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Cut-and-paste essays a problem in schools

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22nd January, 2008

THE ARTICLE

A survey by Britain's Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL) has revealed that 58 percent of British teachers believe online plagiarism (copying work from the Internet) is a serious problem. Estimates are that over a quarter of students' work includes writing that was cut-and-pasted directly from a website. ATL general-secretary Dr Mary Bousted said: "Teachers are struggling under a mountain of cut-and-pasting to spot...plagiarism." One shocked teacher explained she had work "so blatantly cut-and-pasted that it still contained adverts from the Web page!" Dr Bousted added that putting so much emphasis on passing tests meant students were not learning. "Unsurprisingly, pupils are using all the means available to push up their coursework marks, often at the expense of any real understanding of the subjects they are studying," she said.

To tackle this issue, many high schools are trying out software that can easily spot plagiarized work. The Turnitin programme is used by universities across the world. Teachers can highlight a block of text they believe was copied and the software searches the Internet to see if it is already online. William Murray, a Turnitin spokesman, said the Internet made it easy for students to cheat. He pointed to the hundreds of sites that offer sample essays and essay-writing services. He added that students often do not know they are cheating when they copy-and-paste from the Web. This view is supported by teacher Diana Barker, who said: "I think the majority of students who engage in plagiarism do it more out of ignorance than the desire to cheat." Dr Bousted noted that: "Pupils are the real losers because they lack the skills they appear to have."

WARM-UPS

1. CHEATING: Walk around the class and talk to other students about cheating. Change partners often. After you finish, sit with your original partner(s) and share what you found out.

2. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words from the article are most interesting and which are most boring.

surveys / copying / cut and paste / struggling / Web page adverts / coursework / software / text / cheats / essay writing / ignorance / losers / lacking skills

Have a chat about the topics you liked. Change topics and partners frequently.

3. CHEATING: Talk with your partner(s) about the points below. Are they examples of cheating? Do you do any of them? Rank them: 10 = very serious, 1 = not at all serious. Change partners and share your findings.

- a. _____ looking at the answers in the back of the book
- b. _____ using an Internet essay-writing service
- c. _____ looking at the answers of the person next to you in an exam
- d. _____ copying and pasting text from an Internet site for use in your essay
- e. _____ stealing the answer key to a test from the teacher's drawer
- f. _____ asking a friend about the questions to a test they had just taken
- g. _____ sharing answers to the exam using Bluetooth
- h. _____ writing spellings and grammar rules on your arm

4. TEACHER PROBLEMS: Talk with your partner(s) about these problems teachers struggle with. Agree on the three biggest and smallest. Change partners and share your findings.

- students cheating
- in-class violence
- marking homework
- classroom noise
- technology
- too many students in a class
- discipline
- salary
- school management
- resources and materials

5. CHEAT: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the word 'cheat'. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

6. QUICK ROLE PLAY: Student A **strongly** believes that any student caught cheating should be expelled from school; Student B **strongly** believes cheating is a useful tool to have in life and should be encouraged in schools. Change partners again and talk about your roles and conversations.

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

1. TRUE / FALSE: Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- | | |
|--|-------|
| a. Many British teachers are worried about cheating students. | T / F |
| b. Over half of students' work has been copied from the Internet. | T / F |
| c. Some students forget to remove the Web ads from what they copy. | T / F |
| d. An expert suggested cheating can lead to more understanding . | T / F |
| e. Schools are now using software to detect work copied online. | T / F |
| f. A company spokesman said the Internet made cheating difficult. | T / F |
| g. One teacher said many students don't know that copying is wrong. | T / F |
| h. An expert said that schools are the real losers when pupils cheat . | T / F |

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | |
|---------------|----------------------|
| 1. survey | a. shown |
| 2. revealed | b. do |
| 3. struggling | c. deal with |
| 4. blatantly | d. highlighted |
| 5. emphasis | e. battling |
| 6. tackle | f. obviously |
| 7. spot | g. lack of knowledge |
| 8. pointed to | h. importance |
| 9. engage in | i. questionnaire |
| 10. ignorance | j. find |

3. PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- | | |
|---|-------------------------------|
| 1. online | a. to cheat |
| 2. copying work | b. plagiarism |
| 3. Teachers are struggling under a mountain | c. they believe was copied |
| 4. so much emphasis on passing tests meant | d. their coursework marks |
| 5. using all the means available to push up | e. of cut-and-pasting |
| 6. To tackle this | f. losers |
| 7. Teachers can highlight a block of text | g. issue |
| 8. He pointed to the hundreds of sites that | h. from the Internet |
| 9. more out of ignorance than the desire | i. students were not learning |
| 10. Pupils are the real | j. offer sample essays |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

GAP FILL: Put the words into the gaps in the text.

A _____ by Britain's Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL) has revealed that 58 percent of British teachers believe _____ plagiarism (copying work from the Internet) is a serious problem. Estimates are that over a _____ of students' work includes writing that was cut-and-pasted _____ from a website. ATL general-secretary Dr Mary Bousted said: "Teachers are struggling under a _____ of cut-and-pasting to spot...plagiarism." One shocked teacher explained she had work "so blatantly cut-and-pasted that it still _____ adverts from the Web page!" Dr Bousted added that putting so much emphasis on passing tests meant students were not learning. "Unsurprisingly, pupils are using all the means available to _____ up their coursework marks, often at the expense of any _____ understanding of the subjects they are studying," she said.

directly
mountain
online
push
survey
quarter
real
contained

To _____ this issue, many high schools are trying out software that can easily _____ plagiarized work. The Turnitin programme is used by universities across the world. Teachers can highlight a _____ of text they believe was copied and the software searches the Internet to see if it is already online. William Murray, a Turnitin spokesman, said the Internet _____ it easy for students to cheat. He pointed to the hundreds of sites that offer sample essays and essay-writing _____. He added that students often do not know they are cheating when they copy-and-paste from the Web. This _____ is supported by teacher Diana Barker, who said: "I think the majority of students who engage in plagiarism do it more out of ignorance than the _____ to cheat." Dr Bousted noted that: "Pupils are the real losers because they lack the _____ they appear to have."

services
block
skills
view
made
tackle
desire
spot

LISTENING: Listen and fill in the spaces.

A survey by Britain's Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL) _____ 58 percent of British teachers believe online plagiarism (copying work from the Internet) is a serious problem. _____ a quarter of students' work includes writing that was cut-and-pasted _____ website. ATL general-secretary Dr Mary Bousted said: "Teachers are struggling under a mountain of cut-and-pasting to spot....plagiarism." One shocked teacher explained she had _____ cut-and-pasted that it still contained adverts from the Web page!" Dr Bousted added that putting _____ passing tests meant students were not learning. "Unsurprisingly, pupils are using _____ to push up their coursework marks, often _____ real understanding of the subjects they are studying," she said.

_____, many high schools are trying out software that can easily spot plagiarized work. The Turnitin programme is used by universities across the world. Teachers _____ text they believe was copied and the software searches the Internet to see if it is already online. William Murray, a Turnitin spokesman, said the Internet made it easy for students to cheat. He _____ of sites that offer sample essays and essay-writing services. He added that students often do not know they are cheating when they copy-and-paste from the Web. This _____ teacher Diana Barker, who said: "I think the majority of students who engage in plagiarism _____ ignorance than the desire to cheat." Dr Bousted noted that: "Pupils _____ because they lack the skills they appear to have."

AFTER READING / LISTENING

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words 'cut' and 'paste'.

cut	paste

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. GAP FILL: In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the activity. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • revealed • quarter • mountain • adverts • emphasis • push up 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • tackle • block • easy • services • supported • lack
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STUDENT PLAGIARISM SURVEY

Write five GOOD questions about plagiarism in the table. Do this in pairs. Each student must write the questions on his / her own paper.

When you have finished, interview other students. Write down their answers.

	STUDENT 1 _____	STUDENT 2 _____	STUDENT 3 _____
Q.1.			
Q.2.			
Q.3.			
Q.4.			
Q.5.			

- Now return to your original partner and share and talk about what you found out. Change partners often.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a) What did you think when you read the headline?
 - b) What springs to mind when you hear the word 'cheating'?
 - c) Have you ever cheated?
 - d) What do you understand about the word 'plagiarism'?
 - e) What do you think teachers need to do to stop their students plagiarizing from the Internet ?
 - f) What do students need to do if they cut and paste work from the Internet and put it in their essay?
 - g) Who do you think of the student who forgot to take the website adverts off the text (s)he pasted from the Internet?
 - h) What punishment should students receive for plagiarism?
 - i) What means have you used to push up your coursework marks or exam grades?
-

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a) Did you like reading this article?
- b) Do you think cheating is a good or bad thing?
- c) What do you think of the new Turnitin software?
- d) Do you think the new software will stop students from cheating?
- e) Does cheating get you ahead in life?
- f) Would you use or have you ever used an Internet essay-writing service?
- g) Do you think websites that have sample essays are useful to find examples of good model answers?
- h) Do you think pupils are the real losers if they cheat and then pass all their exams?
- i) Did you like this discussion?

LANGUAGE

CORRECT WORD: Put the correct words from a–d below in the article.

A (1) _____ by Britain's Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL) has revealed that 58 percent of British teachers (2) _____ online plagiarism (copying work from the Internet) is a serious problem. Estimates are that over a quarter of students' work (3) _____ writing that was cut-and-pasted directly from a website. ATL general-secretary Dr Mary Bousted said: "Teachers are struggling (4) _____ a mountain of cut-and-pasting to spot....plagiarism." One shocked teacher explained she had work "so blatantly cut-and-pasted that it still contained adverts from the Web page!" Dr Bousted (5) _____ that putting so much emphasis on passing tests meant students were not learning. "Unsurprisingly, pupils are using all the (6) _____ available to push up their coursework marks, often at the expense of any real understanding of the subjects they are studying," she said.

To tackle this issue, many high schools are trying (7) _____ software that can easily spot plagiarized work. The Turnitin programme is used by universities across the world. Teachers can highlight a (8) _____ of text they believe was copied and the software searches the Internet to see if it is already online. William Murray, a Turnitin spokesman, said the Internet (9) _____ it easy for students to cheat. He pointed to the hundreds of sites that offer sample essays and essay-writing services. He added that students often do not know they are cheating when they copy-and-paste from the Web. This view is supported (10) _____ teacher Diana Barker, who said: "I think the majority of students who engage in plagiarism do it more out (11) _____ ignorance than the desire to cheat." Dr Bousted noted that: "Pupils are the real losers because they (12) _____ the skills they appear to have."

- | | | | | |
|-----|------------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|
| 1. | (a) surveillance | (b) scurvy | (c) surfing | (d) survey |
| 2. | (a) believe | (b) belief | (c) believes | (d) beliefs |
| 3. | (a) include | (b) includes | (c) including | (d) inclusion |
| 4. | (a) over | (b) on top of | (c) under | (d) inside |
| 5. | (a) divided | (b) subtracted | (c) added | (d) multiplied |
| 6. | (a) meanings | (b) means | (c) mean | (d) meant |
| 7. | (a) in | (b) for | (c) of | (d) out |
| 8. | (a) block | (b) black | (c) back | (d) book |
| 9. | (a) done | (b) made | (c) did | (d) make |
| 10. | (a) with | (b) out | (c) in | (d) by |
| 11. | (a) from | (b) in | (c) of | (d) for |
| 12. | (a) lack | (b) lacks | (c) lacking | (d) lacked |

HOMEWORK

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. INTERNET: Search the Internet and find out about plagiarism and the Turnitin software. Share what you discover with your partner(s) in the next lesson.

3. CHEATING: Make a poster about all the different ways to cheat in class or in an exam. Show your work to your classmates in the next lesson. Did you all have similar things?

4. PLAGIARISM: Write a magazine article about the effects of plagiarism. Include imaginary interviews with a school teacher and a student who cheated.

Read what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson. Write down new words and expressions.

5. LETTER: Write a letter to the head teacher of a school. Ask her/him three questions about plagiarism in her/his school. Give her/him three suggestions on what (s)he should do to stop students from cheating. Read your letter to your partner(s) in your next lesson. Your partner(s) will answer your questions.

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

a. T b. F c. T d. F e. T f. F g. T h. F

SYNONYM MATCH:

- | | |
|---------------|----------------------|
| 1. survey | a. questionnaire |
| 2. revealed | b. shown |
| 3. struggling | c. battling |
| 4. blatantly | d. obviously |
| 5. emphasis | e. importance |
| 6. tackle | f. deal with |
| 7. spot | g. find |
| 8. pointed to | h. highlighted |
| 9. engage in | i. do |
| 10. ignorance | j. lack of knowledge |

PHRASE MATCH:

- | | |
|---|-------------------------------|
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| 3. Teachers are struggling under a mountain | c. of cut-and-pasting |
| 4. so much emphasis on passing tests meant | d. students were not learning |
| 5. using all the means available to push up | e. their coursework marks |
| 6. To tackle this | f. issue |
| 7. Teachers can highlight a block of text | g. they believe was copied |
| 8. He pointed to the hundreds of sites that | h. offer sample essays |
| 9. more out of ignorance than the desire | i. to cheat |
| 10. Pupils are the real | j. losers |

GAP FILL:

Cut-and-paste essays a problem in schools

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LANGUAGE WORK

1 - d 2 - a 3 - b 4 - c 5 - c 6 - b 7 - d 8 - a 9 - b 10 - d 11 - c 12 - a