

海外アカデミック・ディスカッション	
Presentation and Research on Investigating Chinese Students' Opinions on Plagiarism	
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比較社会文化学専攻	
期間	2010 年 11 月 23 日～2010 年 12 月 21 日
場所	パリ
施設	Télécom ParisTech 大学、Paris Diderot - Paris 7 大学、Paris-Sorbonne 大学

1. Presentation at the 29th Annual International TESOL France Colloquium

Financially supported by the Overseas Academic Discussion program, I was able to take part in and make a poster presentation at the 29th Annual International TESOL France Colloquium held in Paris from November 26th to 28th, 2010.

My academic interest is teaching English writing. And the main topic of my doctoral project is about Chinese students' plagiarizing practices in intercultural contexts. Nowadays in the field of teaching English writing, it is common sense that the concept of authorship and the rules of quotation/citation are West-originated. One opinion that is supported by many researchers and educators is that Chinese students are more inclined to plagiarize during the English writing process because they culturally and historically have weaker consciousness about it. Some previous studies have discussed the "cultural difference" theory in the field of teaching English writing. Some claim that cultural differences do exist in understanding and explaining frequent plagiarizing practices of students from certain countries, while others believe that it is only an "urban legend" (Buranen, 1999).

I am interested in how Chinese college students themselves look at this problem. I made a survey in order to investigate whether there are so-called "cultural differences" that are big enough to contribute to the frequent occurrences of Chinese students' plagiarizing practices in English writing classes. A questionnaire consisting of ten multiple-choice and free answer questions was

used to research Chinese students' experiences of, attitudes toward, and knowledge of plagiarism. More than 400 responses were collected. This presentation reported the findings of the survey and addressed the issue mainly from a cultural and historical perspective. Since one of the most important purposes of taking part in the conference was to share my study with other educators, I also made some suggestions for English teachers who have Chinese students in their classes based on my findings.

The findings of this presentation and my suggestions are: (1) culturally and historically we cannot assert that Chinese students have no or little consciousness of plagiarism or copyright. (2) Imitation is emphasized and valued in the process of teaching and learning writing in China. (3) However, many Chinese students don't know to what extent imitation can become plagiarism. And they don't have knowledge of quotation and citation rules in academic writing. (5) For teachers who have Chinese students in their classes, it would be effective to firstly teach them the differences between imitation of article structures or usage of words and incorrect text borrowing. To stress the importance of creativity, explaining the quotation and citation rules clearly would also help those who plagiarized unintentionally in order to get rid of the risk of plagiarizing and at the same time improve their writing ability.

By presenting this study at the conference, I received valuable feedback and was able to hear other researchers' opinions and advice, which will be very important for my further studies, on the same issue, including my doctoral dissertation. By

listening to lectures of well-known scholars, presentations of researchers from all over the world and discussions with other participants, I was able to deepen my understanding and knowledge in the field of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages. This precious experience will no doubt help me continue with my doctoral research.

2. Class observation at the University of Paris Diderot

I was also given the chance to observe classes at the University of Paris Diderot during this period of oversea research. Since my academic interest is teaching English writing to students who are from non-native English speaking countries, it was a valuable chance to see how English writing is taught in a Western country. This experience will not only allow me to learn more pedagogical methods of teaching English writing, but also help me deepen my knowledge in this field from a comparative point of view.

I observed an Intensive English class, which aimed at helping students learn language in real use, and a Creative Writing class, several times. Both were fulfilling and meaningful for me but the latter one was especially inspiring in that to some extent it was relevant to my dissertation in progress. In the Creative Writing class, the professor focused on helping students improve their writing abilities by free writing (for example, short stories, poems, magazine writing) in English. During my observation period, the professor was teaching students how to write poetry. No textbook was used in this class. The flow of the class activities is as below:

- (1). The history of poetry writing was introduced briefly.
- (2). Students were asked to find words with the same rhymes as certain given words. This helped students to understand and feel rhymes.
- (3). Introduction of meter (stress patterns) and iambic.
- (4). Dictation of a humorous poem.
- (5). Checking the dictation results.
- (6). By reading the poem repeatedly, the professor tried to help students understand how rhymes and iambs worked.
- (7). Students were asked to find stressed and un-stressed words of each line of the poem.

- (8). Students were instructed to write a short poem by using iambic.

As the professor emphasized, students need not pay much attention to iambics or rhythms since they were taught just a few minutes previously. The most important thing was to enjoy the process of free and creative writing. Students were given 20 minutes to write the poem and hand in their work at the end of the class. At the second class, more knowledge and techniques of poetry writing was taught. Class activities included:

- (1). The poems students wrote last time were returned.
- (2). The professor summarized several typical grammatical errors. Students were given some time to read the professor's correction of their own poems and ask questions individually.
- (3). Review of the contents taught in the previous class, with emphasis on iambs since it was a completely new concept to students.
- (4). More techniques of writing a poem (e.g., setting, rhyme, metaphor, verse, and synesthesia) were taught.
- (5). A printout of three short news reports was distributed. The professor asked the students to read it and answered some questions on the news contents.
- (6). Making sure that students had understood the contents, the professor asked them to become aware of five words coming to their minds when reading each report.
- (7). After the professor's example, students were instructed to compose a short poem by using one of the word sets.

According to the Professor, the purpose was to "have fun" by imaging and writing freely. The techniques and quality of the poems were not stressed at all. As a result, students were able to enjoy writing in another language, without worrying about making mistakes. Other styles of free writing, like magazine writing and short stories, had or would be taught with the same purpose.

This class was inspiring for me because it not only showed me a method of teaching English writing to first year undergraduate students with which I was unfamiliar, but also gave me some hints in preventing plagiarism in English writing classrooms. Nowadays in many universities,

students are usually asked to hand in their homework in print form. While in this class, the professor asked students to hand-write their assignments. And what is more, most of the assignments were finished within the class time. Due to the time limit (usually 15~20 minutes), students surely could not finish every writing task in a very complete, long enough and neat style. They could not refer to any other materials, either. However, they were able to use their imagination to the utmost and write with more freedom. There was no danger of plagiarism since they were given no chance to touch a computer, get online, search for information, and then plagiarize more or less, purposely or not purposely. In an era when many students rely too heavily on Internet information, it might be a good way to prevent plagiarism while at the same time cultivate students' interest in writing.

With some knowledge of the processes of teaching and learning English writing and what English writing classes are like in China and Japan, it was a precious experience to observe classes in a Western university.

3. Survey investigation

As mentioned in section 1, I am doing my doctoral research on Chinese students' attitude toward, knowledge of and experiences of plagiarizing in English writing classes. Although I have collected

a number of responses and made a presentation on the primary results of the investigation, I need more responses in order to make my dissertation more convincing statistically. This Overseas Academic Discussion program gave me the chance to continue the survey with Chinese college students who were studying abroad. I was able to obtain about 80 responses, which would be very meaningful for my further study in that the results could be used as data of a control group. The survey conducted in Paris made it possible for me to compare the results of students from mainland China and students who are studying abroad in order to find whether there are any differences between them.

In summary, I was able to not only learn a lot from this overseas study, but also express myself and introduce my study to many international researchers. This experience will no doubt shed light on my future research from a global perspective.

Reference:

Buranen, L. (1999). 'But I Wasn't Cheating': Plagiarism and Cross-cultural Mythology. In L. Buranen & A.M. Roy (eds.), *Perspectives on Plagiarism and Intellectual Property in a Postmodern World*. State University of New York Press. 63-74