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Shifting the discourse of plagiarism and ethics: a cultural opportunity in higher education

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Abstract

Plagiarism is a pervasive challenge throughout academia perpetuated by the advent of technology, lack of ethical education, and the ambiguity in its definition. Plagiarism in the United States' higher education settings has gained more attention over the years as international student population has increased. Considering how higher education institutions are growing as international spaces due to globalization, it is crucial to closely examine ethical issues concerning the diverse and multicultural student population. A prevailing view of plagiarism asserts that international students' plagiarized texts are influenced by their ethical judgment and cultural backgrounds. This invites the question of whether ethical decision-making processes and cross-cultural perspectives are taken into consideration when instructors encounter instances of plagiarism committed by international or multicultural students. This paper intends to expand on the concept of culture in regard to the ethical dilemmas of plagiarism. Extending the discussions of cross-cultural influences surrounding plagiarism and ethical judgments in higher education, we position ourselves as viewing culture through the expanded lenses of macro- and micro-level cultural practices. In response to the internationalization of higher education, we advocate for changes in higher education curricula and instruction towards more cultural responsiveness and inclusivity. Instead of questioning or criminalizing ethics based on cultural background, especially in the cases of plagiarism committed by international students, we suggest approaching culture using the expanded perspectives of macro- and micro-cultural practices. The paper also provides recommendations for higher education instructors when tackling ethical dilemmas while preventing and managing situations of plagiarism.

Keywords Academic dishonesty · Culture · Higher education · International students · Plagiarism · Second language writing

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Introduction

Given the ever-diversifying population of higher education institutions in the United States (U.S.), it is crucial for course instructors to revisit the concept of culture and multiculturalism concerning ethics education. Higher education institutions are becoming more multicultural and diverse with increased international student mobility worldwide (Jon 2013; Maxwell et al. 2008). Altering higher education curricula and syllabi in response to the diversifying student population is one of many challenges instructors face (Clifford and Montgomery 2017). In particular, instances of plagiarism committed by second language (L2) writers of English, or international students, in academic settings invite various ethical and moral issues (Mulholland 2020). Researchers and instructors typically blame plagiarism on cultural differences, lack of ethical education, ambiguous definitions of plagiarism, students' low language proficiency, or easily accessible online resources (Hu and Lei 2012; Luthar et al. 1997; Pecorari 2003; Pecorari and Petrić 2014). There has been an array of literature recognizing the relation between culture and plagiarism, particularly concerning Asian or specifically Southeast Asian students in U.S.-based or Western-style higher education institutions (e.g., Chien 2017; James et al. 2019; Lin and Scherz 2014).

The purpose of this position paper is threefold. First, we outline and challenge the prevailing cross-cultural perspectives concerning plagiarism and illustrate how these are intertwined with ethical issues. Second, we suggest viewing culture through an extended lens: macro- and micro-level cultural practices. Third, we recommend preventative approaches for higher education instructors using our expanded cross-cultural perspectives. In this paper, we aim to unpack the cultural debates surrounding the ethics of plagiarism in U.S. higher education by suggesting a different approach to perceiving and defining culture. We do not attempt to advocate for generalization of certain cultural groups or to condone the practice of blaming the culture. Rather, the intent of this paper is to contribute to the discussion concerning cross-cultural perceptions of plagiarism and to promote a more inclusive and critical approach toward postsecondary academic writing instruction and ethics education. We begin by providing our rationale and then ground our position of viewing culture on two levels (macro- and micro-level cultural practices). Finally, we present recommendations for higher education instructors to consider providing a culturally responsive and critical space for L2 writing and ethics education.

Rationale: Revisiting the ethical issues of plagiarism and culture

Culture is a complex concept with layers of micro- and macro-level cultural practices involved within a cultural community. Literacy, including writing activities, is considered a socially and culturally constructed phenomenon rather than a simple ability to read and write (Cook-Gumperz 2006). In this paper, our intention is not to provide a comprehensive synthesis of previous literature or to suggest a new conceptualization of ethics education for plagiarism. Rather, we aim to discuss why and how culture impacts literacy practices and concepts of ethics, particularly for those East Asian L2 writers of English in U.S. higher education and to contribute to practitioners' understanding of the relation between culture and plagiarism that might help their instruction.

Commonly, behaviors of plagiarism are perceived as a violation of academic integrity or as an immoral act. This is evident through higher education policy documents, in which punishments for plagiarism are outlined in honor codes or student conduct contracts. Plagiarism cannot be defined clearly enough to determine whether the text is plagiarized by referencing an example because (a) the definition of plagiarism does not identify counter-examples, (b) individuals differ in their ideas of plagiarism, and (c) the definition of plagiarism does not always support the identification of plagiarism (Pecorari 2019). Although the term plagiarism has been widely used to cover a variety of scholarly misconducts, including cheating, theft, fraud, and copyright infringement, there is no standard or unified definition (Bloch 2012; Pecorari 2019; Sousa-Silva 2020). Besides the unethical aspect, plagiarism takes different forms and is interpreted under different types and definitions. Table 1 illustrates various, yet not all, types of plagiarism with corresponding descriptions. Most students—and even instructors—are unclear about defining each type of plagiarism, and whether these categories of plagiarism are considered an unethical act or not can vary among students and instructors.

Not dissimilar to the vague and inconsistent definitions of plagiarism, there is no consensus on the definition of ethics (Ward 2020). One of the reasons for so much variability in the definition is due to the fact that ethical decisions are contingent on environment. In other words, ethical judgment involved in the act of plagiarism is influenced and shaped by cultural environments (Grimes 2004). For successful ethics education, consideration of students' cultural diversity and backgrounds is critical because ethical decision making is significantly shaped by the means, which will impact the end (Johnson and Reiman 2007; Ward 2020). Thus, it is fundamental to consider what cultural environment has led a student down "the path of plagiarism" before criminalizing a student's behavior of plagiarism. Instead of beginning the discussion of plagiarism at the point of morality and embedding policies on academic dishonesty, higher education institutions need to re-examine the influences of culture that shape both the instructors' and students' ethical perspectives (Mulholland 2020; Ward 2020).

Table 1 Types of Plagiarism (Adapted from Sarlauskiene and Stabingis 2014; Sousa-Silva 2020)

Categories of plagiarism	Definitions/descriptions
Verbatim/quasi-verbatim copying	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Word-for-word copying or partial word-for-word copying of sources without an acknowledgment or an inappropriate/inadequate acknowledgment of the original sources
Deliberate hiding/ appropriation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriating others' work (i.e., switching to synonyms, reordering phrases/sentences, deliberate mistakes, etc.) • Deliberately providing inaccurate information about the references
Discredited cheating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presenting another author's work and taking credits for it (e.g., purchasing someone's paper, presenting a peer's paper with or without permission, hiring a ghostwriter, presenting collaborative work as individual work, etc.)
Self-plagiarism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presenting or re-using one's own work through multiple outlets without acknowledgment of the course
Stealing/masking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking credit for someone's ideas or concepts and presenting them as one's original idea
Translingual plagiarism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Translating of foreign sources and presenting it as one's original idea

The variability of ethical decisions in cases of plagiarism has been explored in previous literature. In their content analysis of past research on students' ethical reasoning behind plagiarism, Granitz and Loewy (2007) apply six ethical theories to interpret how students respond to plagiarism including the theories of (a) deontology, (b) utilitarianism, (c) rational self-interest, (d) machiavellianism, (e) cultural relativism, and (f) situational or contingent ethics. Among these six ethical theories, both deontology and cultural relativism align with our perspectives, which assume students' unintentional act of plagiarism. Deontology subscribes to the idea that human beings are self-directed in their act of fulfilling moral duties, whether that be personal rules, organizational rules, or religious beliefs. If students subscribe to deontology, plagiarism is considered an immoral act, and plagiarism only occurs because students misunderstood or were unaware of plagiarism. Cultural relativism subscribes to the belief that ethical standards are different across cultures including the standards of whether an act is ethical or unethical. Under this theory, students' plagiaristic act is justifiable because what is acceptable and ethical in students' cultural backgrounds may differ.

There are also two major perspectives when viewing plagiarism in relation to culture. One perspective is the cultural-conditioning perspective, which assumes that students' perceptions toward plagiarism are conditioned by their cultural settings. This perspective aligns with the ethical theory of cultural relativism, which assumes differences in cultural practices that shape students' conceptualization and definition of plagiarism (see Fig. 1). In this paper, we refer to this perspective as macro-level cultural practices. Past literature has paid particular attention to East Asian international students who are L2 writers of English and how their cultural background influences their conceptualization, knowledge, and skills concerning plagiarism (e.g., Chien 2017; Hayes and Introna 2005; Hu and Lei 2012; Maxwell et al. 2008; Ting 2012). The cultural-conditioning perspective emphasizes how international students or L2 writers of English are culturally influenced when they are accused of plagiarism in Western universities (Hayes and Introna 2005; Teeter 2014).

Another perspective is the integrated perspective, which approaches plagiarism through a preventative point of view. In this perspective, other factors are considered more influential than culture, such as experience with academic writing, level of understanding of the subject matter, or linguistic abilities. This perspective is in concert with the ethical theory of deontology, which assumes that students' act of plagiarism is caused by misunderstanding or unawareness rather than their unethical intentions (Fig. 1). In other words, as long as students are provided with an opportunity to learn the expectations explicitly with effective guidance and instruction, plagiaristic acts are more likely to be prevented. We refer to this perspective as micro-level cultural practices. We align our position more closely with the integrated perspective while viewing that both perspectives should be taken into consideration as part of expanded cross-cultural perspectives.

Ethical decision making involves rational and systematic judgments on whether an act is good or bad (Ward 2020). The prevailing cross-cultural perspective of plagiarism assumes that students from certain cultural backgrounds or educational norms (i.e., Asian, collectivist, Confucianist) have a different ethical construct (Hayes and Introna 2005; Sowden 2005). Therefore, when a student submits a plagiarized text, it is assumed that a rational ethical decision was made by the student. If plagiarism occurred, the student's cultural background and values are assumed to be influential on the student's ethical or moral decisions. However, when we are considering both

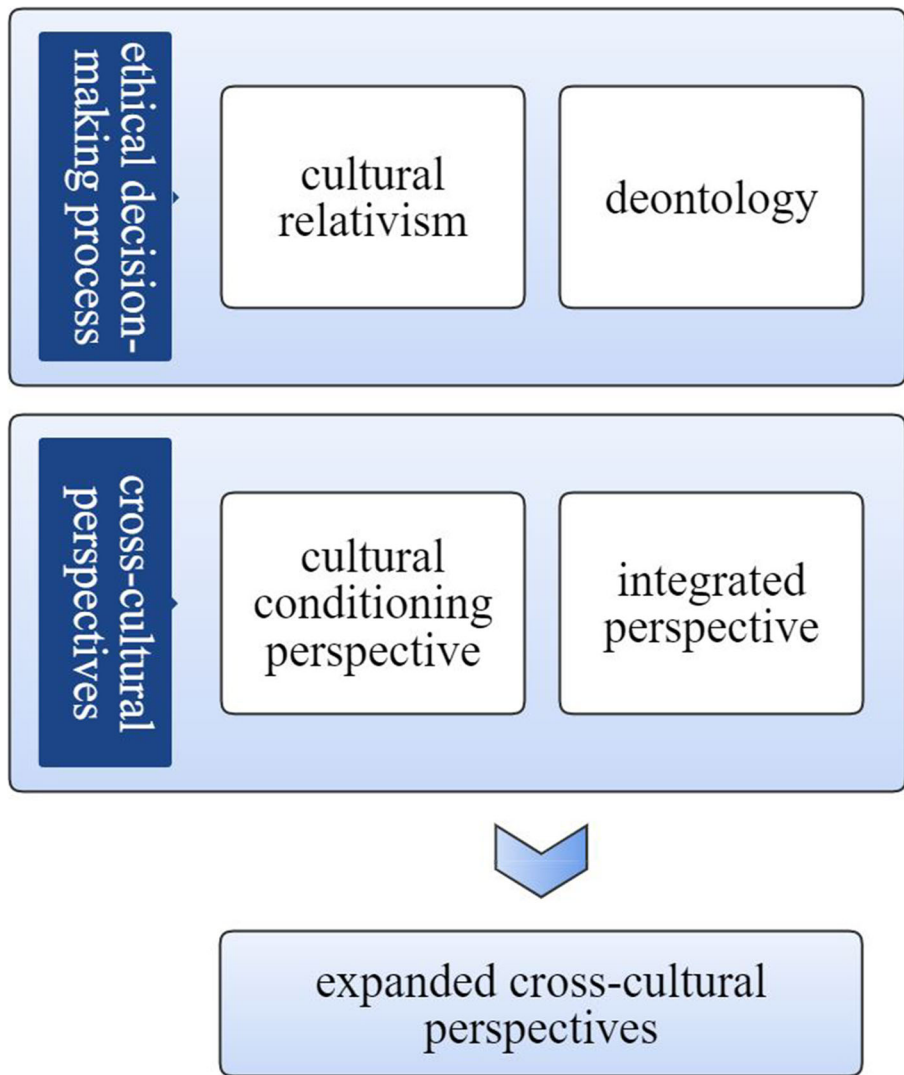


Fig. 1 Development of Expanded Cross-cultural Perspectives

ethical decisions and the issue of plagiarism, it is crucial to consider the process before the product. Thus, unpacking the element of “culture” involved in the ethical decision-making process regarding plagiarism can provide insights into improving instruction in higher education classrooms.

Expanded cross-cultural perspectives and practices of plagiarism

When instructors encounter incidents of plagiarism, it is tempting to choose the course of action of assuming culturally relative ethical standards based on the textual product

rather than interrogating the students' process of making ethical judgments. Thus, it is fundamental to discuss plagiarism from an extended cross-cultural perspective to understand students' process of ethical decision-making instead of making assumptions based on students' diverse cultural backgrounds. Aligning ourselves with the integrated perspective, we expand the way of approaching culture through both macro-level and the micro-level cultural practices. As illustrated in Fig. 2, macro-level cultural practices encompass societal beliefs, values, and practices such as individualism, collectivism, Confucianist beliefs, or educational norms. The micro-level cultural practices include conventions and norms in a particular community of practice, such as academic writing conventions, context-dependent understandings of plagiarism, or academic classroom norms. In this section, we will further discuss how both macro- and micro-level cultures can significantly influence L2 writers' conceptualization, knowledge, and practices concerning ethics and plagiarism.

Macro cultural practices: Why students struggle to grasp plagiarism

After teaching the importance of copyright and the consequences of committing plagiarism, it seems reasonable to assume that such actions would no longer take place. Then why does plagiarism still prevail in higher education classrooms? Do international students simply come from a different background that condones such unethical behaviors? While cultural conditioning of plagiarism has been widely researched in relation to such questions, going beyond cultural stereotyping or essentializing particular cultures has been a challenge. A majority of students would agree that plagiarism is morally wrong behavior, yet their understanding and definition in detailed descriptions about plagiarism vary greatly (see Chien 2017). For instance, scholars state that students from a collectivist background interpret plagiarism with little to no negative implications because there is no fine line between individual and public property

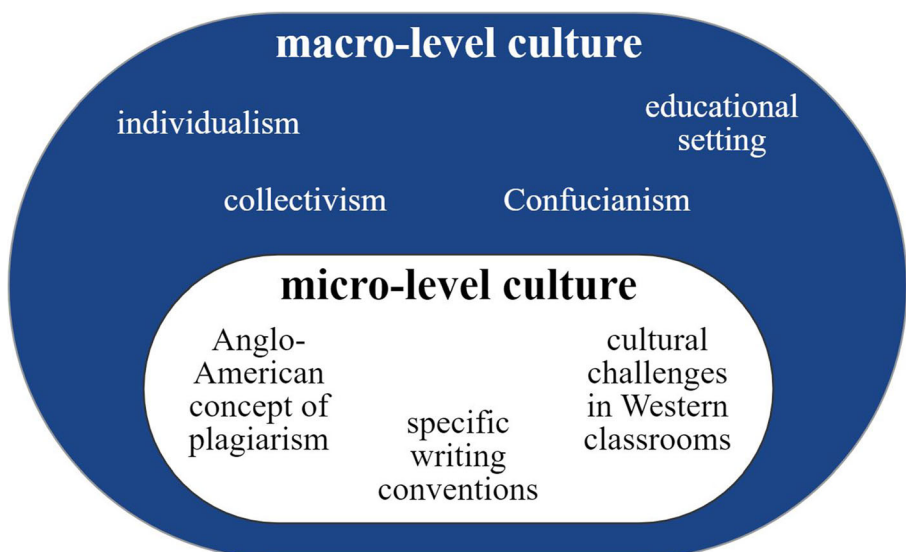


Fig. 2 Macro- and Micro-level Cultural Practices of Plagiarism

(Bloch 2012; Chien 2017). On the other hand, scholars also contend that plagiarism has been historically and consistently condemned even in societies with a collectivist or Confucianist orientation (Li and Flowerdew 2019). We believe that macro-level cultural practices can influence students' understanding and conceptualization of plagiarism in U.S. higher education. These macro-level practices are through different values and educational norms influenced by culture.

Not only is plagiarism difficult to define, it is also perceived and viewed differently in various cultural contexts (Pecorari 2019; Sousa-Silva 2020). Similar to the point made in the cultural-conditioning perspective and the cultural relativism theory, how students perceive plagiarism and plagiaristic acts are conditioned by their cultural contexts. Thus, ethical decisions and judgment are also known to be influenced by ones' cultural environments (Grimes 2004; Ward 2020). According to Chien's (2017) investigation of Taiwanese college students' perception of plagiarism, culture is recognized as one of the major factors determining students' degree of understanding and defining plagiarism. Although all students in the study acknowledge that plagiarism is ethically unacceptable, students are only able to provide the basic definition of plagiarism (i.e., copying and pasting other people's work) and generally have difficulty articulating subtle plagiaristic acts such as proper paraphrasing and applying appropriate academic writing conventions. Students also state that the extent to which act counts as plagiarism depends on the academic and cultural setting. For instance, the students describe that if they are studying in a U.S.-based institution, they expected heavier punishment for a plagiaristic act.

Influenced by Confucianist beliefs and practices commonly promoted in Southeast Asian countries, sense of community and collectivism plays a role in students' understanding of textual ownership and belonging. Compared to American individualism that emphasizes crediting original sources in order to protect one's own property as well as others' property (Griffis 2020), collectivism promotes harmony and believes that ideas belong to the community rather than the individual (Chien 2017). In addition, Sowden (2005) argues that learning by memorization and the tendency to respect authorities influence how Asian L2 writers of English conceptualize plagiarism. Apparently, although the global higher education landscape is under reformation towards a more Western style, these cultural values and beliefs influence students' conceptualization and definition of what counts as plagiarism and what does not.

Not only does culture promote certain values over others, but it also shapes students' conceptualization and perception of how to obtain academic success or academic accomplishment. The concept of "studying" in Confucianist Asian cultures promotes finding and imitating great work by an authority figure (Csikszentmihalyi 2020). Due to the concept of communal knowledge in some countries with collectivist backgrounds, students believe that widely known quotations by renowned philosophers or commonsense words do not require citation (Sowden 2005). Although scholars caution against the generalization and stereotyping of certain cultural groups regarding plagiarism (e.g., Ehrich et al. 2016; Le Ha 2006; Liu 2005), we should consider how students' cultural backgrounds may shape their understanding of studying, creating written work, and gaining academic accomplishments.

The influence of culture on educational backgrounds should also be considered when discussing plagiarism. For instance, Simon (2019) illustrates the challenge of relating to creativity and individualism, particularly for Southeast Asian students.

According to Simon, the pressure of cheating is steep in South Korea due to the upward social mobility provided by academic accomplishments. The Confucianist culture promotes social status, which is often attained through success in education. This cultural setting encourages faking accomplishments or committing intellectual fraud. South Koreans commit to high-stakes academic tests, which promotes conformity rather than individual creativity.

Plagiarism is a culturally constructed concept—an unconscious reaction to fundamental differences in values concerning the role of individuals in knowledge creation (Leask 2006). In other words, the cultural discourses surrounding plagiarism influence the way students from diverse backgrounds construct the concept of academic dishonesty. While we strongly caution against cultural stereotyping and the essentializing of international students or L2 writers of English, we also acknowledge that culture can play a role when it comes to students' understanding of plagiarism and academic expectations in different cultural contexts. The debate surrounding plagiarism and culture suggest that there is a lack of empirical evidence to support the stereotypes of students from certain cultural backgrounds such as their "softer" attitudes or ethical standards to commit plagiarism (Ehrich et al. 2016). However, we should recognize that certain cultural contexts and messages can set different expectations for students engaging in academic writing and that not all students are equipped with the knowledge and skills to meet those expectations. Thus, while acknowledging the cultural influences that might shape students' degree of understanding and definition of plagiarism, it is important to approach the matter with an integrated perspective that will prevent students from falling into the trap of plagiarism. In this paper, we approach the integrated perspective by exploring micro cultural practices.

Micro cultural practices: Why plagiarism continues

As much as we caution against blanket-stereotypes or essentialization of certain cultural groups, we have stressed how macro-level culture can shape students' conceptualization and understanding of plagiarism as well as their perceptions of studying and academic accomplishments. In this section, we point out that there are other aspects of culture at a micro-level that can pose challenges to L2 writers of English when it comes to learning in the U.S. higher education academic setting. In this section, we discuss micro-level cultural practices from two perspectives: academic writing and U.S. higher education culture.

Unfamiliarity with academic writing conventions and text appropriation are added challenges to L2 writers as they try to avoid plagiarism. Du (2020) demonstrates how students' unfamiliarity with the Anglo-American concept of plagiarism can hinder Chinese students' development of source referencing skills. Although the students in this study had received six hours of instruction in source referencing and identifying plagiarized pieces of writing, students continue to show difficulties recognizing subtle plagiarism. Similarly, Li and Flowerdew's (2019) examination of post-secondary level Chinese writing and literacy textbooks confirm that students are taught with limited instruction on developing skills to cite sources at a sentence- or paragraph-level. Li and Flowerdew emphasize that although a corpus-based analysis of classic Chinese texts from the 1950s and onward verify how plagiarism is strongly disapproved in Chinese

literacy practices, there are limited opportunities for students to develop appropriate source referencing skills in educational settings.

Academic writing is a complex writing game with norms and rules that are often not familiar to novice writers or L2 writers of English. There are multiple elements that a writer needs to consider including voice, tone, vocabulary, style, organization, cohesion, unity, and subject matter knowledge. While trying to master academic writing skills, L2 writers of English face an additional challenge of appropriating texts and avoiding plagiarism. Many concerns arise here including reading comprehension skills, grammatical knowledge, linguistic abilities, and the correct use of the required citation style. Previous studies even state that the prevailing conceptualization of culture as the sole contributing factor to plagiarism is incorrect and that there are no significant differences between Asian and Caucasian students in terms of the number of plagiarized texts (e.g., Le Ha 2006; Liu 2005; Martin 2012). Rather, scholars stress that lack of understanding of the academic content or insufficient training to effectively cite resources is responsible for L2 writers of English committing plagiarism (e.g., Le Ha 2006; Wheeler 2009).

In addition to learning and familiarizing themselves with the academic writing culture in the U.S., international students and L2 writers of English face other cultural challenges in the U.S. higher education classroom communities. Lin and Scherz's (2014) investigation of international graduate students at a U.S. higher education institution find that students face various cultural challenges while trying to be part of their classroom communities. These cultural challenges include building social relationships with peers and instructors and familiarizing themselves with instructional styles in the U.S. Participants express difficulties asking for help and communicating with professors as well as discussing academic expectations in their courses. Social and academic challenges international students face in U.S. higher education institutions are part of cultural challenges that students are grappling with while trying to be part of the classroom's cultural community.

The discourse of ethics in Western academia views plagiarism through a binary understanding that categorizes a student as either honest or dishonest, regardless of intentions behind the act (Valentine 2006). Howard (2001) refers to such binary discourses as a "gotcha industry" where the criminal-police relationship is replacing the student-teacher relationship. As Pecorari (2006) claims, although the actual citation process is quite visible to L2 writers, how the text is appropriated or how the original source is reported is not a straightforward writing practice. In other words, it is a hasty assumption to believe that a student's writing practices are transformed to meet the micro-level cultural expectations in U.S. higher education simply because a few writing workshops have been provided. Students are in need of extended mentorship, explicit guidelines, and effective instruction that will develop them with the proper academic writing skills.

Plagiarism is a complex concept and a gradual learning process that needs to account for various features and aspects. In addition to cultural values and educational norms that influence international students' conceptualization of plagiarism, understanding academic writing conventions, developing textual appropriation skills, and familiarization with U.S. higher education classroom cultures all play roles in the act of plagiarism. By not considering multiple aspects with a comprehensive and critical perspective, we are denying each student's identity as a writer and a cultural being in higher

education classrooms. We should have a holistic understanding of the writing practices of students through the lens of culture—macro- and micro-level cultures—instead of masquerading international students as writers of a particular ethical quality.

Shifting the discourse: Moving forward

As stated by Price (2002), we need to stop treating plagiarism as a “pure moral absolute” (p. 90) and position it as an opportunity. Indeed, we need to recognize the opportunity to begin a dialogue, to learn, to embrace differences, and to change the discourse in higher education. It is also equally important to caution against stereotyping and profiling particular racial/ethnic groups of students as we discuss ethics and plagiarism. When treated accordingly, L2 writers can also begin seeing academic writing as a dialogue and space for them to contribute their own voice.

Research has shown that there is no consensus among students, instructors, and administrators in terms of clearly defining plagiarism (Pecorari 2019; Polio and Shi 2012; Sousa-Silva 2020). The various interpretations of plagiarism lead to instructors’ different expectations of students’ textual product and different means of addressing plagiarism as well. Thus, students—international students in particular—are encountering mixed messages and expectations from their higher education instructors. As different cultures contribute to a wide range of knowledge and definitions of plagiarism, it is reasonable to expect added confusions and challenges among students from diverse cultural backgrounds. Viewing such variabilities as an opportunity, we stress the importance of shifting dialogues and applying an expanded view of culture when confronting the ethical issues of plagiarism in higher education instruction.

Through the exploration of macro- and micro-level cultural practices that can influence one’s writing and behavior regarding plagiarism, we attempt to deepen higher education instructors’ understanding of the relationship between culture and plagiarism. We caution against cultural profiling or stereotyping, as plagiarism can be rooted in lack of training in text appropriation and source-based writing (Cumming et al. 2018; Hirvela and Qian 2013). Nevertheless, it is imperative to take into account the various cultural aspects that may have contributed to a student’s ethical decision, beliefs, perceptions, and writing practices before making a quick assumption based on his or her textual product. Echoing Howard’s (2001) argument about current higher education instruction that focuses on policing plagiarism rather than mentoring students, we believe that teaching appropriate skills lead to students’ academic success rather than instructors’ attempt to criminalize students.

Instead of suggesting that plagiarism should be tolerated because of macro- and micro-level cultural differences, we advocate for shifting the discourse in higher education instruction that will orient to teaching textual appropriation skills and building a unique micro-level classroom culture that embraces the process, not only the product. In order to foster students’ multicultural perspectives while respecting current policy and writing practices in higher education, scholars have suggested various instructional approaches that reflect the integrated perspective. As we conclude with the hope that this paper will broaden approaches and shift the discourse of ethics and plagiarism, we provide a few recommendations based on literature and our own instructional practices to advance higher education instruction regarding academic honesty.

First, before making assumptions based on cultural backgrounds, we suggest initiating dialogues to shift the discourse around plagiarism. This includes reaching an agreement on the definition of plagiarism and negotiating different perspectives or understandings behind the act of plagiarism. For instance, instructors hold different opinions about a student re-using papers from a previous course or imitating certain projects (e.g., PowerPoint presentations, lesson plans, and media projects) from publicly available web sources. If students are encouraged to openly discuss such assumptions and definitions, they might be less likely to plagiarize and will be more likely to ask for an instructor's help if needed. Instructors can also consider inviting speakers who can potentially bring new perspectives about writing and promoting discussion activities that value diverse approaches to writing rather than adopting a monolithic definition of plagiarism (Lin and Scherz 2014).

Second, gaining a holistic understanding of each student through different channels of communication such as individual conferences, online office hours, or exit-slips after each class can encourage students' commitment to the course. Students are less likely to plagiarize when they believe the instructor cares and is willing to listen (Garavalia et al. 2007). Furthermore, promoting students' active learning can encourage students to have ownership of the course material (Chertok et al. 2014). Opportunities for one-on-one conversations through, for example, an individual writing conference can encourage students to reflect on their writing and literacy practices to develop meta-cognition for referencing and appropriating textual sources (Johns 1997).

Lastly, more training, opportunities to practice, and explicit instruction should be given to students in micro-level cultural practices. This includes informing and providing practices in the sentence- and paragraph-level source referencing skills and training students to recognize subtle plagiarism as much as blatant plagiarism. Although macro-level cultural practices play a role in the understanding and conception of plagiarism, L2 writers of English are also aware of the culturally conditioned concept of plagiarism (Chien 2017). In other words, once students are provided with instruction to learn appropriate skills, it is more likely that students will avoid unintentional plagiarism (Strittmatter and Bratton 2016). Furthermore, setting up explicit guidelines and opportunities for classroom norms such as interacting with and asking questions to peers and instructors can ease international students' academic and cultural challenges.

The purpose of this position paper was to challenge the prevailing cross-cultural perspective of plagiarism that negatively labels students from a particular cultural group as unethical students. Furthermore, we suggested expanding such a perspective by illustrating both macro-level and micro-level cultural practices that can influence L2 writers' ethical decision-making process and textual products in U.S. higher education classrooms. We concluded this position paper by making a few instructional recommendations that can promote open discussions between the instructor and students; help the instructor to understand each student holistically; and foster micro-level cultural practices in higher education classrooms. Such instructional practices will shift the discourse—as what Leask (2006) refers to as the orientalist discourse—from the binary and hierarchical “us” and “them” discourse to a mutually respected, equal, and just discourse in academic integrity and literacy practices. As we move forward to the internationalization of higher education in the U.S., we believe issues surrounding the ethics of plagiarism will be deemed a cultural opportunity to shift from a static view to a holistic view of embracing differences.

Compliance with ethical standards

Conflict of interest On behalf of all authors, the corresponding author states that there is no conflict of interest.

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