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Effective Strategies for Avoiding Plagiarism in Academic Writing: An Interdisciplinary Approach

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Abstract

This article defines plagiarism and the strategies for avoiding it in academic writing. We must learn skills to avoid plagiarism. This article describes different types of plagiarism and advises on preventing them. In modern Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology, nothing can be hidden if they are posted on the website. So, one should be careful while using others' ideas and language. Though modern knowledge is interdisciplinary, we must be sincere while using others' ideas—the best way to be safe from the allegation of plagiarism is to acknowledge them in any way. When we give credit to them, we become intellectually sincere. It is necessary to learn how we happen to commit plagiarism knowingly or unknowingly. Only then, can we seek solutions or strategies for avoiding them. By using the interdisciplinary approach, this article explores the different avenues to reach a safe destination untainted by the ink of plagiarism.

Keywords: Plagiarism, Interdisciplinary, Artificial Intelligence (AI), ChatGPT

Introduction

Plagiarism is intellectual dishonesty or copying others' ideas as one's own. According to the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, plagiarism is “the practice of copying another person's ideas,



words or work and pretending that they are your own.” According to the Dictionary, the synonyms of plagiarism are copy, piracy, theft, stealing, poaching, appropriation, cribbing, and infringement of copyright.

As Elizabeth Brookbank and H. Faye Christenberry define, plagiarism is “using other people's words or ideas without attribution, intentionally or unintentionally passing them off as one's own (136). According to the *MLA Handbook*,

Plagiarism is presenting another person's ideas, words, or entire work as your own. Plagiarism may sometimes have legal repercussions (e.g., when it involves copyright infringement) but is always unethical.

Plagiarism can take a number of forms. Copying a published or unpublished text of any length, whether deliberately or accidentally, is plagiarism if you do not give credit to the source. Paraphrasing someone's ideas or arguments or copying someone's unique wording without giving proper credit is plagiarism. Turning in a paper or thesis written by someone else, even if you paid for it, is plagiarism. (Modern Language Association)

The commercial use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) is growing faster. Before the introduction of AI on the internet, people could plagiarize easily. However, after the introduction of AI, it is not so easy to plagiarize because it can be easily noticed through the internet or plagiarism-detecting software. Therefore, it is a challenging work to show one's own original, creative, or critical thoughts. Whatever we search on the internet or post or comment on Facebook, YouTube, etc. can be easily detected by others. So, we should not search vulgar and criminal matters on the internet. Against this background, we can show our creative or critical mind by acknowledging the previous authors. Keeping these ideas in mind, the objective of this article is to explore the different types of plagiarism and the strategies for avoiding them.

Interdisciplinary Approach

This article uses an interdisciplinary approach to explore the different types of plagiarism and suggests strategies for avoiding them. The interdisciplinary approach integrates ideas from different disciplines of knowledge to fulfill the objective. It is a salad culture in which different varieties are combined to create new tastes.

A relevant example comes from Edward O. Wilson's famous book *Consilience: The Unity of Knowledge*. Wilson advocates for the integration of disciplines, stating that “the greatest enterprise of the mind has always been and always will be the attempted linkage of the sciences and humanities” (8). His work highlights the power of interdisciplinary thinking in bridging gaps between different fields of study.

Wilson's quote mentioned above strongly advocates interdisciplinary collaboration. He argues that integrating scientific and humanistic perspectives is essential for advancing knowledge and solving complex problems. This idea underscores his belief in “consilience,” or the unity of knowledge, where different disciplines should not exist in isolation but rather complement and enrich one another. Objectively, Wilson's assertion highlights the limitations of working within a single field, particularly when addressing multifaceted issues like climate change, ethics, or technological advancement. It champions a holistic approach to learning, which can lead to more innovative solutions by blending empirical evidence from the sciences with the philosophical, ethical, and cultural insights from the

humanities. However, one could critique this approach by noting that integrating vastly different fields can be challenging, as disciplines often have distinct methodologies and terminologies that can create barriers to effective collaboration. Wilson's idea remains highly influential, especially in contemporary academic and research settings that increasingly encourage interdisciplinary work to tackle global and complex problems.

Using an interdisciplinary approach can help avoid plagiarism by encouraging original thought and allowing us to draw from multiple sources and fields, rather than relying too heavily on a single one. When we incorporate knowledge, methodologies, and perspectives from different disciplines, we naturally create unique connections and interpretations that minimize the risk of unintentional plagiarism. Here are some strategies and examples of how this can work:

- **Broadening sources of inspiration:** By engaging with different disciplines, we can gather diverse insights. For instance, combining literary theory with psychology might give us new angles to analyze character development in a novel.
Example: Analyzing Shakespeare's *Hamlet* through both psychology (Freudian analysis of Hamlet's hesitation) and philosophy (existentialism and the theme of life's meaning) leads to an original interpretation that blends ideas from two fields.
- **Using different research methods:** Different disciplines often use distinct research methodologies. Integrating these can help produce unique findings.
Example: In a research paper on the ethics of AI, we might combine computer science's technical approach with philosophy's ethical frameworks. This method would result in an analysis that reflects multiple, often underexplored, perspectives.
- **Exploring unique perspectives:** By examining a topic from multiple disciplines, we can bring fresh perspectives to existing conversations.
Example: In the study of climate change, instead of repeating ideas from environmental science, we could incorporate economics (the cost of climate action), sociology (how different communities are affected), and politics (the policy-making challenges). Each discipline adds depth to the analysis, making it our own.
- **Creating new connections:** Interdisciplinary work often involves connecting ideas that haven't been widely linked before, leading to new frameworks and insights.
Example: When researching human identity, combining neuroscience (the biological basis of behavior) with literature (representation of identity in the narrative) can create new conversations on how personal identity is constructed both in the brain and in society.

Some more strategies of interdisciplinary approach are discussed below:

- **Combining disciplines:** A research paper that explores the environmental impact of literature could combine ecology and literary analysis. By examining how authors represent nature, the work not only draws from literary theory but also incorporates scientific studies on environmental issues.
- **Cross-pollinating ideas:** Artists might study psychology to understand the emotional impact of color in their work. By integrating psychological principles into the artistic process, they create a unique style rather than replicating existing artworks.



- **Citing multiple perspectives:** A thesis on the effects of social media on mental health could integrate sociology, psychology, and communication studies. By citing research from each of these fields, the argument becomes more robust and avoids over-reliance on a single source.
- **Developing new methodologies:** A researcher studying migration patterns might combine geography and sociology to create a new framework for understanding the social dynamics of communities. This original methodology can lead to new insights and prevent the use of established theories without attribution.
- **Creating original case studies:** In a public health project, one could draw from both public policy and health sciences to develop a case study on the effectiveness of a new health initiative. By framing the analysis through both lenses, the work becomes original rather than derivative.
- **Utilizing creative formats:** A historian could incorporate graphic design to present historical data visually. By creating infographics that merge historical facts with visual storytelling, the output is innovative and less likely to be plagiarized.
- **Engaging with different media:** A film studies scholar might analyze a film using insights from sociology and gender studies, examining how societal norms influence character development. This approach enriches the analysis and fosters original thought.
- **Exploring cultural contexts:** In a literature review, one could explore how cultural studies and anthropology illuminate the themes in a novel, examining cultural artifacts alongside the text. This multi-faceted perspective can yield fresh interpretations.

Practical steps to avoid plagiarism through interdisciplinary work:

- **Cite everything properly:** Ensure that all sources, even from multiple disciplines, are properly credited.
- **Synthesize, don't copy:** Bring ideas together and show how they interact or contrast, rather than repeating verbatim from each source.
- **Contribute your analysis:** Always add your own critical thinking and analysis to the conversation, rather than just summarizing others' work.

An interdisciplinary approach encourages creativity, and as long as we are synthesizing and attributing sources correctly, it helps us produce distinctive work that avoids plagiarism.

Benefits of interdisciplinary approaches.

- **Enhances creativity:** Exposure to various fields can spark new ideas.
- **Promotes critical thinking:** Engaging with diverse theories encourages deeper analysis.
- **Encourages originality:** Drawing from multiple sources leads to unique conclusions and reduces the likelihood of unintentional plagiarism.

By leveraging interdisciplinary connections, researchers and creators can produce original work that reflects a comprehensive understanding of their subjects while respecting intellectual property.

Strategies for Avoiding Plagiarism in Academic Writing

There are multiple strategies for avoiding plagiarism in academic writing. They are paraphrasing, summarizing, quoting, acknowledging, creating reference lists, or crediting the author in any other way such as through footnotes, endnotes, etc. Regarding paraphrasing, Adrian Wallwork in his book *English for Academic Research Grammar, Usage and Style* states,

Paraphrasing, i.e. saying the same thing using different words, is very useful when you are not 100% sure that what you have written is correct. In such cases, you can rewrite the phrase using construction and words that you know are correct (using simple words, grammar and word order). On other occasions, you may want to paraphrase something to avoid plagiarizing your own work or someone else's work. Plagiarism software will even find examples of where you have written the same phrase in another published paper. (120)

In simple terms, the passage gives practical advice about paraphrasing for clarity and to avoid plagiarism but we should also encourage deeper understanding and originality in how ideas are rephrased.

Wallwork in his book *English for Academic Research: Writing Exercise* discusses that paraphrasing helps "you to avoid plagiarism (cutting and pasting from other papers without acknowledging the source i.e. taking the credit for work that others have done)" and to avoid "word-for-word repetition of what you wrote earlier in the paper." The skills of paraphrasing are "being concise, avoiding redundancy, changing nouns to verbs, changing from a personal form to an impersonal (or vice versa), [and] changing the word order. When paraphrasing, concentrate on the concept rather than the actual words used by the original author" (117). In simpler terms, Wallwork is saying that paraphrasing is not just about changing a few words but understanding the main point and expressing it differently while keeping it clear and concise.

Farah Khaled and Sabbih H. Al-Tamimi mention two major types and their subtypes of plagiarism as follows:

- **Literal plagiarism:** Replicate plagiarism, self-plagiarism, accidental plagiarism, and mosaic plagiarism (2774).
- **Intelligent plagiarism:** Structural plagiarism, idea plagiarism, and metaphor plagiarism (2774).

Literal plagiarism refers to copying someone else's words or work directly, without giving credit to the original source. It can be broken down into several types:

- **Replicate plagiarism:** Copying someone's work word-for-word without making any changes or giving credit.
- **Self-plagiarism:** Reusing one's previous work without telling anyone, like submitting an old paper as if it were new.
- **Accidental plagiarism:** Unintentionally copying another's works, maybe because we forget to cite the source or do not realize we are repeating someone else's ideas or text.
- **Mosaic plagiarism:** Borrowing phrases from different sources and mixing them into our own writing without properly quoting or citing, making it look like the work is original.

Intelligent plagiarism refers to more subtle forms of copying where the plagiarism is less obvious than directly copying words. Here's a breakdown of its subtypes:

- **Structural plagiarism:** Not copying the exact words but instead copying the structure or organization of another person's work. The content might be different, but the way it is arranged, or the framework, is the same.
- **Idea plagiarism:** Taking someone else's original ideas and presenting them as our own without giving credit. Even if the wording is different, the core concept is stolen.



- **Metaphor plagiarism:** Using a unique or creative metaphor or comparison, originally developed by someone else. Even though it is not word-for-word copying, it steals the original author's creative expression.

In short, in intelligent plagiarism, we are more careful to avoid directly copying text, but we still take key elements like structure, ideas, or creative expressions without proper acknowledgment.

Gerald Graff, Cathy Birkenstein, and Russel Durst hold that often, a lively discussion helps clarify who owns an author's work and where the line between plagiarism and fair use lies. Students quickly realize that common phrases like "on the one hand . . . on the other hand" or "a controversial issue" are so widely used that they belong to everyone and can be used freely without worry. However, if we use someone else's original words or ideas to complete these phrases without giving credit, it is plagiarism. In short, while it is okay to reuse commonly used expressions, taking another person's actual content without acknowledgment is a serious academic offense (13).

Judith Woolf argues that a translation is considered the author's work and using it without giving credit is plagiarism. Some well-meaning people mistakenly think it is okay to copy translations, like copying math answers from a book. However, each translator creates a unique version of the text, making translations easily recognizable. When studying for a translation exam, we should be careful not to memorize one specific translation too closely, as we might unintentionally copy it word for word in our exam, which could lead to accidental plagiarism (114).

Predatory academic journals accept the authors' articles or papers without performing a plagiarism test. Cabell's blacklist is a resource that identifies and lists predatory academic journals. These are journals that engage in deceptive practices, such as claiming false peer review processes, charging high fees without providing proper editorial oversight, or making misleading claims about their impact factors and indexing. Cabell's blacklist evaluates journals based on 60 criteria, grouped into categories like minor, moderate, and severe offenses, to help researchers avoid submitting their work to untrustworthy publications. Predatory journals often mimic legitimate ones by using prestigious-sounding names or fake metrics. Cabell's goal is to protect scholars from wasting their research efforts by highlighting such journals, as well as offering a companion list, called "Journalytics," for trusted journals that meet certain quality standards. The blacklist has grown substantially since its launch, as the number of predatory journals continues to increase, posing challenges to academic integrity.

We can use Beall's list of predatory journals to find out whether or not a journal is predatory. Beall's list was a compilation created by Jeffrey Beall, a librarian and researcher, to identify potentially predatory journals and publishers. Predatory journals usually exist to make money by charging researchers high fees to publish their work, without providing the rigorous academic review process expected in scholarly publishing.

Before finalizing writing, we must check our articles with the help of plagiarism-detecting software such as iThenticate, Grammarly, Duplicate Checker, Plagiarism Checker, CrossCheck, eBlast, and Scribber to avoid even unintentional plagiarism. Some are free up to a certain limit of words and some are paid services.

Wallwork in his book *English for Writing Research Papers* very clearly explains that plagiarism is easy to spot, especially in papers written by non-native English speakers. It becomes obvious when phrases copied from the internet, often from non-scientific sources like advertisements or informal



writing, appear in a paper. Using a mix of different English styles (scientific, commercial, casual) without recognizing their differences can make plagiarism more noticeable. When revising papers, the author often finds paragraphs in poor English followed by sentences in perfect English. A quick Google search usually reveals that these well-written sentences are taken from published papers. Editors use plagiarism detection tools like iThenticate, which can find copied content even faster. The iThenticate survey identifies different types of plagiarism, such as submitting the same paper to multiple journals, self-plagiarism (reusing our own work without acknowledgment), improper citation, and presenting someone else's work as one's own. The worst case is submitting another person's entire manuscript under one's name (187).

Wallwork further explains, "[However] You can copy generic phrases It is perfectly normal to copy phrases from other people's papers. However, these phrases must be generic. Such phrases may even help you to improve your English." Such generic phrases are, for example, *in fact, to suggest that, at a disadvantage, may be perfectly adequate, it seems to be the case that, may tend, it has been suggested, for example, that, one study found that, a paper published in the same anthology, with no statement of purpose, from the English point of view, more generally, has put forward a widely discussed position that, as to the degree of, compared to, it might be objected though that, differ greatly to, however, has shown, much less linear structure, to the extent that, whereas, is evidenced by, by the appropriate level of abstraction, similarly, have been shown to, drawing of conclusions, a similar pattern, therefore, would seem to be a more, than at least some other* (188).

According to the *MLA Handbook*, documentation is not needed for common knowledge, passing mentions, allusions, and epigraphs. This reference indicates that when something is widely known or briefly mentioned, we usually don't need to give a reference (Modern Language Association).

Plagiarism is an unethical work. According to the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, "Writers who plagiarize disrespect the efforts of original authors by failing to acknowledge their contributions, stifle further research by preventing readers from tracing ideas back to their original sources, and unfairly disregard those who exerted the effort to complete their own work" (American Psychological Association). This statement highlights three main problems with plagiarism. First, when writers plagiarize, they fail to honor the hard work of original authors by not giving credit where it is due. It is like taking someone else's rice harvest without acknowledging the farmer's labor. In a context like Nepal, where respect for others' contributions is a key cultural value, this would be seen as a serious offense. Second, plagiarism blocks the flow of knowledge, making it harder for others to track ideas back to their source. This is similar to breaking the chain in a relay race—if one runner doesn't pass the baton, the race can't continue smoothly. In research or education, tracing ideas to their original source is essential for progress and deeper understanding. Finally, plagiarism is unfair to those who put in the effort to complete their work honestly. Let's imagine students preparing for exams: one who cheats gets the same score as one who studies hard. This is not only unfair but also discourages genuine effort and hard work, which are deeply valued in Nepali culture.

According to that *Manual*, writers who try to publish copied work risk having it rejected, facing punishment from professional organizations, criticism at their workplace, and losing the chance to apply for government funding. Students who submit a copied assignment can get a failing grade and may also face punishment from a school honor board, suspension, or even expulsion (American



Psychological Association). As reported by that *Manual*, publishers and teachers often use plagiarism-checking tools like iThenticate and Turnitin to spot instances where entire papers are copied, sections of text match exactly, or when a few words are changed but the main content remains the same. This practice, called “patchwriting,” still requires human judgment to confirm if plagiarism has occurred. To avoid plagiarism, it is important to take good notes during research and properly cite our sources (American Psychological Association).

As suggested by that *Manual*, we should make sure that we have given credit to others' ideas with in-text citations and matching reference list entries. Besides plagiarism, other unethical writing practices are also banned. For instance, creating fake citations or reference list entries is wrong. This makes it seem like sources were properly credited, but the sources don't exist or can't be traced. The author may have invented both the information and the sources or used real information without proper credit. Similarly, “contract cheating,” where students pay someone to write their paper, is unethical. Even if the paper is original, the student is still claiming credit for work he or she didn't do, which breaks academic integrity and ethical guidelines. Most publishers, including APA, now regularly use plagiarism-checking software to compare submitted papers with millions of academic articles and web content. This helps journal editors see if there is any overlap with previously published material and decide if the overlap is acceptable or a problem (American Psychological Association).

Adeeb M. Jarrah, Yousef Wardat, and Patricia Fidalgo conclude that using AI language models can bring up concerns about intellectual property and copyright. Researchers should be careful to give credit when using AI-generated content and think about the possibility of AI copying from other AI systems. There's also an ongoing debate about how AI affects academic writing. As AI helps create content, it raises questions about the role of human authors and how to define authorship when AI is involved. To deal with these concerns, the academic community needs to work together to create guidelines for recognizing AI's role in research (17). Thus, the authors discuss the issues surrounding the use of AI language models, particularly regarding intellectual property and copyright.

Conclusion

Plagiarism is an unethical practice that involves copying another person's ideas, words, or work without proper attribution. It can take various forms, such as copying a published or unpublished text, paraphrasing someone's ideas or arguments, or turning in a paper or thesis written by someone else. The commercial use of AI has made it more difficult to plagiarize, making it challenging to show one's original, creative, or critical thoughts.

To avoid plagiarism, an interdisciplinary approach is used. This approach integrates ideas from different disciplines of knowledge to fulfill objectives. By incorporating knowledge, methodologies, and perspectives from different disciplines, unique connections and interpretations can be created, minimizing the risk of unintentional plagiarism.

Examples of interdisciplinary work include broadening sources of inspiration, using different research methods, exploring unique perspectives, creating new connections, and citing multiple perspectives. To avoid plagiarism through interdisciplinary work, it is essential to properly cite all sources, synthesize ideas, and contribute our analysis, but not copy.

Some strategies for combining disciplines include combining ecology and literary analysis, cross-pollinating ideas, citing multiple perspectives, developing new methodologies, creating original case studies, and using creative formats. For example, a historian could incorporate graphic design to present historical data visually, while a researcher could use a combination of geography and sociology to create a new framework for understanding migration patterns.

In conclusion, an interdisciplinary approach to academic writing can help avoid plagiarism by encouraging original thought and drawing from multiple sources and fields. By incorporating diverse perspectives, synthesizing ideas, and contributing to the conversation, researchers can produce distinctive work that avoids plagiarism and promotes intellectual sincerity.

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