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ABSTRACT: *The dramatic increase in the number of overseas students studying in the UK and other western countries has required academics to re-evaluate many aspects of their own, and their institutions practice. This paper considers differing cultural attitudes and perceptions among overseas students towards plagiarism, and the implications this may have for postgraduate education in the UK. Based on focus groups, questionnaires and informal discussions, we report the views and perceptions of plagiarism among students on two postgraduate management courses, both of which had a high constituency of overseas students. We show that plagiarist practices are often the outcome of many diverse, complex and culturally situated influences, and consider the appreciation of these differing cultural assumptions to be fundamental in pre-emptively responding to issues of plagiarism among overseas students.*

1.   INTRODUCTION

The issue of academic integrity within higher education has received considerable attention in the literature over recent years (Harris, 2001; Carroll & Appleton, 2001; Lathrop, 2000; Dryden, 1999; Myers, 1998; Pennycook, 1996; Scollon, 1995; Howard, 1995, 1993; Deckert, 1993; Sherman, 1992; Kolich, 1983). Much of this literature, coupled with the considerable anecdotal evidence amongst colleagues within our own and other universities, suggests that plagiarism is on the increase. Within the UK, this has resulted in a Plagiarism Advice Bureau being established in September 2002, funded by the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC). This Bureau provides advice to academics and students alike regarding the prevention and detection of plagiarism; links to on-line resources and among other facilities, an electronic detection service free to registered UK higher education institutions. Indeed, the issue of plagiarism has even received considerable attention in the UK press (Mann, 2003; Mooney, 2003). For example, Mooney (2003) purports that the rise in the number of cases of plagiarism can be attributed to the move away from relying solely on formal examinations to now relying on essay, project and dissertation type assessments. He claims the constant pressure to perform that arises from these frequent assessments, and the incessant workload results in "students trying to cut corners and pass off the work of other people as their own."

In the academic literature there have been a plethora of articles that seek to identify the extent of plagiarism and understand why students undertake plagiarist practices. In relation to the extent, O'Connor (2003) describes one recent Australian study that spanned twenty subjects and six universities that was conducted by Caval in 2002 on behalf of the Victoria Vice Chancellors Committee. This saw 1925 essays being submitted into Turnitin, an electronic detection service that compares electronic work submitted with the 2.6 billion publicly available pages on the internet, and to all the essays previously submitted to Turnitin for checking. This study found that 14% of essays "contained unacceptable levels of unattributed materials." Further, unacceptable levels of plagiarism were found to be present in all six universities and in over 70% of the subjects. The report also highlighted that what was detected electronically is just the tip of the iceberg, as Turnitin did not cover most books, journals and paper mills etc (O'Connor,2003).

In relation to the literature that has considered why students plagiarise, Carroll (2002) has suggested that most students are unsure what plagiarism is. She argues that this lack of understanding of what is and what is not plagiarism contributes to students plagiarising unintentionally. Furthermore, Angelil-Carter (2000) claim that there is also a lack of clarity across a university about what constitutes plagiarism and a discrepancy in the way plagiarism is detected and enforced (Biggs, 1994; Ryan, 2000; Scollon, 1995). Others have highlighted the growing staff student ratio as being implicated in the rise in the number of cases of plagiarism. They suggest this results in staff having less time to deal with students as individuals and hence less opportunity to talk through issues regarding writing practices (Angelova & Riazantseva, 1999; O'Donoghue, 1996). Carroll (2002) also argues that the move from examination to coursework and project based assessment has resulted in not just over assessment, but students experiencing continual pressure to attain high marks (Carroll, 2000). Others suggest that poor time management by students, or the institutions setting simultaneous deadlines is a major contributing factor (Errey, 2002). Some commentators have noted that contributing to these time pressures is the increased number of students undertaking part-time work in order to help finance their studies, which can contribute to less study time, a weaker understanding of a subject, and less time to prepare work (Bamford et al., 2002). Finally, and perhaps as a consequence of many of the above, when students are dissatisfied with the course, then their interest and work rate reduces which may contribute to plagiaristic activities.

Though much of this literature has shed considerable light on why students plagiarise, it is rooted in western contexts, and such does not specifically address the theme of this paper – examining the differing cultural attitudes and understandings of plagiarism amongst overseas postgraduate students undertaking management related courses. This is perhaps surprising when most western countries, especially those whose national language is English, have witnessed a prolific increase in the numbers of overseas students. In relation to the UK, there has been a dramatic rise in overseas students studying at British Universities. In 1999 the Prime Minister launched an initiative to encourage more international students to study at British Universities. The initiative promoted UK education overseas, streamlined visa applications, made it easier for students to work in UK and increased the number of scholarships available.[1] The number of full-time overseas students has risen from 202,000 in 1990 to 313,000 in 2000.[2] A cynical reading of this has been a drive to provide a profitable income stream in an already considerably under funded government sector. Regardless of the politics of this strategy, it has resulted in considerable growth in the number of overseas students studying in the UK, and with it, it appears, at least anecdotally, an increase in the number of cases of plagiarism, and certainly expressed concerns by students about how to reference, how to argue, how to make use of library sources etc. Indeed, this was the stimulus for our research.

In relation to understanding why students from differing cultural backgrounds plagiarise, when studying abroad, several authors have explained that for many students from the east, the approach to learning in the west is contrary to their experiences in their own country. For example, in China and other Asian countries, typically learning and assessment focuses on the content of a textbook for an assessment. A consequence of this is that when they enter western higher education, it is especially difficult for students to be critical about an author and to state their own personal opinions and views. As Pennycook (1996) argues, for Chinese students particularly, using another author's words is a form of respect and it is hard for these students to change this cultural concept. Other commentators have highlighted how when English is a student's second or third language, then the writing process takes considerable longer than they are used to in their own countries and as a result they encounter more time pressures. Furthermore, some commentators have found that overseas students may feel that they cannot improve upon what is already written and

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[1] Churches Commission for International Students(CCIS) Annual Paper 2000-2002
[2] Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) quoted in CCIS Annual Paper 2000-2002

prefer to use the original text rather than their own (Angelova & Riazantseva, 1999; Biggs, 1994; Fox, 1994). A further explanation for why some overseas students may plagiarise stems form their lack of experience in essay writing, as many eastern countries still rely exclusively on examinations. Bridging this gap of experience is seen to contribute to both intentional and unintentional plagiarism (Ashworth et al, 1997; Carroll & Appleton, 2001). Fear of failure generally, and especially when students are funded by their family (often extended) or a particular company, is provided as a further explanation, as this places considerable pressure on the student to do well. For Chinese students particularly, they may be the 'chosen' one from the wider family to study abroad (O'Donoghue, 1996; also see Bond, 1986), and the fear of bringing shame on one's family, especially among students who lack confidence in their own abilities may result in plagiarising work appearing as an option to ensure that they will not fail (O'Donoghue, 1996).

Our research will extend this literature by examining the different cultural understandings that students from differing nationalities on two in a UK management related postgraduate courses have of plagiarism, as the basis for considering the implications this may raise for postgraduate education, and specifically within the management domain. Our paper is structured as follows. The following section will outline the methodology that underpinned this study. Section three will review the students' past practices, perceptions and judgements about different aspects of academic integrity. Following this we will focus the issues arising from our empirical work. The final section will present some brief conclusions and implications.

2.   METHODOLOGY

Our research was conducted primarily with a cohort of MSc students studying on two different postgraduate programmes at Lancaster University Management School, one being a specialist masters program pertaining the interrelationship between technology and organisations, and the other a general management course. We sought to understand the students past practice and judgements on various manifestations of academic malpractice. The first programme, an MSc in Information Technology, Management and Organisational Change (ITMOC), comprised of 46 students with a diverse range of nationalities, including students from India, Pakistan, China, Indonesia, Thailand, Greece, France, Ukraine, Germany, Brazil, Iceland, Columbia and of course the United Kingdom. The general

management programme, the MSc Management, comprised of approximately 80 students with the same diversity of backgrounds. Importantly, though this research was conducted after they had been in the UK for about 5 months, our questions focussed exclusively on their experiences in their own country.

As Table (1) indicates, we conducted both focus group interviews and distributed questionnaires to the MSc ITMOC students, while with the MSc Management students we primarily distributed questionnaires. Supplementing this has been considerable informal discussion with ITMOC students by both authors as will be explained below.

MSc Course	Method	Number on Course	Number of responses / interviews
ITMOC	Questionnaires	46	46
	Focus Groups		22
Management	Questionnaires	80	57
	Focus Groups		1

Table (1) Number of Responses to Questionnaires & Interviews

Our questionnaire largely replicated a well-known survey developed by Donald McCabe, Professor of Organization Management at Rutgers University and former president of The Centre for Academic Integrity[3]. We merely included an extra section and modified some of the terminology to make it more comprehensible for those not from the USA. For both courses, as Table (1), highlights, we had an extremely high response rate to the questionnaire. This was primarily due to the authors handing the questionnaires out during a scheduled core lecture session. We also explained the importance of them completing the questionnaire honestly. One of the authors made himself available for questions, while the other stood by the exit to collect them, making it normatively difficult to leave the room without handing a questionnaire in. For the ITMOC students, we also left a copy for those students that were not at the lecture in their pigeonholes, and provided a box in their base room for them to deposit it. The questionnaires were anonymous, though when there was only one person from a particular country, this obviously reduced the anonymity.

The questionnaire data was inputted into a spreadsheet, we then analysed the resulting tables and graphs, identifying differences between the national groupings, areas that were high, and any inconsistencies. This preliminary analysis provided us with significant

insights into the variations of academic malpractice within and between the different groups that we then pursued in detail in the focus group discussions.

The focus group discussions were highly successful in relation to the ITMOC programme. In part this could be attributed to there being quite a small core of teaching staff that we still operate tutorial groups, and as a consequence, means we tend to know the students very well, and have generated a considerable degree of trust with them. We believe that this communal ethos assisted in encouraging a significant number of students to attend the focus groups. The focus group interviews lasted approximately between 45 and 60 minutes each, and were organised on the basis of national/ regional origin. They were tape-recorded and then the notes were transcribed afterwards. This resulted in five groupings, a UK Group, a Chinese group, an Asian (other) group, a Greek group, and a group from the rest of the world. As with the questionnaires, our focus group discussion also sought to understand the students' experiences prior to coming to Lancaster, though the conversation inevitably became referential to their experiences of plagiarism since arriving in the UK. The interview transcripts were then coded and run through Nudist, Sage's qualitative data analysis software. With regards to the MSc Management programme, we organised the focus groups on similar lines. However, unfortunately, only one student, from China, attended any of the focus groups, and thus for this course our data has to rely on that attained in the questionnaires. Unlike the ITMOC programme, neither of the authors has any contact with this postgraduate programme in either a teaching or an administrative capacity, which we believe could have been partly responsible for the negligible turnout for this optional session (coupled with student apathy).

The questionnaires and focus groups were supplemented by considerable discussion with students during a study skills module the authors convened and taught together, as well as at the Course Directors weekly meeting. Though discussions undertaken in such circumstances were not recorded systematically, it did help us understand the differing cultural attitudes to plagiarism within the programme prior to, during and after the data collection.

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[3] The Center for Academic Integrity · Box 90434 · Duke University · Durham, North Carolina 27708, USA.

3. STUDENT'S ATTITUDES TO ISSUES OF ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

This section will introduce the issues that emerged in the focus groups and questionnaires. The first section outlines the issues that arose with regards to plagiarism and coursework. Section two considers their views with regards to cheating in exams. The final section examines the pressures that some students encountered to gain good marks.

3.1 Academic Integrity in Coursework

How much is plagiarism?

A limited degree of plagiarism in coursework was seen to be acceptable by all the British students interviewed. They suggested that it was generally acceptable to at least plagiarise what they termed "very general and background information" (such as company information or general facts and figures). Other students viewed copying some degree of text that they had already thought of themselves, but was written more eloquently than they felt they were able to do themselves as being acceptable. In this sense it was about English proficiency, rather than content, even though they themselves had English as their first language.

		Asian	Chinese	Greek	UK
Action	**Once or more**	20%	40%	21%	19%
	Never	80%	60%	79%	81%
Judgement	**Not or trivial cheating**	40%	30%	7%	25%
	Somewhat or very serious	60%	70%	93%	75%

Table 2 Copying material, almost word for word, from any source and turning it in as your own work

When asked what they considered substantial plagiarism in the context of a 3000 word essay, the British students responses ranged from the majority viewing it as being more than two sentences, for another a whole paragraph, while one student said he would not try to quantify it, but more generally could be considered substantial *"at the point when the text they were copying began controlling what they were writing."* However, several other British students responded vehemently to this by stating that if students were consciously copying extensive amounts of material, this was substantial plagiarism. Table 2 highlights the mixed response UK students provided in relation to whether they had, or considered

copying material word for word from any source and turning it in as their own to be serious or not. It indicates that 19% of UK students admitted to doing this once or more, while 25% of UK students saw this as not being cheating or at least being trivial. When asked if copying material was done by combining one or two sentences (patching) from the work of different authors the student said this was a typical approach they adopted when plagiarising coursework.

In relation to non-UK students, surprisingly most students explained that they had little experience of coursework in their undergraduate education and thus were not able to comment extensively on the issue of plagiarism in coursework. Typically, the only form of coursework they had completed were group project papers or business papers. As one Greek student stated, *"there is no notion of submitting academic work in Greece, just business plans really."* In China, it was estimated that they only write one essay during their undergraduate education

Though all of the national groups were required to reference in these different forms of coursework, they claimed it was not as rigorous as it is in the UK. They explained that this was due to most courses only requiring students to consult one textbook, and consequently referencing was not required. Due to this lack of experience in undertaking coursework in Greece, they naturally started to refer to their experiences since arriving in the UK. One Greek student suggested that copying a few words as long as they were not copying a concept or an idea was acceptable. Another Greek student suggested that everyone plagiarises to some degree and as such the concept of plagiarism needs to be reassessed. He viewed it as being a matter of degree, claiming that it was only important when it became significant. Again, as with the UK students the typical approach was to combine many different sources.

In relation to the non UK students responses to the questionnaire, due to most of them either not having done coursework, or at best only having completed one or two non-essay based pieces, it is more revealing to look at how serious they **judge** cheating in coursework to be rather than their previous practices (**action**). As Table 2 indicates, 40% of Asian and 30% of Chinese students did not judge copying material word for word as being serious.

		Asian	Chinese	Greek	UK
Action	**Once or more**	75%	56%	57%	56%
	Never	25%	44%	43%	44%
Judgement	**Not or trivial cheating**	100%	60%	64%	63%
	Somewhat or very serious	0%	40%	36%	38%

Table 3 Copying a few sentences of material without referencing them.

Table 3 highlights that all the different student groups judged copying a few sentences word for word without referencing it as being not or trivial cheating. In relation to previous practice, 56% of UK students admitted to having done this once or more, while 63% of UK students judged this as being trivial or not cheating. This supports the view that a small amount of plagiarism is considered acceptable. In relation to the judgement of non-UK students, 100% of Asian students viewed this as not being cheating or only being trivial cheating, while for the other groups approximately two thirds of the students saw copying a few sentences of material without referencing them as being not cheating or trivial. This indicates that across all cultures, not only that copying several sentences is likely to be endemic in coursework submissions, but also that it is not seen as being serious or unacceptable practice by students regardless of cultural background.

Unintentional plagiarism in coursework

Several UK students highlighted how plagiarism is often unintentional as a consequence of the way they make notes while researching their essays. They explained that in the process of researching and drafting an essay, they collect numerous electronic and non-electronic references, keep several windows open at one moment in time, and copy and paste between them. They recognised that this could be dangerous in terms of not clearly identifying the work of others, losing track of the different sources, or alternatively, very tempting in terms of passing it off as their own work. One UK student suggested that not fully referencing the patchwork could come about due to *time constraints* and / or the poor time management of projects. He suggested that time is an issue saying that *"most of the cases arise when students are short of time, and just do not have time to think about it."* In this sense UK students viewed some form of plagiarism as being unintentional. Due to the limited coursework that non-UK students engaged in during their undergraduate education, this was not an issue at their previous university, though based on their experiences of coursework since arriving in Lancaster, several students echoed many of these points.

Learning and plagiarism

One surprising view that emerged amongst both the UK and Greek student focus groups was that plagiarism is perceived as being inextricable interlinked with student learning and development. For example a UK student commented that when students plagiarise work (well), it often still requires an understanding of the topic, and thus exhibits a degree of learning, saying that, *"If you take all the sentences / paragraphs from other authors – then you have to do the work to put it together – you have learned and need a certain understanding of the topic, it is not just blatant copying."* At a subsequent focus group, several Greek students supported this view, claiming that being able to generate an argument in a coursework assessment, even if some of it was plagiarised from different sources (patching), this demonstrated a good degree of learning.

Ability and plagiarism

The issue of academic ability or competency in English and / or the subject matter was seen to be linked to understanding why some students plagiarise. Based on their insights gained since arriving in Lancaster, several Greek students suggested that due to English not being the first language of many students, *"taking a bit here and there helps with getting meaning across. Paraphrasing if you are not a native speaker is difficult."* Others suggested that there are only so many ways that issues could be written, and often if an author had written something clearly and you agreed with it, then there was nothing wrong with copying this. As one Greek student commented, *"All the ways for saying something have already been said, and thus we have to use the same words. But this is about words and not concepts."*

Collaboration and coursework

In relation to the essay writing practice of students (Table 4), between 50 – 75 % of the non-UK students *judged* receiving unpermitted help from fellow students to be trivial, while 31% of UK students admitted to receiving unpermitted help with a coursework assignment.

		Asian	Chinese	Greek	UK
Action	**Once or more**	25%	40%	50%	31%
	Never	75%	60%	50%	69%
Judgement	**Not or trivial cheating**	75%	50%	50%	38%
	Somewhat or very serious	25%	50%	50%	63%

Table 4 Receiving substantial, unpermitted help on an assignment.

Table 5 highlights how 6% of UK students admitted to providing a coursework paper for another student. Interestingly, the UK students judged writing a paper for another student as being more trivial than their practice suggested. However, this was much lower (13%) than any of the other national groups.

		Asian	Chinese	Greek	UK
Action	**Once or more**	60%	40%	36%	6%
	Never	40%	60%	64%	94%
Judgement	**Not or trivial cheating**	80%	40%	29%	13%
	Somewhat or very serious	20%	60%	71%	88%

Table 5 Writing or providing a paper for another student.

Furthermore, Table 5 suggests that 80% of Asian students do consider writing a paper for another student to be trivial or not cheating, while the same applies for 40% of Chinese students and 29% of Greek students. This highlights how non-UK students, to varying extents, consider unpermitted collaboration with others to be an acceptable practice and thus individuality does not appear to be as highly regarded by non-UK students.

3.2   Academic Integrity in Examinations

This section considers the issues raised by students with regards to academic integrity during exams. Due to the limited experience of coursework non-UK students have in their own country, this is perhaps more indicative of their practices surrounding academic integrity rather than relying on their judgements in relation to coursework.

Detecting and enforcing exam malpractice
Surprisingly, in all the cultural groups other than the British, the detection of cheating in exams and the enforcement of any institutional penalties were not thought to be strong. In

essence, most students saw the chances of being caught cheating in an exam as being quite low due to the low student/invigilator ratio among non-UK students. For example, in India, exams were explained to be conducted in halls with a thousand or more other students and only a few invigilators, and as such students were confident they would not get caught cheating. He thought the only time invigilators would intervene was if cheating during exams became disruptive noting, *"unless it is really serious then nothing will be done."* In contrast, a Pakistani student recalled the example of, *"two top students who got caught cheating during an exam being thrown out of the institute for one year."* She had heard of people being excluded permanently. However, with only 60% of Asian students viewing the penalties in their institutions as being severe or very severe, while only 40% saw the chances of getting caught as being high or very high, these examples seemed the exception rather than the rule.

	Asian	Chinese	Greek	UK
Severity of penalties for cheating at your institution?	60%	90%	79%	80%
Chances of getting caught cheating at your institution?	40%	50%	36%	60%

Table 6 Those students that rate the severity of penalties and changes of getting caught as high or very high?

Chinese students suggested that rules in their institutions were rigorously enforced to the extent that if someone commits exam malpractice they will be excluded from the university within twenty-four hours. However, as with the Asian students, it was explained that catching someone cheating was rare due to the high student/ invigilator ratio. The questionnaire data reinforces this view. Table 6 indicates that 90% of Chinese students saw the penalties as being severe in Chinese universities (the highest rate), while only 50% thought there was a high or very high chance of getting caught.

The Greek students also suggested that due to the high student / invigilator ratio, cheating in exams typically went undetected. None of the Greek students could recall an instance when someone had been caught cheating in an exam. This was evidenced in 36% of respondents thought that the chances of getting caught cheating were high or very high, even though 80% viewed the penalties as being severe. They all mentioned that looking at other people's scripts, taking notes into exams and even swapping exam scripts during exams was commonplace in Greece, and indeed admitted collectively during the focus

group interview that almost 100% of Greek students had cheated once or more. As such, cheating was said to be an acceptable practice among Greek students.

In contrast, UK students saw cheating in an exam as being very serious, with 80% of UK students viewing the penalties as being serious or very serious in UK institutions, while 60% of UK students viewing their chances of getting caught cheating as being high or very high. Several UK students mentioned that as exams typically have a higher weighting than coursework, then *"it is much more of a risk."* Furthermore, several UK students knew of a student that had been caught cheating in an exam and the UK institution had taken serious action against the student.

Exams as Memory Tests

In all the countries represented other than the UK, most students viewed exams as purely memory tests. For example an Indian student mentioned that in his undergraduate examinations, more marks were awarded when students regurgitated lecture notes or the course textbook verbatim rather than if they paraphrased them. Indeed, he said that the exam questions *"will ask us to repeat definitions word for word from the textbook."* He went on to explain that they are not required to reference quotes or definitions in exams as it is assumed that it derives directly from the lecture notes or the textbook. Similarly, the Chinese students explained that there was one book for each course and exams were designed so they allowed students to demonstrate how well they have memorised the book. Furthermore, often the books were considered to be out of date and as a consequence memorising the material in the book was thought to be a futile activity. For example, one Chinese student suggested *"sometimes it is not worth putting much effort when we just want to get the credit for the course – it is not important."*

The Greek students were particularly animated with regards to the futility of the examination processes. Greek students explained that often during their undergraduate education, they were required to memorise many pages of text word for word, or memorise fifty different mathematical formulae. They all agreed that this was ridiculous, as one Greek student explained, *"the point is that it is about knowing how to use them not memorise them."* Indeed, he argued that due to the emphasis on memorising material, all Greek students were forced into a position were they "had to cheat." Another student was even more vehement in his opposition to the Greek assessment methods noting *"We did not*

believe in the system of grading due to the requirement to memorise 50 mathematical formulae, pages of poetry in ancient Greek and 600 pages of a text book. It was stupid"

One particular Greek student explained that even though he had studied and revised very hard for exams, he was not confident that he would pass or do well due to the nature of the examinations as he could easily forget something. It was on this basis that he felt cheating was justified.

		Asian	Chinese	Greek	UK
Action	**Once or more**	0%	30%	43%	0%
	Never	100%	70%	57%	100%
Judgement	**Not or trivial cheating**	20%	30%	21%	0%
	Somewhat or very serious	80%	70%	79%	100%

Table 7 Using unpermitted crib notes (or cheat sheet) during a test/exam

Table 7 highlights the extent to which students have used unpermitted crib notes in an exam. It also reinforces the qualitative views represented by students with regards to exams being viewed as being pointless memory tests. It highlights how 43% of Greek students admitted to using unpermitted crib notes during an exam, 30% of Chinese students admitted to this, while non of the UK and Asian students admitted to using them in an exam. With regards to none of the Asian students having used unpermitted crib notes, one student mentioned that they did not take crib notes into an exam, as that *"would be getting caught red-handed."*

Reciprocity and exams

The issue of unpermitted collaboration during examinations was seen by all national groupings, other than the UK, to not only to have taken place in their previous institution, but also to be judged by many as not being serious. The Asian and Chinese students all said they knew it occurred in different forms, but did not respond readily when being interviewed. The most forthcoming national group once more were the Greeks, and perhaps as a consequence, once again surprised us with their comments. Greek students mentioned that they would frequently provide unpermitted help to each other during exams, as was graphically explained by one Greek student, *"I have submitted exam papers for others, swapped exam papers while writing it. It is perfectly logical as we do not care if the people are learning anything or not, they don't care they just want to pass. I just made one or two*

random errors so they did not get the same mark." As long as those cheating were not getting as high marks as them, they did not feel too strongly as they viewed malpractice as being inevitable.

		Asian	Chinese	Greek	UK
Action	**Once or more**	80%	20%	36%	0%
	Never	20%	80%	64%	100%
Judgement	**Not or trivial cheating**	80%	30%	21%	6%
	Somewhat or very serious	20%	70%	79%	94%

Table 8 Copying from another student during a test with his or her knowledge.

Indeed, 80% of Asian students admitted to copying from another student with their knowledge, and significantly, 80% of this is judged to be trivial or not cheating. Table 8 also highlights that 36% of Greek students admitted they have copied from another student once or more with their knowledge, even though 79% of them thought it was somewhat or very serious. However Table 9 casts a different light on the issue of unpermitted collaboration with others during an exam. In relation to the Asian group, 80% admitted to helping someone else cheat once or more, which though is high, is consistent with the responses summarised in Table 8. However, double the number of both Chinese and Greek students admitted to helping someone else cheat once or more than admitted to copying from another student, even though 50% of them judged it to be a serious form of cheating. This also questions whether the responses in Table 8 may in fact be higher.

		Asian	Chinese	Greek	UK
Action	**Once or more**	80%	40%	79%	0%
	Never	20%	60%	21%	100%
Judgement	**Not or trivial cheating**	60%	50%	50%	6%
	Somewhat or very serious	40%	50%	50%	94%

Table 9 Helping someone else cheat on a test/exam

This collaboration in terms of copying from someone else and helping others cheat in an exam was partly explained during the focus groups by non-UK students to be due in part to the exam not being viewed as being a meaningful exercise, but was also attributed to cultural norms of reciprocity. In essence student helped others so they could later call for help on a subsequent assessments, as a Greek student explained, *"in general if you help, you will get help when you need it."* Indeed, the main concern and fear among Greek and

Asian students was not getting caught, but that those that copied did not get as high a mark as the person they copied it from. For example, one Thai student mentioned, *"there is nothing wrong with helping friends, as long as they do not get as high a mark."* A Greek student also admitted to making one or two deliberate mistakes to ensure they did not get a higher mark. Both the questionnaire and focus group data indicated that collaboration of any form in exams was viewed as being taboo by UK students.

Trust and exams

One of the most shocking insights that emerged from the empirical research arose in the Greek focus group. One Greek student suggested that a further condition that forced them to cheat derived from their lack of trust in Greek academics to treat all students equally, saying *"sometimes I cheat because you know other people do so, other people do so with the professors knowledge, sometimes the professor gives the exam paper to students before the exam. Students have certain connections with professors. Everybody knows that this happens."* All twelve Greek students who attended the focus groups agreed with this. Another Greek student continued this theme and provided further insight saying, *"When you see that people are taking degrees without doing anything – the youths of political parties have a say in the promotion of professors. They tell professors who they should pass. It leaves people thinking why should I bother to study and memorise things that I do not need afterwards when these things are going on around you. Why should I try not to cheat when even the professors are cheating behind my back? The competition was unfair from the start, in my institution there were 600 and about 50 of them took a degree without even opening a book."* When this was asked of other national groups they said this was not the case, other than in the case of perhaps a professors favourite student, or a family connection etc. In general they trusted the equity of their professors' marking.

Motivations for Cheating

Marks were seen by all respondents, but specifically the Asian and Chinese students to be the main pressure behind cheating. All Asian and Chinese students concurred that competition for many was fierce at their previous institutions. In China, though high marks were seen as important so as to undertake an overseas postgraduate programme, they were also important in terms of finding a good job. Chinese students suggested that it was due to this that students felt they may need to cheat, as one Chinese student mentioned, *"marks mean everything when students have no work experience. Marks are the only thing that*

companies judge them on." Asian students reported similar views. Greek students also saw marks as being vital for providing employment opportunities and in gaining places on overseas postgraduate courses. One Greek student explained that they are allowed to repeat a year and resist an exam as many times as they wish, which means that many Greek students write on a paper *"don't mark it if it does not get 8 or higher,"* indicating the importance for some in gaining a high mark. For those that would not cheat, they felt they had to work even harder to get higher legitimate marks than those students who were cheating.

	Asian	Chinese	Greek	UK
from parents or other family	40%	50%	29%	29%
to get into a graduate program	40%	60%	62%	64%

Table 10 Pressures that motivate students to get good grades

Table 10 supports these views, highlighting that 60% of Chinese, 62% of Greek and 64% of UK students saw getting good grades in order to undertake postgraduate study as being fairly or very important. When asked about family pressure to get high marks, this was seen to be especially significant among the Asian and Chinese students, where 40% of Asian students and 50% of Chinese students saw family pressures as being fairly or very important.

4. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Many overseas students coming to the UK clearly have very different understandings and experiences of higher education to domestic students. This section will examine some key themes pertaining to cultural difference, as a basis to developing a more detailed and culturally sensitive understanding of plagiarism among overseas students, and the implications this may raise. However, we suggest that many of the issues raised will be generalisable to other western higher education contexts.

4.1 Memorisation and the Borrowing of Words

As was highlighted in the previous section, it is clear that many overseas students, arriving at UK universities are more familiar with a 'textbook based' teaching approach. In Asian and Greek universities, lectures systematically cover the material in the textbook and the

exam requires the student to demonstrate that they can recall all relevant material from the textbook and the lecture notes—often verbatim. The level of interpretation, evaluation and commentary expected from the student is often minimal or non-existent. Through his research on learning and plagiarism in China, Pennycook (1996) has argued that this form of learning should not be frowned upon, but instead viewed as different, and deeply embedded in cultural and linguistic practices. He argues that the Chinese view of language is quite different to ours: "In this [view of language] primacy is accorded to language and not to the 'real' world, notions such as metaphor, which suggests that some word 'stands for' something else, become quite different because reality is in the language and not in the world" (p.221). Thus altering the exact expression of something *is* altering the reality of the world itself. Also capturing the exact expression—through meticulous memorisation—is capturing the reality as such. Though our data did not represent this point as eloquently as Pennycook, several Chinese students mentioned that memorising texts has been the focus of their learning experience throughout all levels of education. Once a western representational view of language is set aside one can start to understand the importance that memorisation and the use of exact expressions plays in this particular way of understanding and knowing the world.

Indeed, though we cannot extrapolate this culturally embedded analysis to the students from the rest of the world, students from the rest of Asia, and Greece reinforced this emphasis on memorisation, and the assumed authority of the author. The underlying explanation for this is the teacher is taken to be the authority and therefore the only one authorised to have an interpretation. It is important that we understand this mode of teaching within the context of Pennycook's comments above, not as inferior but as different to the UK.

When faced with education in the UK, in contrast to their history of relying on one textbook, we expect students—especially at postgraduate level—to be able to read material from multiple sources and distil from it the important points, arguments and issues. We expect them to give a critical account of the literature and to be able to formulate their own position, with regard to the material, which they must be able to justify. Valid justifications need to provide clear evidence of critical evaluations and reference to appropriate sources. We often expect them to present and justify these views openly through discussion and questioning in a group or lecture context.

It is clear that in this situation the typical foreign student will often find himself or herself in a context where they have a huge deficit of skills, which is likely to deepen as the expectations and workload increases as the course progresses. Indeed, when our discussions drifted onto their experiences since arriving in Lancaster, coupled with the many conversations prior to and subsequent to this research, students suggested that they panicked at the prospect of having to recall all of the references or reading list in their assessment. Further, many students lack the confidence to express and defend their own views and instead fall back on the supposed authority of the text, and string together arguments from a diversity of texts on the reading list without critical evaluation of the issue or reference to appropriate sources. Though this is an intentional act, it is fuelled by the mismatch of skills required in different educational contexts. It is vital to address these culturally laden points in formulating policies surrounding plagiarism in higher education institutions. This implies there is a need for additional education about how to formulate arguments, how to tackle reading lists, and indeed substantial practice in both prior to their first assessment.

4.2   Language, Writing Practices and Academic Malpractice

As has been previously introduced, coming from an institution that has a textbook based teaching model and assessments based on a 'recall' type examination to one where assessments typically take the form of a critical review of a topic must be very daunting indeed. If you add to this the issue of language, not just ordinary linguistic competence, but the ability to master *disciplinary academic language*, then one can see that such a task would tend to overwhelm the foreign student. Add to this other things such as family pressures and financial pressures as well as a history of success in a different teaching approach, then it is easy to image the sort of pressure and anxiety that many students feel.

In order to deal with this anxiety they often turn to a number of writing practices that may be more or less acceptable to us (Howard, 1993). One typical form draws on their experiences of the past, namely repeating the words of others, though not in exactly the same form. Instead of merely submitting to the authority of one author, they engage in subsuming the words of multiple authors. This is referred to as *pachwriting*. Howard (1993) defines patchwriting as "copying from a source text and then deleting some words,

altering grammatical structures, or plugging in one-for-one synonym-substitutes" (p. 213). She argues that writers often turn to patchwriting when they are unsure of their understanding of the material or lack confidence in the use of a particular language (such as academic language and phraseology). They understand how important it is to 'speak' like the teachers and the people they read to be accepted into the community. Is this type of writing plagiarism? Howard argues, following Hull and Rose (1989) that this form of writing is a legitimate attempt to "interact with the text, relate it to your own experiences, derive your own meaning from it" (p. 150). Something most writers do in unfamiliar contexts. It is indeed how we all learn by mimicking or copying others considered being exemplary in wither an academic discipline or in terms of their linguistic competence. However, in the case of many authors, instead of merely regurgitating one exemplary figure as they have done successfully in the own country, they patch together the work of multiple authors. Patchwriting, as a response to a lack of familiarity of an academic discipline applies to students whose first language is English, yet must be seen as being more extensive among non-UK students due to their lesser language proficiency. It is not just students that feel they need to 'borrow words,' as a Chinese chemist highlights (Myers, 1998): "Many scientists are not good at English. In order to publish their articles in foreign journals they have to translate their journals from Chinese to English. So they usually borrow some words from foreign articles. I don't know if this is a kind of plagiarism."

One could also argue that in a 'cut and paste' style of writing a 'beautiful patchwork' may indeed be something to be valued. It seems incorrect to assume that such patchwriting does not imply a serious attempt to make sense of the material, as was raised by several Greek and UK students, one UK students commented: *If you take all the sentences / paragraphs from other authors – then you have to do the work to put it together – you have learned and need a certain understanding of the topic, it is not just blatant copying."* Should we not consider patchwriting as a legitimate pedagogical step towards becoming a competent 'speaker' of academic English in the academic community? Indeed, this issue of language proficiency was claimed to be one of the fundamental explanations for why students may plagiarise, as was noted by one Greek student who said: *"taking a bit here and there helps with getting meaning across. Paraphrasing if you are not a native speaker is difficult."* As Pennycook (1996) comments on this tension: "while [students are] constantly being told to be original and critical, and to write things in their 'own words,' [they] are nevertheless only too aware that they are at the same time required to acquire a fixed canon of

knowledge and a fix canon of terminology to go with it" (p.213).   Indeed one could ask what other means are available for them to both progress to competency, and be seen to be using the language of the subject, but a sort of patchwriting?   Thus, perhaps a more pertinent question may be at what point a student's disciplinary apprenticeship should we expect patch writing (when referenced) to be unacceptable.

4.3   Equality and Academic Malpractice

One aspect that is very evident from our case study is the issue of fairness. It operates on many levels simultaneously. If the context, process or content of the assessment is seen as unfair students generally feel justified cheating. Our data clearly indicates that cheating is widespread among many non-UK students, yet this was not attributed to the devious nature of students, but instead to the unfairness of the assessment process in their own countries. This ranged from attributing the need to cheat due to their lack of trust in the professors, the nature of the task, or as a consequence of the number of other students cheating. As the Greek students commented: "*Why should I try not to cheat when even the professors are cheating behind my back. The competition was unfair from the start.*"   However, even in cheating there is also a sense of fairness operating. One student said he will "*just [make] one or two random errors so they [the ones benefiting from cheating] did not get the same mark.*" Equally, those who do not engage in these practices even though they are aware of the inequality, still note they have to work very hard to compensate for their cheating.

If there is indeed a sense in which students feel justified to engage in cheating practices in a situation perceived as unfair then we need to ask ourselves if such conditions exist, especially for the foreign students in our own educational context. We would hope to discount lack of trust in professors, but we do impose other constraints that are potentially formidable. They find themselves in an educational system that expects of them things they are not prepared for, and in a language they are not competent in which is likely to leave them feeling powerless and anxious. This sense of powerlessness is captured well by this Korean engineer's comments (Myers, 1998):
I have learned English since I was in junior high school until now. This is 15 years after I started to learn English. Whenever I have a problem in English, I felt the same feelings as the slaves in the ancient period might did. The slaves might have an idea that if I were born in royal family, what would happen to me?

It seems clear that we should continue to interrogate and be critical of the sort of conditions we impose on our foreign students. Are our expectations of them fair? In other words, should our expectations change as they gain familiarity with the pedagogical model and the disciplinary practice?

4.4   Alienation and Academic Malpractice

One theme that was pervasive, particularly among the non-UK students, is that for many students, cheating in assessments often becomes attractive as a possible 'script' to follow in situations where students have become alienated from the process, purpose and meaning of the assessment. For example, the pressures that Chinese, Thai and Indian students felt they had to attain if they wanted to secure good first jobs. In the extreme case this alienation could imply a situation in which the assessment is so 'preconfigured'—due to politics, untrustworthy academics, etc.—that the outcome becomes completely meaningless and any cheating behaviour becomes potentially morally justifiable. The Chinese students, but most notably the Greek students explained this to be the case. One can see such a the moral justification in the comment of a Greek student:

"When you see that people are taking degrees without doing anything – the youths of political parties have a say in the promotion of professors. They tell professors who they should pass. It leaves people thinking why should I bother to study and memorise things that I do not need afterwards when these things are going on around you."

Alienation derived from the emphasis on memorisation, out of date material, the lack of trust in the assessment process, in other words the output orientated (marks) rather than process orientated (learning) model that seemed common to all the students in our case study. It also helps us to see why there can be such a paradoxical situation that although students believe cheating is wrong they still engage in it in quite an extensive way, as is clear from our data particularly among the non-UK students. Interestingly, this shared sense of alimentation in many contexts resulted in a strong degree of collegiality among students. For example, collaboration in tests and exams was said to be common in all of the non-UK countries represented. It seems that as the sense of alienation increases the students feel increasingly justified to cheat—indeed in such conditions cheating becomes so morally ambiguous as to become widespread. This was perhaps most graphically

depicted in the Greek context, where students suggested 90% had cheated and helped other to cheat. Thus, if we want to address the issue of plagiarism (and academic malpractice) we need to address the systemic conditions of alienation. As major actors in the network it is as much our responsibility (academics) to address these conditions, as it is the students responsibility to respond to such attempts.

5.   CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

In this paper we have tried to show that the issue of plagiarism is not simply a matter of cheating or not cheating. We have shown that the practices we deem plagiaristic are often the outcome of many diverse and complex influences, especially for the overseas student, but also for all students who are not familiar with a particular academic discipline. On the one hand, the ideological basis of the notion of plagiarism and the alienation from the assessment task (due to learning skills, language, perceived unfairness, etc.) could potentially provide ample moral resources for students to feel justified when they engage in practices we deem plagiarism. On the other hand, when students make a sincere attempt to cope with the situation by engaging in practices such as patchwriting and the borrowing of words they may be further alienated by our attempts to impose rigid categories of judgement and sanction. Such attempts could further alienate, leading to an increased sense powerlessness and of being justified in the first place.

One central implication arising from our research pertains to alienation. It seems that its is our task to do whatever we can to limit the alienation from the assessment task. If we succeed in doing this we will be more confident that the cases of plagiarism that do emerge are more likely to be those that are trying to defraud us, or at least to further their understanding of the western cultural expectations, and how they can respond to this. We need to develop a broader understanding of the skills students have when they arrive. This means having a better understanding of how they were previously taught and assessed. We also need to develop the infrastructure to support them in making the transition to an often radically different set of expectations and skills required. We need to communicate our expectations, explain the logic and values it is based on, and check that the students have the resources to develop the skills they require to meet these expectations.

We need to provide ongoing support to develop their linguistic competence, not only in everyday English but, more importantly, also in academic English. The latter (and the former to a lesser extent) also applies to UK students. We also need to develop the academic writing skills of the students. We need to acknowledge that patchwriting is a legitimate step towards developing the skills necessary for the independent articulation of a 'voice'. In this regard we must take careful note of the plagiarism detection technology we employ. For example the 'digital fingerprinting' algorithms that support services such as *Turnitin* will most certainly detect patchwriting as instances of plagiarism. If these outcomes are not carefully scrutinised and treated with caution we may indeed risk branding many 'coping' strategies as outright plagiarism.

Obviously the most basic thing we can and should do is to set meaningful assessment tasks. Tasks that are seen by the students as an opportunity to learn rather than ones that are seen as merely meeting the expectation of some externally imposed logic of judgement, competition, discipline, regulation or award. Within this context we must also be aware and be realistic about the workloads we impose on students.

Perhaps the most important implication of our research is that we need to treat plagiarism as an inherent part of the teaching and learning process rather than *as a disease* that we would like to ignore or be rid of. We need to be open, honest and frank with our students about it—event to the point of admitting that these practices are also present in academics writing. This fact does not escape the vigilant students' attention—especially those practised at memorisation as one student commented: *"Sometimes in articles I have found exactly the same words by different authors, it is as if these authors are also plagiarising."* We need to tell them that we do understand that the issue of plagiarism is fully embedded within a social, political, and cultural framework, as Scollon (1995) has argued. We need to show them that we understand their anxiety and sense of alienation. We need to make explicit that we see patchwriting and borrowing of words as a legitimate step towards independence. That they can freely discuss it with us and ask support to move beyond it. We need to teach them how they can use patchwriting, borrowing of words, and paraphrasing as ways towards developing independence of thought.

Our conversations with the students suggests that a supportive institutional framework that is seen to be fair and applied consistently can be a very effective vehicle to develop

students and deal with plagiarism intended to cheat. However, it seems important that we require an institutional framework that supports rather than alienates. Our institutional framework must be sensitive to the issue of culture and alienation. It would be very unfortunate if our judgements about students within an institutional framework becomes an additional and final humiliation of a student already within such a asymmetrical power relationship. We must be careful that our dealing with plagiarism does not become a form of cultural imperialism that finally excludes the other, not like us.

Clearly our research, due to its limited scope, is provisional and merely indicative of the issues at stake that may be generalisable. There is still much work to do. For example more detailed ethnographic studies of writing practices might help us to understand how 'cut and paste' writing and patchwriting are used to construct arguments. We need to understand what sort of learning is involved and how to develop steps to help the students move on to independent writing practices. We need to gain a much better understanding of the skill gap that foreign students arrive with. We also need a better understanding of the ways in which students become alienated from the assessment task. We need to investigate the use of overseas students make of the Internet in their coursework assessments when studying abroad. It seems that if we were serious about plagiarism it would be necessary for us to abandon the rhetorical and ideological stances and do more detailed research to understand the operation of these practices. Nonetheless, it is important to conduct research into the cultural assumptions that overseas students arrive in the UK with.

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