Cultural Constructions of Plagiarism in Student Writing:
Teachers’ Perceptions and Responses

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While the topic of plagiarism in student writing has received much attention in previous research, relatively few studies have examined teachers’ perceptions of plagiarism, and these have tended to focus on how teachers from English L1 countries understand plagiarism (Flint, Macdonald, & Clegg, 2006). Yet given that approximately 80% of English teachers worldwide are nonnative English speakers (Braine, 2010), research that can shed light on these teachers’ practices of defining, detecting, and preventing plagiarism in student writing is urgently needed. The present exploratory study considers teachers’ perceptions and cultural constructions of plagiarism in student writing in Taiwan. Results from a survey and interviews with 23 Taiwanese teachers reveal that a number of cultural factors influenced student plagiarism during writing. These teachers understood plagiarism as being influenced by the Chinese words piaoqié (to rob and steal) and chaoxi (to copy and steal). They also suggested that an emphasis on social relationships and reciprocity in writing, in addition to students’ lack of experience in citing sources appropriately, may lead to both intentional and unintentional plagiarism in students’ writing. These results suggest that plagiarism in this Taiwanese context might be a by-product of the Confucian educational tradition that emphasizes memorization and repetition. Unintentional plagiarism could be closely linked to unawareness. In this case, lack of intentional wrongdoing by students may be due to the influence of culturally rooted definitions of the word plagiarism, suggesting that inexperience is likely to be a contributing factor behind student plagiarism. Implications for pedagogy and further research are suggested.

Introduction
Plagiarism, and ways to handle this kind of academic dishonesty, have concerned academics in Western societies for a long time. Nevertheless, not all societies may have the same viewpoint on plagiarism. The Western perspective that ideas can be the property of individuals may in fact seem strange to those who have different views about communal information or public discourse (Adiningrum & Kutieleh, 2011). For example, Pennycook (1996) and Sowden (2005) state that plagiarism is culturally conditioned and therefore is interpreted differently in diverse cultures. Pennycook (1996) suggests the complex nature of plagiarism, indicating that ideas
of ownership, authorship, and intellectual property evolving in Western society contain distinctive cultural and historical elements. He questions whether people from other cultures should follow the same conventions. By the same token, Sowden (2005) indicates that cultural variance should be taken into account when examining plagiarism. As suggested by Macbeth (2006), “learning such [academic writing] conventions constitutes a curriculum in the use of cultural objects. And while there might be general agreement that all curricula are cultural, ‘how’ they are has not been so closely considered in the literature” (p. 180).

Just how well students are learning such conventions remains a topic of ongoing scholarly inquiry. In particular, student plagiarism has been reported in many studies in Asia (e.g., Gu & Brooks, 2008; Jia, 2008; Stapleton, 2012). These studies indicate that Chinese students are confused about plagiarism. A substantial and growing body of research has explored Chinese students’ perceptions of plagiarism in either the English language–speaking contexts or the home context (e.g., Gu & Brooks, 2008; Hu & Lei, 2012). While these studies seem to confirm the culturally dependent nature of how plagiarism is understood by students, there are opponents of this view.

Disagreeing with the conceptual arguments of Pennycook, Macbeth, and Sowden, there is a body of literature that either denies or minimizes the impact of cultural perceptions of plagiarism on teaching and learning (e.g., Liu, 2005; Martin, 2012; Weigle & Parker, 2012). For instance, Liu (2005) points out that in Chinese culture, “all the books state the need to credit the source of a citation” (p. 236). Since citation itself is no less emphasized in Chinese composition books than in English composition books, Liu’s thinking goes, there would seem to be little need to study cultural differences in understandings of plagiarism. In Liu’s (2005) opinion, plagiarism by Chinese students when writing in English can be primarily attributed to their lack of language proficiency, writing skills, and educational training.

In response to such ongoing conceptual debates about plagiarism in Chinese language learning settings, this paper begins from the premise that conceptualizing plagiarism in terms of students’ language proficiency, writing skills, and educational training without taking into account teachers’ cultural constructions of plagiarism is to miss a critically important dynamic in the discussion about plagiarism teaching and learning.

In spite of the overwhelming focus on Chinese students in conversations about plagiarism, little has been explored specifically as to how Chinese teachers perceive and deal with student plagiarism. Although some studies broadly focus on and encompass teacher perceptions (e.g., Borg, 2009; Crocker & Shaw, 2002), these studies still need to be more socially situated and centered on a specific context. The present study attempts to decrease this gap in the literature by examining the cultural nature of plagiarism from the perspective of university teachers, using how plagiarism is understood by Taiwanese teachers in Taiwan as a focal case to explore the broader issue of plagiarism in Chinese language learning settings.
Following Vuori, Joseph, & Gururajan’s (2004) framework, I conceptualize teachers’ responses to plagiarism as comprising three major reactions: definition, detection, and prevention, each of which plays an important role in an interacting system. Definition is vital when it relates to detection and prevention. Without a clear definition of plagiarism, it would be problematic for both teachers and students to handle plagiarism, as the meaning needs to be constructed between teachers and students in a specific cultural context. As noted by Vuori et al. (2004), “plagiarism is not a simple matter of rule-bound definition: culture, circumstance and changing attitudes to the management of education interact to exacerbate the scope of the issue” (para. 1). As such, plagiarism is not simply breaking the rules of academic standards. It results from a complex interplay of forces, and thus the causes of plagiarism as a complicated set of issues need to be carefully considered and conceptualized. Plagiarism should be viewed not just as a deliberate or unintentional act, but also as a learning and communication problem. In spite of all the complications in defining plagiarism, in order to minimize its effects, regarding detection and prevention, “managing plagiarism is an ongoing process” (Zobel & Hamilton, 2002, p. 30).

In light of what Vuori et al. (2004) suggest, a framework of three reactions—definition, detection, and prevention—should be highlighted in dealing with plagiarism in the global academic community. This framework should teach students about plagiarism and how to prevent it, offer a considerable deterrent to students, and have appropriate methods to handle the detected cases. Within this framework, I focus on teachers’ effectiveness of detection and prevention, which is linked to how teachers deal with plagiarism. In view of Vuori and colleagues’ (2004) initial research, this study explores how Taiwanese teachers think about some of the important cultural issues related to plagiarism, such as their understanding of plagiarism and potential causes of plagiarism in student writing, their views of plagiarism detection and prevention, and their concerns about dealing with plagiarism and the methods they use to discourage misconduct.

This paper begins by providing a literature review on two major areas of research on plagiarism: plagiarism from a cross-cultural perspective and key issues regarding teachers’ perceptions of plagiarism. Then, I outline and describe some important issues in relation to the research design, such as the procedures of data collection and analysis. Next, results related to the cultural aspects of definition, detection, and prevention are reported and discussed. Finally, the paper concludes with implications and possible directions for dealing with plagiarism.

**Plagiarism from a Cross-Cultural Perspective**

Research on plagiarism often uses Western, English speakers’ perspectives as a baseline from which understanding about this topic should unfold. According to Myers (1998), the rules and regulations regarding plagiarism are based on Western academic conventions. These traditional Western conceptions of plagiarism “splitter on close examination . . . and a new order is needed” (Myers, 1998, p. 13). To stimulate research and encourage academic exchange, research on plagiarism also
needs to be conducted with teachers whose first language is not English and who come from their students’ culture, and with a focus on cross-cultural perspectives on plagiarism rather than solely viewing the topic from a Western mindset. Precisely how teachers’ cultural expectations and understandings of plagiarism and citation are constructed in cross-cultural classrooms hasn’t received enough attention.

Understanding the Western perspective on plagiarism requires first understanding two important Western cultural values: individualism and direct communication. Pennycook (1996) states that ownership of text is mainly a Western notion. He indicates that the cultural value of individualism requires people to respect the rights of individuals by clearly differentiating others’ ideas from one’s own and using an appropriate referencing method. Individualists also ask people not to share answers on an exam or even discuss the questions with others who will take a similar exam later. A second cultural value in the Western world is direct communication. This means people may prefer messages that are explicit and low in context (Pennycook, 1996). Understanding this Western perspective on plagiarism is critical because it informs much of the research on plagiarism and appropriate use and citation of sources. It has become the framework around which definitions of and responses to plagiarism have been studied.

Some studies, mainly conducted at universities in the United States and Europe, have aimed to characterize Western teachers’ perceptions of plagiarism (e.g., Crocker & Shaw, 2002; Pecorari & Shaw, 2012; Pennycook, 1996; Sutherland-Smith, 2008). However, according to Braine (2010), approximately 80% of English teachers worldwide are nonnative English speakers. English “belongs to all people who speak it, whether native or non-native, whether ESL or EFL, whether standard or non-standard” (Norton, 1997, p. 427). Jenvey (2012) further regards nonnative English–speaking teachers as potentially ideal ESL/EFL teachers because they have the experience of learning English as a second or foreign language. Their firsthand experience could sensitize them to the linguistic and cultural needs of their students; for example, they might be aware of the similarities and differences between English and the students’ mother tongue(s).

Although past studies have indicated that Western and Eastern perspectives on plagiarism could be different, nonnative English–speaking teachers’ perceptions of plagiarism in writing deserve our attention. As suggested by Bloch (2012), cultural values unique to some Asian cultures, most notably Confucianism, offer an important insight into understanding textual ownership and plagiarism. Integral to Confucianism is the idea of the relationship, whereby an individual exists as related to others in hierarchical superior-subordinate relationships with the senior or superior having more authority. All relationships within this tradition are based on the proper convention and ritual li, which means the regulation individuals have to abide by in order to show respect as they pursue personal cultivation. The regulation makes sure that people act in accordance with their rank and is meant to facilitate social harmony (Cho, 2000). The respect for the senior or superior extends to written words, with sages and distinguished scholars from the past being admired in Asian societies. People may regard it as presumptuous to paraphrase
the work of a sage or a scholar. If no reference is cited in a section of writing, it can reasonably be assumed that it is from the saying of a sage or a scholar (Bloch, 2012). This may suggest that any *quote* without a citation is from a sage or scholar. Generally, changing or modifying the authority’s word is considered showing disrespect or impoliteness.

For example, in Chinese, when citing verbatim, the publication date and page number are not required, a practice commonly found in Confucius’s and Mencius’s philosophies. For example, in *Confucian Analects*, Confucius said, “If the scholar is not grave, he will not call forth any veneration, and his learning will not be solid” (子曰: 『君子不重、則不威、學則不固』). In *Mencius*, Mencius said, “Having climbed the East Peak of Mount Tai, Lu seemed small to Confucius. Having climbed to the top of Mount Tai, the whole world below seemed small” (孟子曰: 『孔子登東山而小魯，登泰山而小天下。』). There is no publication date or page number, even though in both of these passages there is a direct quote of another writer. From a Western perspective, this would be regarded as plagiarism if these passages were written using English academic conventions. From these examples in Confucian Analects and Mencius, it is possible to begin imagining how foreign Western notions of citation might be to teachers working from within these philosophical systems.

At a deeper level, knowledge in some collectivist cultures such as those in China, Japan, and Korea, is regarded as belonging to societies, and it is a responsibility for people to share knowledge with others for the benefit of societies as a whole (Introna, Hayes, Blair, & Wood, 2003). Textual authorship is thus not owned by an individual, but is instead shared by all members of society. In summary, in contrast with Western definitions of plagiarism that have informed much of the research on the topic, teachers from other cultures might hold different understandings of plagiarism, especially if these teachers follow the educational philosophies of Confucius or Mencius. In these philosophies, there is less stress on referencing others as there is not an underlying assumption of ownership and private property when an individual submits written work.

**Key Issues in Research on Teachers’ Perceptions of Plagiarism**

Three issues commonly mentioned in the literature on plagiarism related to cultures are intentional/unintentional plagiarism, plagiarism detection, and plagiarism prevention. As pointed out by a number of researchers (e.g., Angelil-Carter, 2000; Howard, 1995, 2007; Pennycook, 1996), judging whether something is plagiarism is not simply a matter of examining whether students copied text from another author without any acknowledgment. There are deeper issues behind such practices which need to be explored, such as questions of intentionality surrounding plagiarism, how it can be distinguished, and how it is detected by teachers, especially by nonnative English teachers in a nonnative English-speaking context. As pointed out by Lee (2011), one major limitation of her study was that the teachers came from two US universities. Participants from universities in other cultural settings are needed.
Intentional/Unintentional Plagiarism
Past studies investigating native English–speaking teachers’ perceptions of intentional/unintentional plagiarism have revealed that most teachers are unlikely to consider unintentional plagiarism to be, as a matter of fact, real plagiarism. For instance, in Sutherland-Smith’s (2008) work investigating teachers of English for academic purposes who are teaching introductory writing in Australia, nine of the eleven teachers in the study thought that unintentional plagiarism means that plagiarism is not present, while only two teachers thought that all kinds of plagiarism are intentional as students are supposed to know the school policy and understand that copying other people’s words constitutes plagiarism. Many native English–speaking researchers and academics agree that intention is a key consideration and that unintentional plagiarism due to ignorance should not be punished harshly (e.g., De Voss & Rosati, 2002; Pennycook, 1996). We can surmise from these studies that at least some students commit plagiarism without knowing they are doing so. If an instance of plagiarism takes place, teachers may need to know the motivation and the real cause behind it in order to determine intentionality.

Plagiarism Detection and Prevention
As for plagiarism detection and prevention, although a number of past studies have enhanced our understanding of the effects of plagiarism scanning and detection software on plagiarism prevention (e.g., Garner, 2011; Stapleton, 2012), it should be noted that few studies have investigated teachers’ perceptions (for exceptions, see Sutherland-Smith, 2008, and Lee, 2011). As software continues to be developed and the way teachers use it may have a great influence on students’ citation behavior, it is important to explore teachers’ perceptions of plagiarism detection software. Sutherland-Smith’s study (2008) revealed that native English–speaking teachers did not consider detection of plagiarism a problem. However, not all the teachers she interviewed liked to use plagiarism scanning and detection software. They were reluctant, doubting the software’s effectiveness. Lee’s survey (2011) of teachers working at US universities revealed that teachers seemed to consider using antiplagiarism software, particularly when they expected that there would be benefits and a high return on this investment.

To conclude, teachers’ perception of plagiarism behavior in their academic discourse community may not be applicable for teachers in all other contexts. Cultural differences may play a role in appropriate and inappropriate information use in academic writing (Gu & Brooks, 2008; Lee, 2011; Pecorari, 2003). In other words, more research is needed in different cultural settings about teachers’ perceptions of defining, detecting, and preventing plagiarism.

Method
Research Questions
As reviewed in the literature, plagiarism is perennially a heated issue in higher education. However, little of this research is being conducted from a non-Western perspective. In order to better understand teachers of English who come from, live...
in, and work in non-Western schools, this study focused on Taiwanese teachers’ perceptions of plagiarism and how they deal with it, aiming to address the following questions:

1. How does a small group of Taiwanese writing teachers understand plagiarism and the potential causes for plagiarism in student writing?
2. What are these teachers’ views of plagiarism detection and prevention?
3. What are these teachers’ concerns about dealing with plagiarism and their methods for discouraging such misconduct?

**Research Design**

Given my teaching and research in a Taiwanese university and my understanding of the problematic ways in which plagiarism has come to be understood, the goal of the present study was to learn how plagiarism was defined and conceptualized in a culture different from those featured in most of the studies done by native English–speaking teachers. The present study sought to explore perceptions of plagiarism among English composition teachers at a university in Taiwan.

The sample consisted of 23 teachers (10 male; 13 female) teaching English composition in 2010, with 12 years of teaching experience on average, all from a university located in northern Taiwan. The university is generally regarded as one of the major research universities in Taiwan. It offers bachelor’s, master’s, and doctoral degrees in a number of disciplines such as arts and humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, medicine, engineering, and management. The total number of teachers teaching English composition at the university was 25. I invited all 25 teachers to be interviewed in the study. Two teachers did not participate.

The teachers all had PhD or MA degrees and held positions as professors, associate professors, or lecturers. Among them, 16 teachers earned their PhD degrees in English-speaking countries, including the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada, while seven teachers earned their PhD degrees in Taiwan. Participants were all native Taiwanese, and English was a foreign language. Their teaching experience ranged from five to 23 years. Teacher participation in the study was voluntary and anonymity was ensured. The aim of the English composition course which all of the teachers taught was to prepare students for academic writing tasks such as paragraph/essay writing, as well as referencing skills. Plagiarism detection software programs were available to teachers at the school, such as Turnitin (http://turnitin.com), Plagiarism Checker (http://www.plagiarismchecker.com), and SeeSources (http://www.plagscan.com/seesources). The university did not mandate the use of the software; rather, the school made it available when needed or specifically requested.

In Taiwan, the norm for academic misconduct at a university is called the Code of Academic Ethics (e.g., National Taiwan University, 1998). This norm is adopted by every university across the country. The Code of Academic Ethics is a guideline that teaching and research staff must follow. It guides university members’ behavior with regard to common ethical standards, including rules of humane conduct and good practices, and regulations of ethics in academic papers. For example, in the Code of Academic Ethics for Faculty Members of NTU (National Taiwan University,
1998), Article 3, the Principle of Honesty (faculty members should take an honest attitude when presenting research findings) is closely linked to the present study about plagiarism, as the first and eighth sub-articles state, respectively: “Faculty members should not plagiarize” and “Materials quoted from the works of others should be clearly cited with their source clearly indicated.” As research is one of the major missions for faculty members of the university, they should conduct their research with the highest level of ethics, honesty, and integrity.

**Data Collection Procedures**

The data collection consisted of in-depth, semistructured individual interviews with each of the 23 teachers. As stated by Bazerman and Prior (2004), interviews that focus specifically on writing allow for an exploration of teachers’ reasons for using particular practices of teaching writing and help to illuminate teachers’ decision-making regarding information appropriation and source acknowledgment. In these interviews, explanatory and open-ended questions were asked in order to offer a framework for teachers to reflect upon their experience and understanding of the term plagiarism and its influence on academic writing. The questions covered the teachers’ understanding of plagiarism, their perceptions of potential causes of plagiarism in student writing and plagiarism detection, their concerns about dealing with plagiarism, and their views of plagiarism prevention strategies that they would use to discourage misconduct.

Each interview lasted approximately one hour, mostly taking place in my office or in a school classroom. All interviews were carried out in Chinese by me, recorded digitally, and transcribed verbatim. Much of the verbal contact I had with the teachers was in Chinese to enable them to express themselves freely and accurately.

My previous experiences as a writing teacher provided me with an insider perspective, which, when combined with my outsider role as an independent researcher, created an important methodological strength for this study. My standing as both an insider (teaching writing at the university and therefore giving a sense of collegiality) and an outsider (generally not knowing these teachers and how they taught writing) allowed for frank and open expression of viewpoints on the part of the teachers.

**Data Analysis**

All interview data were transcribed verbatim, which resulted in 481 A4 pages. In the interview data analysis, I worked with a research assistant and used the processes of analytic induction (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984) and constant comparison (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Particular focus was centered on the divergent viewpoints articulated by the teachers, without making true-or-false judgment of a presupposed “reality.” More specifically, my research assistant and I analyzed the data using a continuous process, with the initial themes—determined after analysis of the first few interviews—being continually reassessed and expanded as more data were analyzed. Initially the research assistant and I analyzed data independently. We each made marginal notes on our individual transcripts, highlighting any teacher responses we believed would illustrate particular points, and then listed what we
saw as the key themes. At this point, she compared our analyses to discover whether there was agreement about the main themes.

Our inter-rater agreement was 97.3%, and Cohen’s Kappa, a more stringent measure of agreement, was .97. The measure of intra-rater reliability was obtained as I coded the same data subset again about a month after the inter-rater reliability measure was obtained. Intra-rater agreement was 98.6% and Cohen’s Kappa was .98. These findings reveal that inter- and intra-rater agreement were high.

Based on the framework of definition, detection, and prevention (Vuori et al., 2004) derived from the literature, data from the interviews with the teachers were categorized into five themes. Table 1 provides these themes, coding categories, number of occurrences, and a small sample of the raw data coded (in both English and Chinese).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Coding Category</th>
<th>Number of Occurrences</th>
<th>Sample</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The influence of Chinese words and cultural understanding</td>
<td>Definition</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>“As revealed in Chinese words piaoqie and chaoxi, they contain the meaning of stealing: piaoqie, which denotes to rob and steal, and chaoxi, which denotes to copy and steal.” 中文字的剽竊和抄襲,它們含有偷的意思,剽竊是指搶劫和偷竊,抄襲則是複製和竊取。</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chinese students’ lack of experience in citing sources appropriately and their learning experiences</td>
<td>Definition</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>“Chinese students’ problem with plagiarism is a product of their Confucian educational tradition that emphasizes memorization and repetition, especially the role of copying classic texts.” 中國學生抄襲的問題,是儒家教育傳統的產物,強調記憶和重複,特別是經典文本的複製。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detection of plagiarism</td>
<td>Detection</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>“The plagiarism detection software is to some extent constrained by its searching capacities, access to data, formats of files, range of search, nature of description, and speed of processing.” 抄襲偵測軟體一定程度上受到其搜索能力的限制,數據的獲取,文件的格式,搜索的範圍,性質的說明和處理的速度。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intentional and unintentional plagiarism</td>
<td>Prevention</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>“If students are caught plagiarizing, no matter intentional or unintentional, I think it is a serious moral offence and I would condemn their deeds.” 如果學生被抓到剽竊,無論有意或無意,我認為這是一個嚴重的道德侵犯,我會譴責他們的行為。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remedial approach to plagiarism in student writing</td>
<td>Prevention</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>“To prevent plagiarism, I aim to improve students’ language proficiency and teach students academic writing conventions.” 為了防止抄襲,我的目標是改善學生的語言能力與教授學生學術寫作的規範。</td>
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Results
The following themes resulting from the transcription and coding of teacher responses in the interview data revealed different aspects of teachers’ perceptions of plagiarism. Based on the results of teacher interviews, the majority of the teachers tended to agree with the statements listed in Table 2.

Definition
The Influence of Chinese Words and Cultural Understanding
First, the interviews revealed the teachers’ understanding of plagiarism in academic writing, mainly from the Chinese words *piaoqie* and *chaoxi* (plagiarism). The teachers defined plagiarism as the unauthorized or unacknowledged use of another person’s ideas, failure to document source material, or doing it inappropriately. For example, Teacher 2 stated: “As revealed in Chinese words *piaoqie* and *chaoxi*, they contain the meaning of stealing: *piaoqie*, which denotes to rob and steal, and *chaoxi*, which denotes to copy and steal. Basically, plagiarism is the replication of another person’s ideas without appropriate acknowledgment and showing these ideas as your own.”

Literally speaking, both *piaoqie* and *chaoxi* contain the meaning *to steal*. The major difference is that one is to rob (*piao*) whereas the other is to copy (*chao*). In other words, how the “stealing” takes place is different: one is like a robber while the other is like a copycat. *Piaoqie* tends to convey a more severe sense in Chinese, particularly referring to those who rob or claim other people’s words as their own rather than referring to those who just copy other people’s words. In addition, the teachers pointed out that plagiarism is a theft of intellectual property and a violation of the regulations requiring that credit should be given where it is due.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Teachers’ Perceptions of Plagiarism</th>
<th>Agreed</th>
<th>Disagreed</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>DEFINITION</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Plagiarism is influenced by the Chinese words <em>piaoqie</em> and <em>chaoxi</em>, and cultural understanding is important.</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students lack experience in citing sources appropriately.</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DETECTION</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers do not consider plagiarism detection to be a problem.</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detection software makes it easier for teachers and is to some extent useful.</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PREVENTION</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Before proceeding with prevention, teachers need to first know what the students’ intention is when they plagiarize.</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remedial approaches to plagiarism are used within the cultural milieu of the university.</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>0</td>
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Most teachers felt that students need to know the regulations and laws related to intellectual property and copyright. In the interviews, all teachers emphasized the importance of understanding plagiarism. For instance, Teacher 2 further explained:

Understanding plagiarism is important. Students need to know that there are laws to protect intellectual property, such as knowledge and ideas of individuals and groups. These are known as copyright. Nearly all kinds of expression of knowledge and ideas fall under copyright protection. Therefore, plagiarism is the breach of copyright, and students can be subject to punishment in addition to the university’s regulations.

The interview revealed that the teacher perceived a need for students to know about appropriate source use in relation to intellectual property laws and copyright protection. As for the cultural implications of educational practices, Teacher 6 explained the influence of cultural values as follows:

We grow up helping each other. Although it is a good thing, nonetheless, it becomes a problem for Chinese people who study or work in the United States. We usually share exam questions and answers with others and we think it is somehow common since we grow up in a society that teaches us to share things and wish the best for friends. For instance, in Taiwan, when a person from a family or village does well, it is regarded as a success for the whole family or village.

She added:

There are cultural differences in defining and interpreting what constitutes one’s own work. As Chinese culture is a collectivist society, sometimes there is a problem that people may write collaboratively or get help from others and claim the work as their own without giving credit or acknowledgment. The fine line between individual and public property is not clear-cut.

In light of this, students from societies which have a more collective sense of belonging, such as Taiwan, may have a hard time understanding the distinctions that some societies draw between individual and public property. Teacher 20 explained:

Culture is a major concern. In Taiwan, people place a strong emphasis on relational concerns, and decisions are usually made on the basis of personal relationships. Chinese students are quite easily to be influenced by their friends. If they are unaware of this issue, and given that everybody plagiarizes, you will plagiarize, too. And then in the long run you might take it for granted and think this is not a serious violation.

Chinese Students’ Learning Experiences
Closely related to students’ development in referencing skills, the teachers tended to attribute student plagiarism to their lack of experience and knowledge on appropriate citation of sources. This point was illustrated by Teacher 3:
My students do not have much experience in writing English and most of the time they just take exams in the multiple choice format and/or blank filling. Compared with my learning experience, because my teacher required me to write a lot and I needed to use sources in almost all of the assignments, I naturally picked up the referencing skills.

In light of the issue mentioned by Teacher 3, it seems that one reason why students might plagiarize is their lack of experience in using sources in their writing and lack of awareness of how to use sources in writing appropriately. In addition, all of the teachers considered the traditional Chinese learning style of memorization and repetition to be one of the main contributors to students’ tendency toward plagiarism. For example, Teacher 19 said:

Other than some common causes such as leaving the assignment to the last minute, taking the easy option to copy and paste, being under the pressure to get high scores, having the easy access of papers on the Internet nowadays, and thinking that the teacher will not care about plagiarism, Confucian cultural heritage may play an important role in Chinese student plagiarism. Chinese students’ problem with plagiarism is a product of their Confucian educational tradition that emphasizes memorization and repetition, especially the role of copying classic texts.

The culturally rooted Chinese educational practice of memorization and repetition may still be highly valued nowadays. According to the data elicited from the interviews, the teachers seemed to regard memorization and repetition as a way of learning. For instance, Teacher 6 said:

All Chinese national composition and debate contest winners recite texts extensively. Reciting texts is a main contributing factor to students’ success in language learning and competition. In the Chinese education system, students are taught to use materials from their textbooks to answer questions in examinations and are expected to be able to regularly recite classic texts, such as Four Books and Five Classics.

Therefore, in Chinese culture, rote learning and accomplishments of memory can be considered an important way of exhibiting intellectual superiority. Copying classic texts—for example, by reciting forefathers’ words constantly—is a way of showing respect and knowledge, and this educational culture is ingrained in the modern era. It should also be noted that although many competitions and entrance exams have provided opportunities and equality in Chinese education, nonetheless, these have relied on encouraging memorization of declarative knowledge.

Finally, Chinese students’ experience of citing sources may also be linked to the notion of reader-writer relationship and the attribution of ideas. This is illustrated by Teacher 10, who explained how, in Taiwan,

citing sources tends to be viewed as disrespectful to both reader and writer since it assumes that the sources are not widely known and that people are unable to identify the source information. In other words, the practice of not giving a record of the sources
that the writer has used for research is based on a regard that readers are able to identify references when the writer has used someone else’s ideas or words.

Thus, in Chinese writing, on the one hand, using well-known people’s words strengthens the authority of the work by showing that the writer has taken others’ ideas or words into consideration. On the other hand, it poses a challenge to readers, indicating where they may go to get further information on that particular topic and suggesting that they should know the important piece of information being quoted.

Detection and Prevention
There are important issues that arise about detection and prevention if plagiarism occurs. The teachers tended to regard Internet plagiarism as a serious, morally incorrect behavior and felt pressure to take some measures against it. They indicated that moral obligation prompts the use of antiplagiarism software; not using the software might increase plagiarism in the class, thereby breaking the rules of academic honesty. Nonetheless, none of the teachers considered plagiarism detection to be a problem. They explained that they were able to detect instances of plagiarism in their students’ writing, especially when students used words, phrases, or sentences that were too fluent, sophisticated, or well crafted to be their own. Interestingly, one of the teachers interviewed was not in favor of using electronic detection tools, not because of her limited knowledge of computer use, but mainly because of the limitations of such software. She said, “The plagiarism detection software is, to some extent, constrained by its searching capacities, access to data, formats of files, range of search, nature of description, and speed of processing.”

Intentional Plagiarism
As for prevention, all of the teachers indicated that they need to first know what the students’ intention is when they plagiarize. Of the 23 teachers interviewed in this study, 22 considered all kinds of plagiarism to be intentional, with the intention automatically proven, as students at the university are supposed to be aware that those who copy texts will be penalized. For example, Teacher 5 said:

Although I know that culture may play a role in student plagiarism, nonetheless, as students are already in the academic community, I think saying that plagiarism regarded as unintentional is a bit of avoiding taking responsibility for an action. After all, they are university students, not high school or middle school students.

Teacher 21 agreed:

How do you know if a student does not intend to plagiarize? When a student copied word-for-word from the book, I was shocked. In the eyes of me, any form of plagiarism is an offence. Particularly if a student is at the university, ignorance is not an excuse.

Therefore, for these teachers, plagiarism was an act of misconduct. When it came to the issue of plagiarism in academic writing at the university, they tended to treat
it seriously and thought that despite the inevitable influence of Chinese culture on plagiarism, students should still abide by the rules of intellectual property rights. As Teacher 21 said:

Previously people would think that in Taiwan, plagiarism does not earn as much attention as it has in other countries. However, the situation is gradually changing. In Taiwan, nowadays most teachers would warn students not to plagiarize and remind students of their behaviors when they commit plagiarism. In view of this, if students are caught plagiarizing, no matter intentional or unintentional, I think it is a serious moral offence and I would condemn their deeds.

Unintentional Plagiarism
While most of the teachers characterized plagiarism as intentional or deliberate acts of copying, one teacher (Teacher 3) felt that university policy should distinguish between acts of intentional and unintentional plagiarism. One important factor influencing the teacher’s decision was whether she viewed the plagiarism as resulting from dishonest intent. When she thought that students lacked the intention to plagiarize, she would not to classify their work as plagiarism. For her, intent was the key. Teacher 3 gave her comments as follows:

It is absolutely important to differentiate between those who reuse parts of texts intentionally and those who appear to randomly borrow. Where students deliberately copy lines from a hard copy or on the Internet, it is plagiarism. The most extreme instance of plagiarism is a deliberate attempt to pass off somebody’s work as one’s own. However, where students with poor referencing skills and you know . . . entirely no idea of academic conventions, it should not be judged as plagiarism.

She further added:

Student plagiarism is on a continuum scale from unintentional to intentional action. A closer investigation of intention may reveal whether cases are actually categorized as plagiarism or not. If plagiarism is not intentional, is it primarily because of an ignorance of the citation style? Plagiarism is possibly from simple ignorance rather than cheating.

Thus, the thrust of her argument is that academic citation methods may be unfamiliar to students.

On the basis of Teacher 3’s comments, I returned to other interview transcripts to see what examples other teachers provided of intentional and unintentional plagiarism. A compilation of their responses is categorized and listed in Table 3.

As shown in Table 3, despite most teachers’ declaration that all instances of plagiarism should be considered intentional, some of their other responses seemed to indicate that students’ intention could still be an important criterion in judging plagiarism. It seems that, though teachers felt students should know the school rules about plagiarism, they were also concerned about students who might plagiarize unintentionally, such as by paraphrasing and/or quoting inappropriately.
These acts lack a typical characteristic of plagiarism, the intention to deceive, as the students do not intend to break academic rules.

**Remedial Approaches and Punishment for Students Who Plagiarize**
Remedial approaches that teachers would use to discourage plagiarism in student writing seemed to include both improving students’ language proficiency and teaching students academic writing conventions. Teachers also suggested that they would take the language factor as well as the cultural and educational factors into consideration when deciding on an approach. For instance, Teacher 6 said:

Chinese students may have language problems, such as vocabulary, grammar, and text structure. Oftentimes they do not have enough confidence to write in their own words. Also, as I said before, Chinese culture puts much emphasis on memorization and repetition as a way of learning, usually without giving the in-text citation. Although Chinese writing has the notion of giving source information, such as indicating who says it, nevertheless, the in-text citation is often not necessary, particularly when referring to the year of publication and page number if the source is quoted verbatim.

There appears, therefore, to be reason to think that teachers must consider language and cultural issues when deciding how to handle student plagiarism appropriately in the specific context of Taiwan. In other words, if teachers are not aware of the relevant language standards and cultural values for judging misconduct, this may put students in a dangerous situation and undermine the endeavors of the university community to create and maintain a culture of academic honesty. Conversely, teaching students to improve their language proficiency, build up their confidence, and use sources appropriately could help them avoid plagiarism.

Rewriting was reported as the most popular method used by all teachers to penalize students who plagiarized. However, it should be noted that the punish-

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Examples of Intentional Plagiarism</th>
<th>Examples of Unintentional Plagiarism</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Copying or cutting and pasting an article from a hard copy or online source without quoting or giving appropriate acknowledgment</td>
<td>Paraphrasing inappropriately: changing some words but not the sentence structure, or changing the sentence structure but not the words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Borrowing words or citing other people’s ideas without giving appropriate acknowledgment (for example, failing to use quotation marks)</td>
<td>Paraphrasing inappropriately: changing the meaning of the original or paraphrasing inaccurately/incompletely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asking someone else to write a paper or pretending that someone else’s writing is one’s own work</td>
<td>Quoting inappropriately: putting quotation marks around only part of a quotation, or putting quotation marks in a passage that is already paraphrased</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fabricating a source</td>
<td>Quoting inappropriately: forgetting to cite at some time</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Examples of Intentional and Unintentional Plagiarism
ment teachers would give to students depended on the degree of severity of the plagiarism. For example, Teacher 3 stated:

The punishment to students who plagiarize depends on severity of the act. In Chinese culture, I think one of the most common punishments for students who plagiarize is to penalize by giving them a reduced mark and making them rewrite the assignment. This is true for me. In case that plagiarism is really severe, such as doing it deliberately without feeling any guilt, penalties are harsher and the plagiarism outcome for students is a failing grade in the course or even expulsion from school.

Discussion
First, as demonstrated in the interview data, these teachers understood plagiarism from both the Western and Eastern perspectives. While the teachers identified and may have appreciated the Eastern constructions of knowledge sharing and attribution, they too understood this as stealing, a more Western orientation toward knowledge as property. That they held these seemingly contradictory views on plagiarism is not only fascinating, but also instructive to researchers. In addition, although plagiarism has been criticized and disparaged, with explicit rules governing academic conduct standardized across university contexts, in this Chinese cultural context people are enculturated in such a way that they may not see copying texts as plagiarism. Philosophers’ words can be reproduced without citation, because words that achieve well-known status do not need to be specifically attributed and can be shared.

These teachers also reported that achieving group consensus is more important than showing one’s understanding and ability, and students may think of themselves not as individuals but in relation to the group to which they belong. These teachers thought that in Taiwan, students who plagiarize may not be conscious that what they are doing is wrong, nor do they necessarily plagiarize as an easy way to achieve personal gains. Students’ writing practices are based on their prior educational experience in their own culture. The idea of societal interdependence in a collectivist society influenced by Confucianism is thus set against the view which places value on individual intellectual property rights, as discussed earlier.

One major reason why these teachers consider plagiarism wrong is that they have an awareness of the appropriate style of academic writing in other cultures and feel as if they have a responsibility to teach it to their students. In the context of writing pedagogy, this shows that academic writing conventions in different cultures must be taught, for example, when English teachers teach Chinese students how to write academic English appropriately. In other words, the importance of exposure to academic English writing conventions cannot be ignored. Future research can explore the effects of integrating culture when teaching students to write English.

Second, although 22 of the 23 teachers did not think there was such a thing as unintentional plagiarism, it should be noted that some teachers particularly stated that unintentional plagiarism can be closely linked to students’ unawareness. In the
interview data, the typical example of plagiarism given by the teachers was either paraphrasing inappropriately or quoting inappropriately without knowing that it is wrong. In light of this, awareness may play a key role. Teachers shared some cases in which students did not intend to plagiarize but were not aware of how to cite sources appropriately. For instance, based on Teacher 3’s comments, the writing of some students who plagiarize unintentionally may be found to have textual features that could be considered plagiarism, but their explanation of their writing suggests a lack of intent to plagiarize. Although De Voss and Rosati (2002) indicate that “students aren’t necessarily evil” (p. 193), nevertheless, most of the teachers in the present study tended to presume that because the students were already in the academic community, they were supposed to know the academic conventions very well and avoid plagiarism. However, that assumption is somewhat dubious. Normally in Taiwan, avoiding plagiarism is not a topic taught in high school. In addition, university teachers generally would not teach English writing convention unless students were taking academic English writing courses. Students would not have such awareness unless they were taught, regardless of the Western rules guiding academic honesty that the university system in Taiwan has adopted. It follows that university teachers have to be pragmatic and give their students more opportunities to learn how to cite sources and develop referencing skills step-by-step.

Finally, as for methods that teachers would use to discourage plagiarism in student writing, they to some extent disagreed with both the most lenient one (i.e., no action) and the most stringent punishment (i.e., expulsion from school). Interestingly, rewriting was regarded as the most popular method. This may indicate that Chinese university English teachers are likely to use this method when they handle student plagiarism. It should also be noted that teachers tended to be ambivalent about dealing with plagiarism. One problem pointed out by teachers was that they did not want to show any flaws in their practice of teaching writing. All teachers indicated that if student plagiarism was detected in their classes, it was not due to their professional negligence in teaching their students how to write correctly. On the surface, teachers are aware that they have to be assertive and strong and show that they abide by the rules, due to the important cultural element of face-saving. In practice, though, they may be “soft” with students when it comes to punishment due to another important cultural element in Chinese society, sympathy because of the influence of collectivism. In the United States, however, punishment for plagiarism tends to be stiffer, as there is a strong sense of individualism in Western society. For example, at Harvard and Yale, students who plagiarize may be given a failing grade, be suspended, have their degree withheld, withdraw, or face immediate expulsion from school (Harvard College Writing Program, 2013; Yale College, 2013).

**Implications and Conclusion**

In conclusion, this study aims to explore teachers’ perceptions of cultural constructions of plagiarism in student writing in Taiwan. Despite the study’s merits, there are some limitations that should be taken into consideration. As the title suggests, the
study looks at teachers’ perceptions. Future research can include both teachers and students to explore their interpretations of cultural constructions of plagiarism and examine whether their understandings are consistent with one another. In addition, the teachers’ responses showed remarkable agreement, suggesting that they may have guessed what I was looking for in the study or that they were demographically similar in mindset. Moreover, while the empirical results provided in this study are strong, it is necessary to acknowledge some other factors that may contribute to plagiarism within a cultural context, such as leaving the assignment to the last minute. The present study does not intend to generalize about different cultures’ constructions of plagiarism, but rather to present what, in fact, teachers say takes place in their English writing practice in the context of schooling in Taiwan. Furthermore, this study is exploratory in nature due to both the limited number of participants and the fact that the data were derived from teachers’ reports rather than direct observation. Although the small sample size in the present study cannot yield generalizable results, the following implications may be applied to similar writing contexts in other areas with Confucian cultural heritage.

First, Chinese students learning writing in the academic discourse of another culture—English, for example—need to be taught the process of knowledge construction and the conventions within the other cultural and academic community, rather than simply the mechanical practice of citation and reference. As suggested by Dong (1996), the students’ native language and culture inevitably influence how they learn to use citations. Thus, it is essential for teachers to be very clear about what is valued as knowledge across disciplines and cultures. If students are able to understand what is valued and how different academic communities construct their own meanings from intellectual inquiry, promoting a culture of academic integrity can be achieved.

Second, plagiarism detection software is becoming more common. Getting to know the software may save teachers time if they find something questionable in students’ work. However, teachers may resist the urge to use technology for technology’s sake. The ongoing issue for teachers in plagiarism detection is associated with their roles and responsibilities, as the widespread use of plagiarism detection software may deliver the wrong message to students due to the limitations of such software. The purpose of detection software is not to treat every student as suspicious, but to help students get back on the right track when they make a mistake that may have severe consequences.

Third, in terms of intervention, novice writers, particularly nonnative speakers, may not be ready to write autonomously in academic contexts and may need further training (Howard, 1995). Instances of plagiarism in their writing, then, may be to some extent different from traditional plagiarism. They may lack the intent to deceive, and their writing may still be at a stage of growth that requires support from teachers to help them develop their academic writing competence. Therefore, it seems necessary to raise awareness of the cross-cultural constructions and issues of plagiarism, to conceptualize it as a transitional writing practice, and to see the acquisition of writing skills as a complex process.
The findings of the present study reveal that teachers of English maintain a cultural view of plagiarism by teaching students the importance of academic conventions in the target communities, and adopt a developmental approach to plagiarism by teaching students how to cite references appropriately. As these students are often unfamiliar with proper citation, it is no wonder that the teachers choose rewriting instead of expulsion for the punishment of students who plagiarize. This also partially explains why many Chinese students studying in English-speaking countries are accused by their teachers of transgressive intertextuality (Chandrasoma, Thompson, & Pennycook, 2004). It also highlights the importance of academic training in developing teachers’ understanding of knowledge and skills in the target academic practices. In spite of the teachers’ different views on how to help Chinese students avoid plagiarism, it is important to take both language and skills into account as; first, “language problems and skill deficiencies are the most obvious issues” (Song-Turner, 2008, p. 49) behind student plagiarism, and second, it is a cultural issue related to “language, identity, education, and knowledge” (Chandrasoma et al., 2004, p. 190).

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