Academic misconduct and language centres: (how) do language centres care?

Anna Soltyska M.A.
Zentrum für Fremdsprachenausbildung
Ruhr-Universität Bochum

7. Bremer Symposion “RETHINKING THE LANGUAGE LEARNER”
Bremen, 28.02.-02.03.2019
What is your motivation to discuss the topic of academic misconduct?
To learn (further) measures to reduce academic misconduct that have been implemented in countries with stricter attitudes to cheating and co. than those prevailing in my home country.

Being professionally active in a country with relatively liberal attitudes to cheating: exchange ideas how the awareness of this topic could be raised.

To establish whose regulations (language center’s? of the faculties’ examination offices? university’s?) to apply in instance of academic misconduct and how do these regulations relate to one another.

Having completed higher education in Anglo-Saxon countries where academic misconduct is perceived as a criminal offence and as such severely punished: discuss how awareness of this topic could be raised in Germany.

In the process of establishing a new online assessment procedure: to brainstorm necessary preventive measures to keep e-cheaters off.

To collect (more) information on the topic of academic misconduct for further training sessions for in-service teachers within my institution and beyond.

To learn what to do and who to turn for support when an instance of plagiarism in a language course (e.g. academic writing) is suspected but no evidence found.

To learn what to do and who to turn for support when an instance of plagiarism in a language course (e.g. academic writing) is suspected but no evidence found.
If we want our assessment procedures to be reliable and valid, we need (among others) to tackle the issue of academic misconduct.

“Cheating decreases the validity of assessment, which results in a decreased interpretability of grades”

(Klein Schiphorst 2013)
What instances of academic misconduct have **you** experienced (in your courses)?
1. Using Google Translate for doing foreign language tasks
2. Copying other students' answers while doing an exam/test

2. Using some presentation for two different modules (free topic choice in both courses)

3. Learning by heart answer doesn't answer a

4. Stealing paper

5. Plagiarism in spoken form on the increase!
   - e.g., re-producing or summarizing text without citation in another language

6. Student exploited security gap illegally entered link to false test (pass) uploaded in fact not acquired

7. "Accidental" plagiarism
   - Limitations in wrong place
   - Labeled with reference links

8. Having a "proofreader"
   - Completely "correct" a graded term paper

9. Teacher took test from internet and said it was her own

10. Plagiarism unless students have to produce written paper or prepare a presentation project

   - Forget to cite/down sources, not able to find it later, just use different random sources in hopes the teacher doesn't check sources
What (other) instances of academic misconduct do language centres experience?
Academic Integrity

University of Huddersfield: Academic Integrity Guide
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tswp3k9k5p8
Types of academic misconduct

- Cheating in assessed coursework and open book examinations
- Cheating and other academic misconduct in written examinations
- Other academic misconduct

(based on the Statement of Academic Misconduct, University of Reading
https://www.reading.ac.uk/exa-misconduct.aspx)
Cheating in assessed coursework and open book examinations

- Plagiarism
- Taking a copy of another student’s work without their permission
- Reproduction of work assessed elsewhere
- Collusion: acting with another student with the intention to deceive
- Falsifying data, evidence, or experimental results
Cheating and other academic misconduct in written examinations

- Taking to the examination hall any prohibited material and/or electronic devices
- Communicating with other candidates during the exam
- Impersonating another candidate
- Behaving in a disruptive manner
- Eating, drinking, smoking in the examination hall
- Leaving the examination hall without permission (also after having finished the exam)
- Disregarding instructions of invigilating personnel
- ...
Ignorance or intent? Why do students cheat?

Talk to your neighbour(s) to brainstorm possible causes of misconduct.
Why do students cheat?

Lacking awareness of the fact that “home country rules” concerning academic misconduct differ from the rules in one’s welcoming institution/culture

Opportunity (no proper invigilation)

Laziness

Lack of time / Time pressure

Playing a game: catch me of you can! / if you catch me red-handed you can’t do much anyway!

Insufficient knowledge

...
(Unless you have already had a chance to do so) briefly read one of the texts provided (in English, German, Polish, French and Spanish) and summarise to your neighbour its bottom line.

Pairwork (ideally in cross-language pairs)
Students

Cheating at UK's top universities soars by 40%

Institutions including Oxford and Cambridge under scrutiny as number of academic misconduct cases surges

Informacja zbiorcza o polityce WNE UW „Zero tolerancji dla ściągania”

W 2004 r. WNE UW wprowadziło zasadę „Zero tolerancji dla ściągania”, która obejmuje wszystkie formy zaliczeń i egzaminów. Poniżej zebrane zostały obowiązujące zapisy tej polityki.

'B cheating watches' warning for exams

By Sean Coughlan
Education correspondent

Abschreiben an der Uni

Warum Plagiatsoftware so oft danebenliegt

Viele Unis setzen heute Plagiatsoftware ein. Sie soll Studenten überführen, die heimlich abgeschrieben haben. Doch die Resultate sind mau: Quellenangaben werden als Fehler markiert, echte Schummeln übersehen.
What awareness-raising measures does your language centre implement to prevent or minimise academic misconduct?
Academic integrity in research: Code of practice and procedure

- Code of Practice
- Definition of Misconduct in Research
- Responsibility
- Confidentiality
- Procedure in the event of suspected Misconduct in Research
- Relationship with existing policies

Kursabschlussprüfungen – Leitfaden für das Aufsichtspersonal

Im Vorfeld (Aufgabe von dem/der Aufsichtsverantwortlichen (Festangestellten)):
- Sitzordnung planen: Achten, dass Klausurteilnehmer mit genügend Abstand zueinander sitzen und Platz für die Aufsicht ist, durch die Reihen zu gehen und die Identität zu prüfen
What awareness-raising measures could your language centre implement to prevent or minimise academic misconduct?
Awareness-raising measures

Within an institution in general:

- Promote a culture of academic integrity ("non-cheating culture") in which being honest and not cheating is the norm, not the opposite.
- Establish clear procedures in case misconduct is suspected / detected that are followed throughout and by all staff members (strict enforcement of regulations and inevitability of the punishment).
- Regularly update the existing procedures e.g. to include new electronic gadgets that might be used for illegal practices during exams.
Awareness-raising measures

In language courses, writing courses in particular:

- Focus on process writing (multiple drafts of the same text may help reduce ghostwriting / proofreading by third parties)
- Consider asking students to write by hand instead of submitting typed texts
- Use specific, narrow tasks that make searching for ready texts difficult or impossible
- Consider writing for assessment purposes only in class or/and under exam conditions
- Use declarations of originality (they should be specific and detailed, maybe could be student-co-written?)
- Hold introductory discussions on differences between students’ home countries’/home cultures’ attitudes to plagiarism and cheating
- Design assessment criteria that promote originality and own formulations
What are the existing rules of conduct in case of breaches of academic integrity

- in your language centre?
- in your university?

Who do language teachers turn to for support?
§ 63 HG  
(Gesetz über die Hochschulen des Landes NRW)

(5) Die Hochschulen und die staatlichen Prüfungsämter können von den Prüflingen eine Versicherung an Eides Statt verlangen und abnehmen, dass die Prüfungsleistung von ihnen selbständig und ohne unzulässige fremde Hilfe erbracht worden ist. Wer vorsätzlich

a) gegen eine die Täuschung über Prüfungsleistungen betreffende Regelung einer Hochschulprüfungsordnung oder

b) gegen eine entsprechende Regelung einer staatlichen oder kirchlichen Prüfungsordnung

Desiderata

What **role** should language centres play in preventing academic misconduct?

What measures would you like **your language centre** to implement to reach this goal?

(How) Should language centres **co-operate** on this matter?

Academic misconduct and language centres: (how) do language centres care?
Informal round of discussion during 7. Bremer Symposium
We believe that...

- Language centres with their multicultural staff and customers are among the most suitable units to be the beacons of academic integrity within their institutions of higher education.
- The quality and reliability of language assessment belong to paramount goals that language centres aim to achieve whereas these goals cannot be accomplished unless the topic of academic misconduct is properly addressed and its instances reduced.
- Language centres oftentimes belong to the most progressive units within their institutions and are ready to initiate actions concerning various internal and external stakeholders.
- Diverse cultural and educational backgrounds of university students and lecturers need to be taken into consideration and fully understood to implement proper awareness raising measures and improve the overall understanding of what counts as misconduct.
- The topic of academic misconduct has long enough been treated as a taboo topic and not eagerly approached within many institutions of higher education in Germany and beyond.
What next?

If you want to **join the initiative to reduce academic misconduct**, follow the AKS-intern discussion forum:

https://aks.uni-paderborn.de/login/index.php
Recommended reading


Klein Schiphorst A T (2013) *Students’ justifications for academic cheating and empirical explanations of such behaviour.* Social Cosmos 4(1), 57-63


Soltyska, A (2018) *Assessment of language skills in culturally heterogenous learner groups: implications for teachers, test developers and test administrators (with a particular focus on cheating and academic dishonesty).* IATEFL TEASIG Post-conference Selections

Soltyska, A (2016) *Malpractice in language testing – Why and how should we care?* ETAS Journal, 34/1


Wrigley, S (2017) *Avoiding ‘de-plagiarism’: Exploring the affordances of handwriting in the essay-writing process* Active Learning in Higher Education 1-13
Thank you for your contributions and the fruitful discussion!
I am looking forward to hearing from you:

anna.soltyska(at)rub.de