**Acceptable Use Versus Plagiarism Exercise[[1]](#footnote-1)**

**Directions:** The first paragraph presents *source material* (a paragraph from an academic journal) that a student wants to cite. Below the source material are six ways that the source material might be used. For each potential use, indicate whether the use is acceptable or constitutes plagiarism.

**Source material**

From Nickerson, 1999, p. 737:

“To communicate effectively with other people, one most have a reasonably accurate idea of what they do and do not know that is pertinent to the communication. Treating people as though they have knowledge that they do not have can result in miscommunication and perhaps embarrassment. On the other hand, a fundamental rule of conversation, at least according to a Gricean view, is that one generally does not convey to others information that one can assume they already have (Grice, 1975). A speaker who overestimates what his or her listeners know may talk over their heads; one who underestimates their knowledge may, in the interest of being clear, be perceived as talking down to them. Both types of misjudgment work against effective communication.”

**Potential Use 1**

To communicate effectively, we must have a reasonably accurate idea of what our listeners do and do not know that is pertinent to the communication. Treating people as if they know something they do not can result in miscommunication and perhaps embarrassment. On the other hand, a foundational rule of conversation, at least according to a Gricean view, is that we usually do not convey to others information that we can assume they already know (Grice, 1975). A speaker who over estimates what his or her listeners know may talk over their heads, while someone who underestimates their knowledge may be perceived as talking down to them. Both mistakes work against effective and efficient communication (Nickerson, 1999, p. 737).

*Acceptable use* *or plagiarism?*

**Potential Use 2**

For effective communication, it is necessary to have a fairly accurate idea of what our listeners know or do not know that is pertinent to the communication. If we assume that people know something they do not, then miscommunication and perhaps embarrassment may result. At the same time, a fundamental rule of conversation is that we should not convey information that we assume our listeners already have. If our assumption is wrong, we may talk over our listeners’ heads, or possibly be perceived as talking down to them. Both errors work against effective and efficient communication (Nickerson, 1999, p. 737).

*Acceptable use* *or plagiarism?*

**Potential Use 3**

Nickerson (1999) argues that effective communication depends on a generally accurate knowledge of what the audience knows that is “pertinent to the communication.” If a speaker assumes too much knowledge about the subject, the audience with either misunderstand or be bewildered. However, assuming too little knowledge among those in the audience may cause them to feel patronized. In either case, the communication will be less successful than it could have been (p. 737).

*Acceptable use* *or plagiarism?*

**Potential Use 4**

As Raymond Nickerson (1999) reminds us, “To communicate effectively with other people, one must have a reasonably accurate idea of what they do and do not know that is pertinent to the communication” (p. 737). If we treat people as if they have knowledge that they do not have, we can cause miscommunication and perhaps embarrassment. On the other hand, it is important not to convey to others information that we can assume they already have. A speaker who overestimates what his or her listeners know may talk over their heads, and one who underestimates their knowledge may be perceived as talking down to them. Both of these wrong estimates work against effective and efficient communication.

*Acceptable use* *or plagiarism?*

**Potential Use 5**

We are informed by Nickerson (1999), “To communicate effectively with other people, one must have a reasonably accurate idea of what they do and do not know that is pertinent to the communication.” It is crucial to assume neither too much nor too little knowledge of the subject by the audience, or the communication may be inhibited by either confusion or offense (p. 737).

*Acceptable use* *or plagiarism?*

**Potential Use 6**

If we are to engage in effective communication, we must not talk down to our audience nor talk beyond their understanding. It is therefore very important that we have a generally accurate idea of what our audience knows about the subject.

*Acceptable use* *or plagiarism?*

1. From Harris, Robert. 2001. *The Plagiarism Handbook*. Pyrczak Publishing. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)