

## Chapter 4, Activity 1: Reading and note-taking strategies

Cross referencing key words within a single text and across different texts.

To illustrate this technique, I have selected the concept of 'patchwriting' and chosen this as a key word to look for in different texts. Extracts from six source texts are included below. I have selected the parts of the text which include reference to 'patchwriting' or 'patching'. Prior to this I had read the full texts and added these key word annotations in the margins to remind me to go back to these places in the text for my note taking and writing on the concept of patchwriting. The extracts below illustrate how a thread can be followed through different sources by tracking the use of a key word.

Read the extracts and identify the way that the concept 'patchwriting' is defined and discussed by the different authors and consider how these might be incorporated into a literature review on 'appropriate source use'. 'Patchwriting' could be a section or subsection in a literature review and these extracts could provide the sources to be integrated in this part of the review. After the extracts, a sample piece of writing is included which demonstrates a synthesis of ideas about patchwriting.

### Source 1

Abasi, A.R. and Akbari, N. (2008) 'Are we encouraging patchwriting? Reconsidering the role of pedagogical context in ESL student writers' transgressive intertextuality', *English for Specific Purposes*, 27(3):267-284

Textual analysis of the participants' use of published sources revealed that the majority of the students in the study had relied with varying degrees on a strategy that Howard (1995) refers to as "patchwriting". That is, they had appropriated source materials in their texts with few lexical or syntactic alterations. In some cases, the extent of borrowing and the degree of correspondence with the original source was so extensive that it could qualify as plagiarism according to the university policies. What prompted us to categorize this pattern of borrowing as patchwriting rather than plagiarism was the fact that the sources had been acknowledged, which ruled out an intention to deceive. ... We have termed this type of close appropriation at the micro level of lexis and syntax *localized patchwriting*. (from Abasi and Akbari 2008, p270)

### Source 2

Pecorari, D. (2001) 'Plagiarism and international students: how the English speaking university responds', in D. Belcher and A. Hirvela (eds), *Linking Literacies: Perspectives on L2 Reading-Writing Connections* Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.

Howard (1995) ... argues that a "textual strategy" she terms "patchwriting" involving too-close paraphrasing, "has traditionally been classified as plagiarism" (788) but does not represent a conscious violation of the rules; it is a developmental stage for writers who "are working in unfamiliar discourse, when they must work monologically with the words and ideas of a source text" (796). She observes that teachers whose students engage in patchwriting may find themselves in an unenviable position if their institutions require an inflexible, punitive response to plagiarism. (from Pecorari 2001, p 229-30)

### Source 3

Barks, D. (2001) 'Textual borrowing strategies for graduate-level ESL writers', D. Belcher and A. Hirvela (eds), *Linking Literacies: Perspectives on L2 Reading-Writing Connections* Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.

...Howard (1995) says students' reliance on a coping strategy she calls "patchwriting", that is, copying passages while making only minor changes in vocabulary and grammatical structures, is due in part to their difficulty in comprehending texts (from Barker 2001, p250)

... Insufficient background knowledge in a subject may also lead to an overreliance on quotation or to Howard's (1995) aforementioned practice of patchwriting.

Patchwriting is likely to be prevalent among new graduate students, who are not yet familiar with the discourse community they are joining, but it can also be found among any students who must grapple with unfamiliar readings. (from Barker 2001, pp251-2)

Particularly relevant here is Howard's (1995) distinction between the traditionally negative understanding of plagiarism as a result of either intentional copying or lack of attribution caused by ignorance of the conventions of citing source material, on the one hand, and her more positive view in which plagiarism occurs as a result of the learning process, on the other. Seeing "positive plagiarism" or patchwriting as a pedagogical opportunity is an important step for instructors in designing materials that move beyond the usual treatment of plagiarism in many academic writing classes.

Once this view is adopted, patchwriting can be seen as an intermediary step toward more effective integration of material from other sources. It can also be seen as a valuable step in helping students not only understand the texts they are reading but also learn to use some of the language of their discipline. (from Barker 2001, p257)

#### Source 4

Howard, R.M. (1995) 'Plagiarisms, authorships and the academic death penalty', *College English*, 57 (7): 788-805

In composition studies, most published discussions of student plagiarism proceed from the assumption that plagiarism occurs as a result of one of two possible motivations: an absence of ethics or an ignorance of citation conventions. Some students don't appreciate academic textual values and therefore deliberately submit work that is not their own; others don't understand academic citation conventions and therefore plagiarize inadvertently. Both of these are negative interpretations, postulating an absence--of either ethics or knowledge--in the plagiarist. A few recent studies, though, identify positive motivations for patchwriting, a textual strategy that has traditionally been classified as plagiarism. Patchwriting involves "copying from a source text and then deleting some words, altering grammatical structures, or plugging in one-for-one synonym-substitutes" (Howard 233). Describing the textual strategies of Tanya, a student who in traditional pedagogy might be labeled "remedial," Glynda Hull and Mike Rose celebrate her patchwriting as a valuable stage toward becoming an authoritative academic writer: "we depend upon membership in a community for our language, our voices, our very arguments. We forget that we, like Tanya, continually appropriate each other's language to establish group membership, to grow, and to define ourselves in new ways, and that such appropriation is a fundamental part of language use, even as the appearance of our texts belies it" (152).

(From Howard 1995, p788)

### Source 5

Hull, G. and Rose, M. (1989) 'Rethinking remediation: toward a social-cognitive understanding of problematic reading and writing', *Written Communication*, 6 (2): 139-154

Tanya had a patchwork approach to writing a summary, and when we began to talk to her, we learned why. We pointed to some of the sentences she had lifted from the case study and modified slightly before patching them into her summary. (For example, she changed the nurse's statement "I have pride in my profession" to "I have pride in what I do.") In response to our question as to the purpose of her modifications, she answered, "I have practice from when I try not to copy. When I get a little bit from there, a teacher'll really know what I'm talking about .... Then if some parts from there I change a little bit, they know I'm not really that kind of student that would copy, 'cause another student would copy." (From Hull and Rose, 1989, p 147)

### Source 6

Howard, R.M. (2000) 'Sexuality, textuality: the cultural work of plagiarism', *College English*, 62 (4): 473-91

At first the received categories and definitions of plagiarism made sense to me, but the further I pushed, the more unsatisfactory I found them. In 1986 I began crafting pedagogy that I hoped would teach my students how to avoid plagiarism. That classroom work led to scholarly work: My earliest publication on the topic asserted that patchwriting, a textual activity commonly classified as plagiarism, might be of positive value as a composing strategy (Howard, "Plagiarism *Pentimento*"). A subsequent article argued that patchwriting should be adjudicated differently than other forms of plagiarism (Howard, "Plagiarisms, Authorships). Then I wrote a book that went a step further, advocating that patchwriting be removed entirely from the juridicial category of plagiarism (Howard, *Standing*). (From Howard, 2000, p 475)

### *Sample response*

Here is an example of how the above texts could be integrated into a discussion of 'patchwriting' in a literature review from a research study on 'perceptions of appropriate source use'.

There are a many different ways of using source texts in academic writing some of which are viewed as being more appropriate than others. For example, 'patchwriting', refers to writing which is closely reliant on source texts with only small changes having been made in the grammar or vocabulary (Hull and Rose 1989; Howard 1995). Abasi and Akbari (2008) further explore this concept and differentiate between 'localized patchwriting' and 'global patchwriting', with the former referring to extensive micro level borrowing of lexis and syntax where the source has been acknowledged.

Students may adopt a patchwriting approach to give the impression that they have made an effort not to copy (Hull and Rose 1989) or it may simply be a natural stage that students go through as they learn the writing conventions of the academic community they are working within (Howard 1995; Pecorari 2001; Barker 2001). It is also a strategy that students may resort to if they do not have the necessary background knowledge to fully understand the source material they are reading (Barker 2001). Howard (1995, 2000) argues that rather than punishing students for adopting the practice of patchwriting, it should be viewed as a teaching and learning opportunity to help students become more familiar with the language and conventions of their discipline. These valuable arguments suggest, therefore, that tutors should develop appropriate channels for giving feedback which can support students in their journey to become less dependent on the wording of the sources that they use.