



Plagiarism and How to Avoid It

A guide for MPhil and PhD students



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Graduate School

PLAGIARISM
and How To Avoid It

by

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This booklet has been produced as a collaborative venture between

The Graduate School
and
The Centre for Applied English Studies



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THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

It must be emphasised that what is written in this booklet does not replace any of the University regulations and procedures. Whilst every attempt has been made to ensure the accuracy of the guide, the University regulations and procedures must be regarded as the authority where there is lack of correspondence between them and this booklet. 📖



The Graduate School assists research postgraduate students in their work through programmes offering training in general and specific research skills. The School is pleased to have been able to play its part in the production and distribution of this booklet since the avoidance of plagiarism is not only a duty of all researchers but part of a greater skill, that of writing in which all researchers must be proficient.

The Centre for Applied English Studies

One of the key roles of the Centre for Applied English Studies is to support and improve the use of Academic English among the students of the University. Plagiarism is an area of concern to all students, including undergraduates, because it transgresses the regulations of the University. This booklet will help you avoid plagiarism.

This booklet is produced and distributed by the Graduate School at The University of Hong Kong. For further copies or more information contact:

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INTRODUCTION

What is Plagiarism?

First, let's define plagiarism. The Oxford English Dictionary says it means '*..to take and use as one's own the thoughts, writings, or inventions of another.*' (CDROM 1987). In terms of how it affects you as a student, this is how it is defined in the regulations of The University of Hong Kong:

Plagiarism is defined as the unacknowledged use, as one's own, of work of another person, whether or not such work has been published.

Regulations Governing Conduct at Examinations.

In other words, we are talking about copying. It is clear that it doesn't matter whether the work which is copied has already been published or not. The significant points are that it was copied from someone else and that no acknowledgement has been made.

Why Avoid Plagiarism?

The university does not allow plagiarism. Here is what the regulations say:

A candidate shall not engage in plagiarism nor employ nor seek to employ any other unfair means at an examination or in any other form of work submitted for assessment as part of a University examination.

Regulations Governing Conduct at Examinations.

You may think, at first glance, this is only relevant when taking an exam. But you would be wrong for two reasons. Firstly, if you copy another person's work without acknowledgement you are committing plagiarism regardless of whether it is for an examination or not. Secondly, look again at the part which says *in any other work submitted for assessment*. That means any piece of work you do which counts towards your course assessment. In most cases this means any assignments you complete, any thesis or dissertation and anything you write in exams.

What This Booklet is About

So, have I got your attention? I hope so because now I want to admit that this booklet is not only about plagiarism. The way to avoid plagiarism is to be a better academic writer. Therefore, as well as discussing plagiarism this booklet also gives you some information and examples of what good academic writing is like. In other words, as well as telling you what not to do it also tells you what you should do.

Having said that, it is important to make clear that this booklet is not a complete course on academic writing. It couldn't possibly be that in so few pages. The intention of the booklet is to get you started in thinking about and practising better ways of writing. Different writers will need different additional support. Fortunately, various bodies within The University of Hong Kong understand this and have been active in developing resources to meet these needs.

Other Resources

For those writing a thesis, an important source of information is *Preparing and Submitting Your Thesis* prepared by and available from the Graduate School. This contains advice on the things you have to think about in writing a thesis. It also emphasises strongly the need to avoid plagiarism.

There are other resources within the University for the improvement of academic writing and other language skills. The English Centre runs courses for undergraduates and, in association with the Graduate School, provides written and oral language workshops and the *Writing Support Service* for postgraduates. There are also three self-access centres in which the English Centre provides a wide range of materials for independent study in all areas of English language improvement. These centres also house consultant-teachers who are willing to advise you on your individual language learning needs. The centres are open to all members of the University community.

The Main Library also contains a range of publications on effective study and academic writing. A list of these publications is available from the Information Desk.

I hope it is clear from the above that you have to treat the issue of plagiarism seriously and avoid it. However, it should also be clear that you are not alone in this endeavour. There are numerous resources around the university to help you.

This booklet is broken up into 4 sections. First we will look at techniques for avoiding plagiarism while quoting other writers. Then we will look at ways of expressing opinions about the quoted writing. Thirdly, we will look at supplying references for the quoted material. Finally, there is a self-test to help you identify plagiarism and to avoid it. You can do this on your own or you might choose to work through it with a partner or a small group.

Whichever kind of (plagiarism-free) writing you are currently involved in, good luck!

David Gardner

TECHNIQUES FOR AVOIDING PLAGIARISM

In academic writing you must show that you have read and understood the recommended books and any other relevant reading. BUT not by copying what they say. The ideas are owned by the writer. Copying in a way that makes the ideas *appear* to be your own is plagiarism.

There are two things you can do to avoid being accused of plagiarism:

1. *Paraphrasing* (re-writing in your own words)

Books and articles should be used as a source of information from which you write, in your own words, what you believe are the important points. You must acknowledge your sources of information (see below). In the parts of your writing that rely on source texts for information, paraphrasing should be used the most.

As well as stating the important points you should also explain the points, compare and contrast the views of different authors you have read, and add your own comments on the topic under discussion. By doing these things you go beyond merely repeating the information which you have found. This is what makes a good assignment. Repeating information shows only that the information has been read and possibly memorised. The addition of explanations, comparisons, contrasts and comments is better because it shows that the information has been read, analysed and understood. A teacher who is marking an assignment is sure to give higher marks for such a display of knowledge and understanding.

2. *Follow the rules when copying directly from a text*

There are times when you can quote directly from your source material. However, you must follow certain rules.

- Direct copying of part of a passage (e.g. a whole paragraph) must occur rarely in your writing and once copied should not represent a large proportion of your own text. It should be clearly distinguished from the rest of your text in a way which makes it clear that it is a quotation.
- Very short parts of a source text (e.g. part of a sentence) can be copied when needed. However, the words that you have copied must be immediately obvious to your reader. You must also take care not to change any of the words.
- The exact source of your quotation must be acknowledged. This must be done in a way which shows clearly how much is copied (see below).

Examples of when you might want to copy directly are:

- when the exact words are relevant to your argument/discussion
- when something is expressed in a way which is unique
- when re-writing would cause a loss of impact

2.1 Techniques for direct quotation

To avoid accusations of plagiarism you must show exactly which parts of your text have been copied from other texts. You must, therefore, mark the beginning and ending of the quotation and give the number of the page from which it is taken. Here are some examples:

Example 1: If you are copying more than 2 lines of text they should be indented to show clearly the extent of the quotation.

When discussing the availability of video materials specifically for use by self-access learners, Gardner makes a distinction between teaching material and learning material.

There is a lot of good quality video teaching material but there is very little that can be described, as it stands, as good quality learning material. This is no surprise when we consider the goals of most of this video material, it was designed to be used by teachers in classrooms. What has typically turned quality teaching material into quality learning material is the teachers' input. If that material is made available for self-access learning without providing, in some way, the teachers' input to go with it, it will be of limited benefit to learners.

(Gardner 1994, p108)

This is not a distinction that should necessarily be restricted to the discussion of video materials but should be extended more widely to the discussion of the provision of self-access materials in general.

Example 2: Include short quotations in your text but mark clearly where they begin and end by using inverted commas.

When discussing the availability of video materials specifically for use by self-access learners, Gardner suggests that what 'has typically turned quality teaching material into quality learning material is the teachers' input' (1994, p108). This is a distinction that should be extended more widely to the discussion of the provision of self-access materials in general.

When discussing the availability of video materials specifically for use by self-access learners, it has been suggested that what 'has typically turned quality teaching material into quality learning material is the teachers' input' (Gardner 1994, p108). This is a distinction that should be extended more widely to the discussion of the provision of self-access materials in general.

2.2 Acknowledging your sources

There are different methods for acknowledging sources. Ask your tutor which method is preferred. If this is not possible, use the method which you see most often in the materials that you are reading for your study. Once you have chosen a method it is important to *remain consistent*.

The two most common methods are:

- **Footnotes or endnotes**

Place a small number (usually slightly higher than the word it follows) in the text and list your sources by number either at the foot of the page or the end of the text. The numbers must run consecutively through the text.

What you do in your writing:

Gardner says that what turns good teaching material into good learning material is what teachers do with it¹.

What you do at the bottom of the page, or end of your writing:

Notes:

1. Gardner, D. 1994 'Creating simple interactive video for self-access' in D. Gardner. and L. Miller (Eds.) Directions in Self-Access Language Learning. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.

- **Brief references in the text**

In the text you acknowledge a source by giving the author's family name and the date of publication. Readers can then check this in a references list at the end of your writing which contains the full publication information.

What you do in your writing:

Gardner (1994) says that what turns good teaching material into good learning material is what teachers do with it.

One item in the list at the end of your writing:

References:

Gardner, D. 1994 'Creating simple interactive video for self-access' in D. Gardner. and L. Miller (Eds.) Directions in Self-Access Language Learning. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.

EXPRESSING YOUR OPINIONS

When quoting information you have an opportunity to express your own opinion about it. This is usually done by careful selection of the verb you use to report the information. Here are some examples of varying your opinion using the same quotation that we have already seen.

Example 1: Expressing a positive opinion about the quoted information:

Gardner (1994) demonstrates that what turns good teaching material into good learning material is what teachers do with it.

Example 2: Expressing a negative opinion about the quoted information:

Gardner (1994) claims that what turns good teaching material into good learning material is what teachers do with it.

Example 3: Expressing a neutral opinion about the quoted information:

Gardner (1994) states that what turns good teaching material into good learning material is what teachers do with it.

What turns good teaching material into good learning material is what teachers do with it (Gardner 1994).

Reporting Verbs

There is a large range of verbs to choose from. The best way to get a feel for these is to observe how they are used in the books and journals that you read. Look out for the following, when you see them note how they are used:

argue	claim	conclude	define
demonstrate	describe	discuss	examine
explain	find	hypothesise	identify
indicate	note	observe	point out
propose	report	show	state
suggest			

REFERENCE LISTS/BIBLIOGRAPHIES

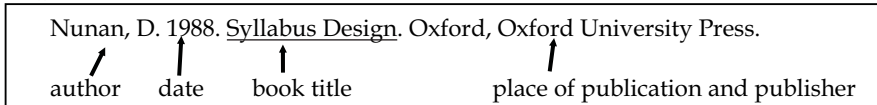
Whether you are using footnotes, endnotes or brief references in the text you must supply full information about the sources of information you are referring to. Once you have decided on a system *be consistent*.

The information supplied about each publication must contain the following elements:

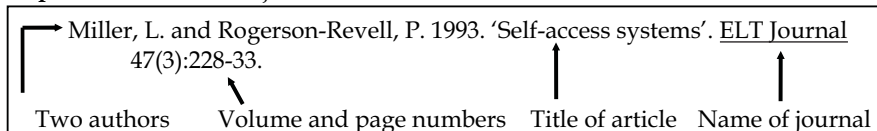
- the name of the author(s)
- the date of publication
- the title of the work (also the name and issue number of the journal if it is from a journal, or the name of the collection and the editor if it is from an edited collection)
- the publisher

Here are some examples:

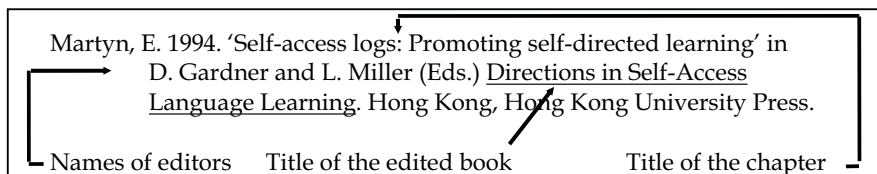
Example 1: . A book:



Example 2: . An article in a journal:



Example 3: . A chapter in an edited collection:



HOW MUCH HAVE YOU UNDERSTOOD? (identifying and avoiding plagiarism)

The following exercise is a self-test to help you evaluate whether you are able to apply what you have learned about avoiding plagiarism. You should not look at the "answers" until you have completed each part of the test. This is, of course, your choice but if you do cheat you may never know whether you are a potential plagiarist!

Texts A and B are source texts which have been used to provide information for writing the student texts (labelled 1 to 5).

Here is what you have to do:

1. Read source texts A and B to get a picture of the source information.
2. For each of the student texts one by one:
 - i) read the text
 - ii) decide if it is guilty of plagiarism
 - iii) identify exactly what is wrong (or right)
 - iv) think of ways to correct the problems
 - v) check the comments on the text (at the end of the notes)

Source Text A

Mickey Mouse is a well loved symbol of the greatness of America. He represents a long carefree era when everything in the world has gone well for the most prosperous nation on earth. He symbolises the prosperity of Americans throughout a period when they have dominated the world both economically and politically.

It is significant that a creature often viewed in other countries as a pest to be eradicated can rise in the United States of America to become a movie star and a household name. This symbolises the American dream where everyone (including apparently rodents and quite possibly many other non-human personalities) can expect freedom of speech, freedom of actions and freedom to make an honest living. It is important to note in this context that the rise to fame and/or riches of an underdog has long been a popular theme in the folk lore of western countries in general but of America in particular.

Not content to make a hero out of one rodent, the American public has also idolised Mickey's partner Minnie. It is interesting to note that Mickey and Minnie frequently demonstrate behavior not unlike human courtship behavior. It is also interesting to note that this happily unmarried couple remain perpetually in this state of innocent bliss. This state seems to capture the innocence of childhood that children do not know they have and adults reminisce about incessantly.

In addition to their role as a platonic couple Mickey and Minnie demonstrate socially acceptable inter-personal behavior with their collection of animal friends. These characters have developed as vehicles for teaching young children the key elements of social behavior. Parents of today have grown up on the antics of Mickey Mouse and his friends and are happy for their children to do so.

It is quite likely that Mickey Mouse originated from a lucky idea by Walt Disney with no intention to create role models for the young (or the young at heart). However, he has developed into an important figure in American, and perhaps global, society. He has played and continues to play an essential part in the formation of well balanced members of society both through film and the now international Mickey Mouse Club.

Extracted from: *Symbols of America* by R.O. Dent 1988 page 53

Source Text B

Mickey Mouse, the charming little mouse from Walt Disney, is known around the world. He is considered a playful character who often gets into trouble but inevitably comes out on top. His resourcefulness and wit are regarded as symbolising all that is best about America and the Americans (Dent 1988). While it is true that Mickey Mouse symbolises America this should not be regarded as a positive but rather a negative feature of the small rodent's character.

The fame of Mickey Mouse has spread around the world in the same way that Coca Cola and MacDonaldis have arrived in even the most obscure corners of the earth. It has been promoted by the American publicity machine. This is a form of insidious colonialism that is far more evil than the European colonialism of the past. In their era the Europeans were unstoppable just as Mickey Mouse and all that follows is unstoppable. The important difference is that European colonialism was immediately noticeable and, therefore, more possible to resist.

It is true that European colonialism was not easy to defeat in the short term simply because it had behind it what was at the time the world's strongest military powers. Mickey Mouse colonialism has an equal, if not greater, power supporting its advance. However, it is infinitely more difficult to defeat in the short or long term because it becomes part of the social fabric of its colonies in a way that earlier versions of colonialism never could.

For nine tenths of the world Mickey Mouse is not, in fact, the loveable underdog who manages to succeed in the land of plenty. He is not the role model who shows children how to interact socially with groups of friends and with individuals of the opposite sex. He is, by contrast, a dictator who moulds children to social behaviour patterns which are alien to their society. He fosters rampant consumerism among nations who are economically unready for it, thus, creating bankrupted dependent client states. He also contributes to linguistic colonisation.

Despite the claims from within the United States of America it is necessary to view the effect of Mickey Mouse, and all that followed after him, in a global sense. It is clear that his role has been as a forerunner for the American colonisation of much of the world. There are many parts of the world today where culture and society have suffered irreparably as a result of this colonisation.

Extracted from: *Insidious Icons of Our Times* by Michel Souris 1990 page 109

Student Text 1

Mickey Mouse is a well loved symbol of the greatness of America because he represents a long carefree era when everything in the world has gone well for the most prosperous nation on earth. The fame of Mickey Mouse has spread around the world in the same way that Coca Cola and MacDonaldis have arrived in even the most obscure corners of the earth. He symbolises the prosperity of Americans throughout a period when they have dominated the world both economically and politically. Mickey Mouse has become a movie star and a household name. This symbolises the American dream where everyone (including apparently rodents and quite possibly many other non-human personalities) can expect freedom of speech, freedom of actions and freedom to make an honest living.

While it is true that Mickey Mouse symbolises America this should not be regarded as a positive but rather a negative feature of the small rodent's character. He has been promoted by the American publicity machine. This is a form of insidious colonialism that is far more evil than the European colonialism of the past. In their era the Europeans were unstoppable just as Mickey Mouse and all that follows is unstoppable. The important difference is that European colonialism was immediately noticeable and, therefore, more possible to resist.

Mickey and Minnie Mouse demonstrate socially acceptable inter-personal behavior with their collection of animal friends. These characters have developed as vehicles for teaching young children the key elements of social behavior. Parents of today have grown up on the antics of Mickey Mouse and his friends and are happy for their children to do so. However, some people think he is not the role model who shows children how to interact socially with groups of friends and with individuals of the opposite sex. But he is a dictator who moulds children to social behaviour patterns which are alien to their society. He fosters rampant consumerism among nations who are economically unready for it, thus, creating bankrupted dependent client states. He also contributes to linguistic colonisation.

Is this text guilty of plagiarism? If so, what exactly is wrong? How can you correct it? Your comments:

Student Text 2

R.O. Dent says that Mickey Mouse is a well loved symbol of the greatness of America. He represents a long carefree era when everything in the world has gone well for the most prosperous nation on earth. He symbolises the prosperity of Americans throughout a period when they have dominated the world both economically and politically.

Michel Souris says Mickey Mouse, the charming little mouse from Walt Disney, is known around the world. He is considered a playful character who often gets into trouble but inevitably comes out on top. His resourcefulness and wit are regarded as symbolising all that is best about America and the Americans. While it is true that Mickey Mouse symbolises America this should not be regarded as a positive but rather a negative feature of the small rodent's character.

R.O. Dent also says that it is significant that a creature often viewed in other countries as a pest to be eradicated can rise in the United States of America to become a movie star and a household name. This symbolises the American dream where everyone (including apparently rodents and quite possibly many other non-human personalities) can expect freedom of speech, freedom of actions and freedom to make an honest living. It is important to note in this context that the rise to fame and or riches of an underdog has long been a popular theme in the folk lore of western countries in general but of America in particular.

Michel Souris also says that the fame of Mickey Mouse has spread around the world in the same way that Coca Cola and MacDonalds have arrived in even the most obscure corners of the earth. It has been promoted by the American publicity machine. This is a form of insidious colonialism that is far more evil than the European colonialism of the past. In their era the Europeans were unstoppable just as Mickey Mouse and all that follows is unstoppable. The important difference is that European colonialism was immediately noticeable and, therefore, more possible to resist.

He also says that for nine tenths of the world Mickey Mouse is not, in fact, the loveable underdog who manages to succeed in the land of plenty. He is not the role model who shows children how to interact socially with groups of friends and with individuals of the opposite sex. He is, by contrast, a dictator who moulds children to social behaviour patterns which are alien to their society. He fosters rampant consumerism among nations who are economically unready for it, thus, creating bankrupted dependent client states. He also contributes to linguistic colonisation.

Is this text guilty of plagiarism? If so, what exactly is wrong? How can you correct it? Your comments:

Student Text 3

Dent (1988) has said that Mickey Mouse is 'a well loved symbol of the greatness of America' (p53) who symbolises the best aspects of life from the American viewpoint. In defining this symbolism he refers to the prosperity and the power, both political and economic, of the United States of America and its people throughout the last fifty years. He also mentions the fact that the rise to fame and fortune of a cartoon character, particularly of such a weak figure as a mouse, is a phenomenon unique to American culture. He links this symbolism to the aspects of the way of life in America which offer its citizens the freedom to lead their lives as they please.

Souris (1990) is aware of earlier arguments (Dent 1988) regarding the symbolism of Mickey Mouse and also comments on this aspect of the cartoon character. He says that the power of this symbolism when released globally is 'a form of insidious colonialism that is far more evil than the European colonialism of the past' (p109). It is also much more difficult to overcome because it integrates itself more fully into the society it invades. Souris (1990) says that, when taken outside the American context, Mickey Mouse is not a good role model for children but, in contrast, encourages behaviour which is unacceptable in their own societies. It is also opined that Mickey Mouse encourages consumerism and facilitates the establishment of English as a universal language to the detriment of local languages.

Is this text guilty of plagiarism? If so, what exactly is wrong? How can you correct it? Your comments:

Student Text 4

Dent (1988) says that Mickey Mouse is 'a well loved symbol of the greatness of America' (p53) who symbolises the best aspects of life from the American viewpoint. In defining this symbolism he refers to the prosperity and the power, both political and economic, of the United States of America and its people throughout the period of Mickey Mouse's existence (approximately the last fifty years). During this period America has increased its status as a world power through participation in wars and the space race as well as through generous overseas aid and maintenance of a strong dollar.

Souris (1990) agrees that Mickey Mouse is symbolic of certain features of American life, however, he takes a more negative view of this symbolism which he sees as 'a form of insidious colonialism that is far more evil than the European colonialism of the past' (p109). He argues that the European colonialism of the nineteenth century was easier to combat whereas the insidious 'Mickey Mouse colonialism' (p109) is much more difficult to overcome because it integrates itself more fully into the society it invades. It is important to note that while Dent (1988) refers only to the American context Souris (1990) extends his arguments to a global context.

Dent (1988) says that the rise to fame and fortune of a cartoon character, particularly of such a weak figure as a mouse, is a phenomenon unique to American culture. He links this symbolism to the aspects of the way of life in America which offer its citizens the freedom to lead their lives as they please. This freedom is guaranteed under the American constitution and is, therefore, an important feature of life in America. Souris (1990) does not dispute this argument but says that, when taken outside the American context, Mickey Mouse is not a good role model for children but, in contrast, encourages behaviour which is unacceptable in their own societies. Souris (1990) also says that Mickey Mouse encourages consumerism and facilitates the establishment of English as a universal language to the detriment of local languages.

Is this text guilty of plagiarism? If so, what exactly is wrong? How can you correct it? Your comments:

Student Text 5

Dent (1988) claims with little evidence that Mickey Mouse is 'a well loved symbol of the greatness of America' (p53) who symbolises the best aspects of life from the American viewpoint. In attempting to define this symbolism he refers to the prosperity and the power, both political and economic, of the United States of America and its people throughout the period of Mickey Mouse's existence (approximately the last fifty years). During this period America has increased its status as a world power through participation in wars and the space race as well as through generous overseas aid and maintenance of a strong dollar.

Souris (1990) agrees that Mickey Mouse is symbolic of certain features of American life, however, he takes a more negative view of this symbolism which he shows is 'a form of insidious colonialism that is far more evil than the European colonialism of the past' (p109). He demonstrates that the European colonialism of the nineteenth century was easier to combat whereas the insidious 'Mickey Mouse colonialism' (p109) is much more difficult to overcome because it clearly integrates itself more fully into the society it invades. It is important to note that while Dent (1988) refers only to the American context Souris (1990) shows that the arguments extend inevitably to a global context.

Dent (1988) suggests that the rise to fame and fortune of a cartoon character, particularly of such a weak figure as a mouse, is a phenomenon unique to American culture. He attempts to link this symbolism to the aspects of the way of life in America which appear to offer its citizens the freedom to lead their lives as they please. This freedom seems to be guaranteed under the American constitution and is, therefore, considered as an important feature of life in America. Souris (1990) does not dispute this argument but makes clear that when taken outside the American context, Mickey Mouse is not a good role model for children but, in contrast, encourages behaviour which is unacceptable in their own societies. Souris (1990) also shows that Mickey Mouse encourages consumerism and wider use of the English language. It seems likely that Mickey Mouse has contributed to the establishment of English as a universal language to the detriment of other national languages.

Is this text guilty of plagiarism? If so, what exactly is wrong? How can you correct it? Your comments:

ANALYSIS OF THE STUDENT TEXTS

TEXT 1

COMMENTS

This is the worst possible kind of plagiarism. It 'steals' large chunks of text from both the source texts without any acknowledgement. In fact, very little of this text is written by the student writer. It is mostly copied from the sources although the order has sometimes been changed. In addition, some of the pieces of copied text are used in a way that does not make clear the original view of the author. For example, the second sentence (beginning "The fame of...") is taken from source text B where it is used to express a negative view of the spread of Mickey Mouse's fame. However, the way it has been incorporated here (i.e. out of context) it tends to reinforce the positive view expressed by source text A.

OUTCOME

The writer of this text would at least be asked to re-write the assignment. If it was a repeat offence the writer might be asked to leave the course.

TEXT 2

COMMENTS

This text indicates the sources of information used. Also the text has been structured reasonably well so that the relevant points from each source appear together. However, there are two main faults. Firstly, it is not clear from the text how much of it is directly copied and how much is paraphrased. In fact, if we look carefully we see that virtually the entire text is copied from one or other of the sources. This is far too much direct copying. Secondly, the writer has added nothing. There are no explanations, comparisons, contrasts or opinions about what the sources say.

The writer has done a minimal job and is still guilty of plagiarism because there is no indication of direct copying (and there is too much copying anyway).

OUTCOME

The teacher may ask the writer to resubmit the work or may award a low (or even fail) grade.

TEXT 3

COMMENTS

This text indicates its sources in a correct manner and we can see from studying the original texts that most of the time it is not copying directly but paraphrasing the information. On the two occasions when direct copying takes place it is done correctly. The paraphrasing has allowed the writer to show an understanding of the source texts, for example, we see that the writer has clearly understood the contrastive nature of the two sources.

As **descriptions** of what the writer has read in the sources these two paragraphs are well written. However, they do not go far enough. The writer has not exploited the contrast to the full, has included almost no explanation of points and has included absolutely no opinion.

OUTCOME

As a well written text covering the main points of the topic this text would receive an average mark. After spending a lot of time producing well polished sentences the writer would be disappointed with this mark. To do better the writer needs to demonstrate an ability to manipulate the information.

TEXT 4

COMMENTS

This text acknowledges its sources correctly and clearly indicates which pieces are copied directly and which pieces are paraphrased. The second half of the final sentence of the piece appears to be a paraphrase, however, it tends to attribute more to Souris than he actually wrote. It is, rather, an interpretation and extrapolation of what Souris wrote.

The structuring of the text is good. Related views from different sources (either agreeing or disagreeing) are linked together. The links are indicated by "Souris (1990) agrees....., however,..." and also by "Souris (1990) does not dispute this information but..."

In addition, some explanations are added where the writer feels the audience may need further clarification. Some examples of this are:

- the last sentence of paragraph one
- the use of "nineteenth century" to clarify "in the past" in paragraph two
- the third sentence in paragraph three

The only thing missing from this text is that the writer expresses no views about the points of information. In fact the second half of the final sentence might be an opinion which the student writer has (perhaps shyly and certainly wrongly) attributed to a published source.

OUTCOME

This text is well written and uses the source texts correctly. It also structures the information well. It should receive an above average mark.

TEXT 5

COMMENTS

This is a well written text. It acknowledges its sources and shows clearly which pieces have been copied directly. The final sentence reflects more clearly how much is attributable to Souris and how much is the student writer's own opinion.

It explains points which may need further clarification and shows clearly contrasts between the different source authors' views.

Most importantly, it includes the views of the writer. These views are not expressed clumsily in terms of "My opinion is..." but rather in the subtleties of how the views of the different source authors are represented. For example, in the first sentence "Dent (1988) claims with little evidence....". This shows that the writer is reporting what Dent has said but does not find it convincing. The best way of seeing how the writer's opinion has been included is to compare text 5 with text 4. The texts are identical except for the changes shown in table 1 (and the final sentence). All of these changes reflect the writer's opinion about the information from his sources.

<i>Paragraph / Sentence</i>	<i>Wording in Text 4</i>	<i>Wording in Text 5</i>
1 / 1	says	claims with little evidence
1 / 2	defining	in attempting to define
2 / 1	sees as	shows is
2 / 2	argues	demonstrates
2 / 2	integrates	clearly integrates
2 / 3	extends his arguments	shows that the arguments extend inevitably
3 / 1	says	suggests
3 / 2	links	attempts to link
3 / 2	offer	appear to offer
3 / 3	is guaranteed	seems to be guaranteed
3 / 3	an important feature	considered as an important feature
3 / 4	says	makes clear

TABLE 1: Differences between Text 4 and Text 5

The changes in wording show that the writer is sympathetic to the views of Souris but not to the views of Dent. Nevertheless, the text still accurately represents what the two source authors said.

OUTCOME

This text deserves a high mark for demonstrating a knowledge of the information and also for demonstrating the ability to manipulate the information to make the points which the writer thinks are important.

FINAL NOTES

If working through this self-test has made you think about what you write and the way you write it then it has served its purpose. It is not supposed to give you a “quick fix” but to get you thinking.

If you want to learn more about the way people express opinion in their writing, look at the way it is done in everything you read. If you find reporting verbs or sentence structures you like then use them in your own writing.

Finally, a confession. All the source texts and the student texts used in this self-test were made up just for the test. I needed something short and simple enough to illustrate my points which you could work with easily and quickly. I hope you don't feel deceived. I certainly don't feel guilty because I think the texts have done their job.

Language Enhancement Opportunities provided by the Centre for Applied English Studies

For Research Postgraduates:

- Writing Support Service: research postgraduate students can submit 10-15 pages of their own writing and
 - a) receive feedback on the strengths and weaknesses of the writing
 - b) work with a writing specialist on their writing
- Self-access learning opportunities - with consultation and support provided by teachers of the Centre for Applied English Studies (<http://ec.hku.hk/vec>) (see below)

For Undergraduates:

- Courses in academic and professional English are offered to all undergraduates.
- All undergraduates can use the self-access centres independently or participate in the special programmes (see below).

Self-access Centres

These facilities are open to all members of the university for :

- Independent study
- Consultations with language teachers
- Special programmes:
 - Orientation to self-access (introduction to resources and strategies)
 - Conversation exchange
 - Discussion groups
 - Self-directed English Programme
 - IELTS workshops
 - Pronunciation workshops

To find out more about self-access learning (or to get started right away) visit:

- The Virtual English Centre (<http://ec.hku.hk/vec>)
- The Language Resource Centre, 4/F, Meng Wah Complex
 - Monday - Friday: 9 am - 8 pm (term time); 9 am - 6 pm (rest of the year);
 - closed on Saturdays, Sundays and holidays



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