Plagiarism and How to Avoid It
A C A D E M I C   I N T E G R I T Y   H A N D O U T
Let's Not Have Any Misunderstandings

Plagiarism is copying or borrowing from the writing of another author without telling readers the work is not your own. Verbatim copying is the most severe and obvious type of plagiarism, but even borrowing the structure and main ideas of another author without crediting the original violates academic integrity and must be avoided.

The Original Text
from *Writing Academic English, Level 4*, Oshima, Hogue

Because the internet makes the world a smaller place, the value of having a common language is greatly increased. The question is—which language? Because the Internet grew up in the United States, the largest percentage of its content is now in English. Bill Gates, Microsoft's president, believes that English will remain valuable for a long time as a common language for international communication. He says, "Unless you read English passably well, you miss out on some of the Internet experience." Software that does crude translations already exists. It is useful if all you're trying to do is understand the general idea of something you see on your computer screen. However, if you are trying to negotiate a contract or discuss a scientific subject where details are important, machine translation is totally useless.

Version 1. Verbatim Plagiarism
Directly quotes from the original without acknowledging that the passages are lifted.

As the world gets smaller, we encounter people more often who speak "other" languages. Clearly, communication would benefit if everybody shared a language. But which language should that be? Because the Internet grew up in the United States, the largest percentage of its content is now in English. Probably, because of the head start it has as the primary language of the internet, English will remain valuable for a long time as a common language for international communication. Unless you read English passably well, you miss out on some of the Internet experience. There are some software programs that claim to translate pages of text from one language to another, but they are crude. They are useful if all you're trying to do is understand the general idea of something you see on your computer screen. However, if you are trying to negotiate a contract or discuss a scientific subject where details are important, a human translator is your best alternative.

Verbatim Plagiarism: Problems and Penalties

Except for short passages, the paragraph above is copied word-for-word (verbatim) from the original text. The author violates academic integrity (lies and cheats) by pretending the material is her own. The small changes she made and the material she added in between the stolen material are not sufficient to excuse her for her dishonesty.

Hers is a serious integrity violation which would certainly result in failure on the assignment that contained the plagiarism. If the essay is a major assignment, she might even fail the course. If the essay is a final exam or a term paper, the penalties might include suspension or expulsion from the college.

Version 2. Copying Selected Phrases and Passages
Directly but briefly quotes the original without acknowledging that the passages are lifted.

The world is getting smaller and we need a common language. Just <u>because the internet makes the world a smaller place</u>, we don't necessarily understand everybody we meet. A common language would solve the problem. <u>The question is—which language?</u> Because the Internet was invented and <u>grew up in the United States</u>, most of what we read on the world wide web is in English. I believe English <u>will remain valuable</u> for many years to come as the <u>common language for international communication</u>. In fact, anybody who doesn't <u>read English passably well</u>, will probably <u>miss out on some of the Internet experience</u>. There is already software on the market that <u>does crude translations</u>. It works well enough if <u>all you're trying to do is understand the general idea</u> of a page of someone's website. On the other hand, if you need <u>to negotiate a contract or discuss a scientific subject where details are important</u>, it's not as good as a human translator.

Verbatim Plagiarism: Problems and Penalties

The difference between version 1 and version 2 is only a matter of degrees. Despite paraphrasing material around the copied phrases and passages, the student author has deliberately stolen material from the original text without any attempt to acknowledge her debt to the original author.

Each bit of underlined text is a small example of plagiarism. Even the overall structure of the paragraph and its argument is owed to the original and should be cited. In addition. the brief section that should be attributed to Bill Gates is a double violation. Those phrases should be identified as Gates's, and to have come from Writing Academic English.

This is a serious violation of academic integrity, the penalties for which could be just as severe as for version 1.

How to Avoid Plagiarism
Proper citation and acknowledgement make your "borrowing" legal

As we international students are very aware, the world gets smaller all the time, but it doesn't necessarily get easier to understand. Before we can begin to study actual subject matter in our adopted country, we must first become reasonably fluent in the language of the textbooks.

For the internet, the most common language is English, partly because "the internet grew up in the United States," **as Alice Oshima and Ann Hogue tell us in *Writing Academic English*.** For that and other reasons, most of what we find on the web is in English. But does that mean it will necessarily always be so?

Bill Gates thinks so. Microsoft's president believes that "English will remain valuable for a long time as a common language for international communication." **He says**, "Unless you read English passably well, you miss out on some of the Internet experience."

Anyone who has ever tried Babelfish or other online software translation programs knows how crude these early programs are and how unsatisfactory are the results. At best, they provide a rough guide to the general ideas on a page, but those are certainly not trustworthy enough to use for business purposes. Until language software becomes much more sophisticated, the only really good translation source is a person who knows both languages.