

#### 4.8 Paraphrasing techniques

Now that we have seen how and when writers refer to other sources in their work, we can practise some of the language techniques students find useful as they develop the skills of paraphrasing, referencing and using quotations in their writing. If you feel you need extra help in these areas, ask your teacher! There are more published activities available for your use in class.

Good paraphrasing is an essential skill for post-graduate students and other academic writers to master; however, there is often a fine line between skilful paraphrasing and plagiarism which for many overseas students can be difficult to distinguish.

#### What is Plagiarism?

PLAGIARISM is a very serious academic offence. It is best defined as a deliberate activity – the conscious copying of the exact words of an author or writer and using these words without acknowledging the original writer. In Western academic tradition original ideas and expressions are the acknowledged property of their creators, rather like an invention. It is therefore very disrespectful, not respectful to use their ideas without any acknowledgement. Students are warned against this form of *academic stealing* at the beginning of their undergraduate and postgraduate courses. Both native English students and non-native students are tempted to plagiarise at some time in their academic lives, usually as a result of:

- Insufficient understanding of the original material
- Lack of awareness of paraphrasing techniques
- Limited ability to make large scale language revisions
- Lack of confidence in English
- Cultural differences in writing
- Time pressures

However, tutors do not expect students to produce writing of a similar standard to a professional native writer. This is often why it is so easy for them to be able to spot plagiarism. Just follow the rules of good writing as best you can and proof read carefully, this way your writing will improve – and your English too!