homeless people are homeless because they cannot afford a home, and their friends and family can't, or won't, help them out. I don't want to overlook the differences among us but I don't think they're as important as the samenesses in us" (quoted in Coughlin 1993: A8).	Quote	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Supports the argument by name-dropping and drawing on expert support.• Demonstrates conceptual alignment within a field.• Reveals that the authors did not read the original Liebow text.
3			
4			



Activity: Identify the function



- Students see evidence concepts in context
- Students analyze how the writer makes the evidence work for her/him
 - Various ways of using what “they say” to support the author’s claim
- Note: students may not need to write out every citation for the grid
 - Students can underline/highlight the text and number their annotations



To summarize:



- Plagiarism may mean different things to different people
 - If your organization has an academic integrity policy, explore it with your students
 - If not, consider creating a class policy so students understand expectations
 - Actively explore how cultural differences can influence interpretations of plagiarism



To summarize:



- Most EFL students don't plagiarize maliciously
 - Many students don't receive instruction on academic genre requirements
 - ELLs must understand:
 - Academic writing is conversation
 - Claims and evidence are interrelated; there should be balance
 - Voices must be kept separate – “I say” versus “They say”



To summarize:



- EFL students need assistance in mastering referencing and using evidence
 - Develop critical, idea-focused reading skills
 - Concentrate on capturing **ideas**
 - Don't get bogged down in grammar and individual words
 - Notetaking tasks and graphic organizers are great tools!
 - Incorporate a variety of techniques to explicitly address:
 - Quoting
 - Paraphrasing
 - Summarizing



Thank you!

