Ethical Writing

Plagiarism and other questionable writing practices

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Outline

1. On ethical writing
2. Plagiarism
3. Self-plagiarism
4. The Other Crimes of Writing
5. True Cases of Ethical Writing Violation
6. Intellectual Challenges to Academic Writing
Disclaimer

Made by plagiarizing from these sources


2. Purdue Online Writing Lab
   http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/589/1/

3. Universiti Teknologi Malaysia Academic Regulation booklet
On Ethical Writing

Elements of a good paper

- Clear expression
- Concise
- Accuracy
- Honest
Why Unethical Writing

Not enough resources to write proper -> unethical writing

- time
- results
- language prowess
- brain power
- supervision
Plagiarism

■ Item 27 UTM Academic Regulation

■ Plagiarism in academic includes producing thesis, dissertation, project report, article, coursework and research findings without acknowledging or referring to the original sources and claiming as one’s own work. It involves the submission of the whole or part of the work towards a degree.

■ American Association of University Professors (September/October, 1989)

■ ...taking over the ideas, methods, or written words of another, without acknowledgment and with the intention that they be taken as the work of the deceiver.

■ In-short: Writing inappropriation with intention to deceive
We must always acknowledge every source that we use in our writing; whether we *paraphrase* it, *summarize* it, or *quoting* it.

- Words or ideas presented whatever medium
- Information you gain through interviewing or conversing with another person
- Exact words or a unique phrase
- Diagrams, illustrations, charts, pictures, or other visual materials
- Be it in printed or electronic media
Plagiarism of ideas

- An ethical writer *always* acknowledges the contributions of others and the source of his/her ideas.
  - Others Ideas, data, and conclusions are usually borrowed and used as the foundation of one’s own contribution
Plagiarism of text

- Any verbatim text (word-by-word) taken from another author must be enclosed in quotation marks.
- Must be in proper context as in the original publication.
Inappropriate paraphrasing

- Always identify the source of our information when *paraphrasing* or *summarizing*.
- Reproduce the exact meaning of the other author’s ideas or facts *using our words and sentence structure*.
- To properly paraphrase, the author must have a *thorough understanding* of the ideas and terminology being used.
- Whenever possible, to use one’s own words when paraphrasing.
Plagiarism and common knowledge

- Give credit to those whose ideas and facts we are using.
- One general exception for the ideas that represent common knowledge
- When in doubt, always provide a citation
Plagiarism and authorship disputes

- Authorship for collaborative research must properly done
- Contribution \neq\text{authorship (will discuss this later)}
- Previously disseminated \textit{similar} publications, in any form, must be clearly indicated to the editors and readers on the nature (of the previous dissemination).
Self-plagiarism

- Plagiarism = theft (of whatever...)
- How about self-plagiarism? Is it possible to steal from oneself?
- ... the essence of self-plagiarism is [that] the author attempts to deceive the reader...
Double Dipping

- Duplicate publications and of redundant publications
- The new publication may differ only *slightly* from the original (title, abstract, and/or order of the authors).
- Almost always contain *identical* or *nearly identical* text relative to the earlier published version.
- Exception for conference summaries or abstracts subsequently published in *expanded* form as a journal article.
- Typical >30% addition is needed
- Authors must clearly indicate to the editors and readers the nature of the previous dissemination and the addition done.
Salami Slicing

- Segmenting of a large study into two or more publications – similarly unacceptable scientific practice.
- May (or with intention to) deceive unsuspecting readers to believe that data presented in each publication is derived from a different subject sample.
- If the results of a single complex study are best presented as a ‘cohesive’ single whole, they should not be partitioned into individual papers.
- Never produce old data augmented with additional data points as a new study.
Copyright Infringement, Fair Use, and Plagiarism

- Copyright is transferred to publishers – unless open access
- Fair use by the originators is allowed – making a copy of an article for personal use, taking a couple of lines and reproduce it in the next paper.
- *Extensive* quoting of text from a copyrighted source can constitute copyright infringement, moreover if outrightly plagiarized.
- Authors are strongly encouraged to become familiar with basic elements of copyright law. Read the fine prints.
Text recycling

- Two or more papers (by the same author(s)) may be describing *legitimately* different observations that contain almost identical methodology, literature reviews, discussions, and textual material.

- No fixed indicator how much recycling is ethical.

- Some exceptions
  - Unpublished ‘internal’ documents (grants proposals, degree proposals, directed readings)
  - Conference summaries or abstracts subsequently published in *expanded* form as a journal article

- Authors must adhere to the spirit of ethical writing and avoid reusing their own previously published text, unless it is done in a scholarly manner.
Ethically questionable citation practices

- Double-check your citations.
  - If done manually, always ensure that each reference notation appearing in the body of the manuscript corresponds to the correct citation listed in the reference section and vice versa.

- Ensure that all elements of a citation (e.g., spelling of authors’ names, volume number of journal, pagination) are derived directly from the original paper
  - Do not cite that appears on a secondary source.
  - Make sure the publication is traceable.

- Must ensure that credit is given to those authors who first reported the phenomenon being studied.
Inappropriate Manipulation of References

- The references used in a paper should only be those that are directly related to its contents.
- The intentional inclusion of references to *manipulate* a journal’s impact factor or a paper’s is unacceptable.
- When borrowing heavily from a source, authors should always craft their writing in a way that makes clear to readers, which are theirs and which are borrowed.
Try to obtain the actual published paper. When the published paper cannot be obtained, cite the specific version of the material being used.

When describing others’ work, do not rely on a secondary summary of that work.

- It is a deceptive practice, reflects poor scholarly standards, and can lead to a flawed description of the work described.
- Always consult the primary literature.
Selective reporting

- Authors is responsibility to report evidence that runs contrary to their point of view.
  - Evidence that support of our position/stand must be methodologically sound.
  - When citing supporting studies that suffer from methodological, statistical, or other types of shortcomings, such flaws must be pointed out to the reader.
- Authors have an ethical obligation to report all aspects of the study that may impact the independent replicability of their research.
- Researchers have an ethical responsibility to report the results of their studies.
  - Any post hoc manipulations that may alter the initial results (e.g., elimination of outliers, or the use of alternative statistical techniques) must be rationalized.
Authorship issues and conflicts of interest

- Authorship should be discussed early to commencing a research collaboration.
- Only those individuals who have made *substantive* contributions to a project merit authorship in a paper.
- Contributions that warrant authorship include, but are not limited to
  - Conceptualization of the hypotheses
  - Designing the methodology of the investigation
  - Significantly contributing to the writing the manuscript.
- “Mechanical” activities are not sufficient grounds for authorship, but should be acknowledged in a footnote.
  - Entering information in a database or merely collecting actual data
  - Coding/programming
  - Proof reading
Faculty-student collaborations should follow the same criteria to establish authorship.

- Never award authorship to students whose contributions do not merit it.
- Never deny authorship and due credit to the work of students.

Academic or professional ghost authorship in the sciences is ethically unacceptable.

Authors must become aware of possible conflicts of interest.

- Must disclose situations that may pose actual or potential conflicts of interest.
- Stock ownership, consulting agreements to the sponsoring organization.
True Cases of Ethical Writing Violation

- What goes around comes around

- Look at these true cases
  - A historian resigns from the Pulitzer board after allegations that she had appropriated text from other sources in one of her books.
  - A biochemist resigns from a prestigious clinic after accusations that a book he wrote contained appropriated portions of text from a National Academy of Sciences report.
  - A famous musician is found guilty of unconscious plagiarism by including elements of another musical group’s previously recorded song in one of his new songs that then becomes a hit. The musician is forced to pay compensation for the infraction.
More true stories

- A college president is forced to resign after allegations that he failed to attribute the source of material that was part of a college convocation speech.
- A member of Congress running for his party’s nomination withdraws from the presidential race after allegations of plagiarism in one of his speeches.
- A psychologist has his doctoral degree rescinded after the university finds that portions of his doctoral dissertation had been plagiarized.
Scientific writing is a complex process

- Hypothesis -> proof -> write -> redo proof -> rewrite -> redo proof ...
- Usually on tight deadline
- Pressure to supervisors -> pressure to students
- Degree = papers? Publish or perish
- Some are black, some are grey, some are white
- Develop a topic based on what has already been said and written
  - *BUT* write something new and original
- Rely on experts’ and authorities’ opinions
  - *BUT* improve upon and/or disagree with those same opinions
- Give credit to previous researchers
  - *BUT* make your own significant contribution
- Improve your English to fit into a discourse community by building upon what you hear and read
  - *BUT* use your own words and your own voice